

Nutrition Policies

Writing a nutrition policy for your early learning or child care facility

You may be ready to develop a nutrition policy for your facility. If so, use your Best Practices Licensing Manual and the information in this handbook to help you create your policy. Having a nutrition policy can help support nutrition-related actions and give a clear direction of what you hope to accomplish. Use this information to get you started.

A food and nutrition policy could include the following sections:

Vision

This is a general statement about your facility's purpose, meant to inspire staff and to encourage families to want to be a part of your facility.

Think about your ultimate goal and how you plan to achieve it. Also consider what families value most and include this as part of your vision.

Example 1: *"We give the children we care for energy to grow, develop, play and learn by providing fresh, healthy and safe food every day."*

Example 2: *"Children attending our facility will thrive cognitively, physically and behaviourally through the provision of a variety of nutritious foods and a relaxed and calm eating environment every day."*

Example 3: *"Staff at our facility are committed to the well-being of the children in their care. This includes ensuring that all children are offered a variety of nutritious foods and are exposed to a positive eating environment on a daily basis."*

Accountability

To make sure the policy is followed and is sustainable (lasting), identify who is/are accountable for putting together and monitoring the nutrition policy.

Procedure and protocol

These are the specific topics and criteria/standards that form the majority of your nutrition policy. Include topics and criteria that best address nutrition concerns faced in your child care facility. Here are some topics you may wish to include:

- How you plan to work with families on food and nutrition matters
- Basic nutrition principles followed at your facility
- Menus: who writes the menus; how often they are changed; the nutrition guidelines followed; how menus are shared and how changes are communicated
- How you plan to meet the food needs of children from different cultures, children with food restrictions and children following vegetarian diets
- Strategies used for working with "picky" eaters
- How you plan to minimize processed foods and serve healthier products
- Guidelines for food served at special occasions and celebrations
- Guidelines for avoiding choking hazards
- Eating environment: style of dining used (ex: family-style dining); how a pleasant eating environment is created; how staff models healthy behaviours
- Food allergies: how you communicate with families and share information among staff; the guidelines you follow to prevent allergic reactions

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring (or keeping track of) the effectiveness of your policy, will help you know if your efforts are making a difference. Establish a plan for monitoring at the start.