

## Getting started guide

### Outside School Hours Care

# Getting started guide

## → Why promote healthy eating?

Outside school hours care (OSHC) services play a big role in the health and wellbeing of the children in their care.

On average children spend 11 hours at OSHC per week, where they consume up to two of their meals and snacks for the day. Therefore OSHC presents a great opportunity to have a positive influence on their nutrition. Eating habits are instilled from a young age, so by providing nutritious foods and drinks, you can help children establish positive eating behaviours.

## → How to support healthy eating in OSHC

An OSHC service that is effectively providing and promoting healthier food and drinks will:

- provide food and drinks that meet the [Food and drink guidelines for outside school hours care](#)
- have a healthy eating policy and procedures in place to support healthy eating and sustain changes
- have meals and snacks that support and promote healthy eating
- promote healthy eating in the curriculum and through positive role modelling
- engage with families to support them in reinforcing healthy eating messages at home.

The benefits include healthy growth and development, good mental and oral health and a reduced risk of developing health issues later in life.

The benefits of providing and promoting healthy foods and drinks:

- helps your service meet the healthy eating requirements of the [National Quality Framework](#) and the [Food and drink guidelines for outside school hours care](#)
- children can learn better and be more alert when they eat well
- a healthier diet is environmentally sustainable. For example, preparing simple, fresh and healthy foods can reduce food waste and packaging.

This involves embedding healthy eating across your service, by integrating it into planning and curriculum, developing a supportive culture and environment, and engaging the whole of service community.

A whole of service approach brings together leadership (management), staff, students and families to promote healthy eating. Everyone has a role to play.

The steps below outline the suggested process you can follow to achieve this; however, it may not always be possible or suitable to work through them in the recommended order.

**You should aim to make progress where you can and in an order suitable to your service.**

## → 01 Secure leadership commitment and engage key stakeholders

To bring about long-lasting, healthy changes seek leadership from management and commitment from others such as coordinators, cooks and educators.

When managers actively lead change, it helps everyone in your service to feel supported and motivated to be involved.

To start the process of making healthy changes:

- speak to managers about the importance of healthy eating, and the plan for change. Obtain their ongoing support for making healthy changes and encourage them to take an active role in the change process
- communicate that healthy eating changes assist the service to meet requirements of the National Quality Standard and regulations and demonstrate best practice to the parents and carers of the children at your service
- work with management to ensure there is adequate time, resourcing and support for changes.



### Tips!

Making the switch is easier than you think! We encourage you to register for Vic Kids Eat Well - an exciting state-wide movement that's focused on transforming the food and drink environments in schools and other community organisations where kids spend their time. [Register here.](#)

**Remember, healthy eating is not a job for just one person! In fact, everyone in your service has a role to play.**

A whole of service approach is an important part of successfully implementing change. Once you have secured management support:

- create a working group or committee that includes key staff, parents, community members and management; then select someone to coordinate the group (this group can drive change, decide on goals, timelines and strategies, and encourage and support other staff to participate).

## → 02 Develop a healthy eating policy

Creating a healthy eating policy in your service will help to embed and maintain healthy changes.

It also provides your service's community (staff, parents and if your OSHC is connected to a school, the wider school community) with clear and consistent information about your goals and practices.

Your healthy eating working group can work together to develop a new policy or review your existing one. Once this policy is approved, communicate it to your whole service community.

The policy should include actions related to:

- leadership and commitment
- a healthy physical environment
- a healthy culture
- supported staff and educators
- families and community partnerships.

Having a healthy eating policy is also a requirement of [The National Quality Standard](#).



### Key resource

- [Factsheet: Creating a healthy eating policy](#)

## → 03 Recommend staff complete online training

OSHC staff can learn how to plan healthy menus and promote healthy eating with our free online training module.

Online training can be completed anywhere, anytime. Each module takes less than one hour to complete and participants receive a certificate of completion.



