

Food Service Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote children's health, safety, and nutrition through prioritization and promotion of nutrient-dense foods, healthy eating habits, and ensuring consistency with state child care licensing regulations, established quality standards, and best practices for Children's Choice school-age child care programs.

General food service policies:

- Hand washing before and after eating is part of the daily routine.
- Caregivers sit and chat with children during snack times, which are served family style.
- Eating time is offered as an activity choice; children are not required to eat at a certain time, or else go without.
- The program provides nutritional foods and educational nutrition activities.
- Rewards and Punishers are prohibited in general; specifically, regarding food, children will never be given food to eat or be restricted from eating as a form of discipline.
 - Giving food, especially candy as a reward is prohibited.
 - Withholding or restricting the type or amount of food as a punishment is prohibited.

Food Safety Procedures: All staff handling food must follow safe food-handling practices.

- Staff will thoroughly wash all raw fruits and vegetables before cooking or serving.
- Staff will serve food promptly and refrigerate immediately after use.
- Staff will discard any leftover milk.
- Staff will label and date all leftover food.
- Staff will sanitize eating utensils, dishes and cups before re-use by washing them in a dishwasher or by completing the following 3 Steps: 1) wash with soapy water; 2) rinse with clean warm water; and 3) sanitize.
- Staff will provide sanitary cups or glasses or a drinking fountain for drinking water. Staff will not allow children to share drinking or eating utensils.
- Staff will thoroughly sanitize food preparation surfaces before and after each use.
- Disposable plates, cups and plastic utensils of food-grade, medium weight may be used for single service.
- Use of Styrofoam cups is prohibited.

Allergy & Dietary Restrictions:

- Monthly snack menus will be posted for families.
- The program maintains an updated allergy list accessible to all staff.
- Staff will check ingredient labels before serving any food.
- Food substitutions will be provided to ensure all children can participate safely.
- Families must provide documentation for medically required dietary plans (e.g., allergies, intolerances).

Policy for Children's Choice Program Snacks:

- Water is always available. Chilled water is encouraged.
- Offer water as the primary beverage and limit or avoid sugary drinks like fruit juice.
- Offer a variety of fresh, dried, or frozen fruits and vegetables daily (strong preference over canned).
- Offer whole-grain options, such as whole-wheat crackers or oatmeal (strong preference over refined flour).
- **Offer lean proteins and low-fat dairy: Include snacks like cheese, yogurt, nuts, or seeds to provide protein.**
- **Limit unhealthy components:** Minimize foods high in added sugars, sodium, saturated fat, and trans-fat.
- **Serving candy, cupcakes, gum, highly-sugared cereals, popcorn (Skinny Pop is OK, theater or microwave popcorn has added fat and are prohibited), chips, are prohibited.**
- The same menu is not served twice in one week.
- Snacks will include choices from at least two food groups:
 - Fruits or vegetables: preferably fresh, and/or no added sugar is offered daily.

- Whole grains: whole-grain crackers, breads, potatoes, or cereals. Cereals with sugar as the first ingredient on the ingredient list or those with more than 4 grams of sugar per serving are prohibited. Serve cereals where "whole grain" options like oats, barley or whole grains, whole wheat, whole grain corn, or oats is the first listed ingredient.
- Dairy: yogurt (with low or zero added sugar), cheese, milk (non-flavored, no sugar added).
- Lean proteins: nut-free proteins such as hummus, sunflower seed butter, boiled eggs, or beans.
- The use of fruit drinks that contain less than one hundred percent juice, artificially flavored drinks, sugary drinks like soda, sweetened teas, and fruit punch are not permitted.

Field Trip Food Policy: for program-purchased food on field trips

- When on field trips, if food not allowable for snack is served, parents must receive advance notice in writing on the activity calendar.

Special Events & Celebrations

- Special events and celebrations are encouraged. Non-food celebrations (field trips, new program books, special activities) are encouraged.
- Any food served at these events must follow the same nutritional guidelines as snack. (candy, cupcakes, highly sugared treats are prohibited).
- Exception: for highly-enriching, high-novelty, high cultural significance; staff may receive special permission: For example: hot dog roast at a field trip to the mountains.
- Families are encouraged to bring healthy, store-bought items for birthday celebrations. Acceptable options include fruit trays, veggie trays, whole-grain muffins, yogurt tubes, cheese sticks, etc.
- Prohibited Items that are not allowed to be provided by the program, program staff, or families include.
 - Homemade baked goods
 - Candy, cupcakes, doughnuts, or any high-sugar treats
 - Items containing nuts

Cooking Activities, Classes, Projects

- Cooking experiences will be developmentally appropriate and supervised.
- Children may participate in washing, mixing, stirring, assembling, cutting, slicing, and cooking foods.
- All cooking project recipes will:
 - **Follow the same nutritional guidelines as snack. (candy, cupcakes, highly sugared treats are prohibited).**
 - Avoid common allergens.
- Children and staff must wash hands before and after each activity.

Family Communication

- Snack menus and any plans to serve food outside of snack will be shared with all families.
- Families will be informed immediately of any changes related to allergies, food recalls, or policy updates.
- Feedback about dietary needs or cultural food preferences is welcome.