### Key resource

- [Training: Healthy eating in outside school hours care](#)

Healthy eating in outside schools hours care

In this interactive module, OSHC educators will learn:

- about the Food and drink guidelines for outside school hours care
- how to plan healthy menus
- simple meal, snack and drink ideas for children
- healthy ingredient swaps and shopping tips
- ways to deal with challenges like food allergies and budgeting
- and much more!

## → 04 Assess current menus

You can assess your service's current menus to check if they meet the food and drink guidelines for OSHC.

HEAS conduct free menu assessments from which you will receive a detailed report highlighting areas where the menu meets the guidelines, and specific recommendations to help you make changes where needed.

To assess your own menu [use this checklist](#).



### Key resource

- [OSHC menu assessment form](#)

## → 05 Making changes

The following steps can be done in any order or even at the same time.

Make healthy changes to your menus

After completing training and assessing your menu, you can start making healthy changes to your current menus, and plan future ones. The best way to start is by making simple changes that will have a big impact.

You can use the [checklist for outside school hours care](#) to plan new menus, and update existing ones

Start by making sure:

- all meals and snacks are based on food from the five food groups: fruits; vegetables and legumes; grain (cereal) foods; milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives; lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans)
- there is a variety of fruit and vegetables
- 'discretionary' foods and drinks are not on the menu. Discretionary foods and drinks are items that are high in saturated fat, added sugar and/or salt and low in nutritional value, such as confectionary, lollies, soft drinks and sugar sweetened drinks and deep fried foods.
- water is freely available.





### Key resource

- [Food and drink guidelines for outside school hours care](#)
- [Sample menus](#)
- [Recipes](#)



### Promote healthy eating

Coordinators and educators have an important role to play in promoting healthy eating to children.

The [National Quality Framework](#) recommends that early childhood education and care services support all aspects of children's health, including healthy eating, ensuring that they are teaching children that healthy lifestyles underpin everyday routines and experiences.

Examples of how educators can promote healthy eating include:

- teaching the children about healthy eating through discussions, questions, games and cooking activities
- where possible include a kitchen gardens or visits to local food growers or farms during holiday programs
- making mealtimes relaxed and comfortable
- talking in positive ways about the foods the children are eating
- encouraging children to try new foods.



### Key resource

- [Factsheet: Promote healthy eating](#)
- [Training: Healthy eating in outside school hours care](#)



### Key resource

- [Factsheet: Healthy fundraising](#)
- [Factsheet: Celebration days](#)





## → 06 Celebrate success

It is important to continually reflect on, communicate and celebrate your progress with everyone in the service and the wider OSHC/school community. This is a great way to keep staff and families involved and motivated.

You could provide regular updates and share achievements in your newsletter, notice boards, social media and in conversations. These platforms all provide a great way to celebrate and share your successes. Some small changes can be made by stealth and do not need to be publicised, such as adding half wholemeal flour to muffin or pancake recipe.

Communicating successes can also demonstrate to management the impact you have made and may help you to secure their ongoing support.



## → 07 Maintaining changes

Maintaining your changes and ensuring healthy eating remains a priority in your organisation is important.

Your service's healthy eating working group can help to keep healthy eating on the radar by ensuring a healthy eating policy is in place and is continually reviewed and updated. They can also plan fun healthy eating activities and events throughout the year.

Maintain your progress by:

- reviewing your menus regularly to ensure they still meet the guidelines
- reviewing your healthy eating policy every 12-24 months
- ensuring all new staff complete the [online training](#) as part of their induction
- speaking to your manager about communicating your healthy eating plan to families
- monitoring how your service is progressing
- seeking feedback from staff and families (via surveys and similar) to identify any issues and make sure you are on track to achieve your goal.



**We're here to support you**

Visit our website:  
[heas.health.vic.gov.au](https://heas.health.vic.gov.au)  
 ☎ 1300 225 288  
[heas@nnf.org.au](mailto:heas@nnf.org.au)

To receive this document in an accessible format  
 phone 1300 22 52 88 or email [heas@nnf.org.au](mailto:heas@nnf.org.au)

Copyright © State of Victoria 2024.

Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this document show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services. This document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.