

# Sample Policies for Child Care Settings

Policies support lasting change by making recommendations and practices part of staff expectations, orientation and training. They can also guide communication with families about practices in the child care setting. Below are sample policies to consider:

[Foods Offered in our Child Care Setting Sample Policy](#)

[Responsive Feeding Sample Policy](#)

## Sample Policy:

### Foods Offered in our Child Care Setting

[Date policy was developed]

#### POLICY STATEMENT

[Child care setting] is committed to offer nutritious meals and snacks that are designed to meet the requirements of the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#) and align with [Canada's food guide](#). This includes:

- **Foods and drinks offered by the child care setting**
- **Outside foods and drinks supplied by parents or caregivers**

#### Foods and Drinks Offered by the Child Care Setting

##### Rationale

Offering meals and snacks in accordance with the [Child Care Menu Planning Practical Guide](#) (2024) ensures that children are offered the nutrition they need for healthy growth and development, and meets the requirement of the Child Care and Early Years Act to follow Canada's food guide.

Children are learning to become competent eaters\*. A supportive nutrition environment helps children develop healthy eating behaviours and fosters eating competence. It also provides opportunities to support the four foundations of learning and development: belonging, engagement, expression, and well-being ([How Does Learning Happen?](#)).

\*Children who do well with eating (or are 'competent' with eating): Feel good about eating, eat as much or as little as they need, eat what the family eats with only small changes, and enjoy mealtimes.

##### The [Child care setting] ensures that:

- Cooks and menu planners are knowledgeable of the requirements of the [Child Care Menu Planning Practical Guide](#) (2024) and menus are planned in accordance with this guide.
- Menus are regularly reviewed and revised using the Ontario Dietitians in Public Health [Menu Revision Tool](#) (2024).
- Children in care for six or more hours are offered a lunch and two snacks. Meals and snacks are spaced two and a half to three hours apart.

- Children with food allergies or dietary restrictions are offered, as much as possible, foods that are similar to foods offered to other children.
- Food is prepared using safe food handling practices.
- Drinking water is always available and accessible to children and offered often.
- When planning celebrations (add link), non-food related activities are the focus. If foods are offered, consider choosing “Serve” foods from the [Child Care Menu Planning Practical Guide](#) (2024) whenever possible. When food is served as part of celebrations, it is offered at regularly scheduled meal and snack times.

## Outside Foods and Drinks Supplied by Parents or Caregivers

### Rationale

Meal and snack times are important opportunities for children to connect, learn, and engage with their peers and educators. When all children are offered the same foods provided by the child care setting, it fosters a sense of inclusion and shared experience.

Allowing a parent or caregiver to provide different food for their child's meals and snacks can limit their exposure to **new and diverse foods**, reducing opportunities to develop acceptance and enjoyment of a variety of flavors and textures.

Not permitting outside food helps create a **safer, more inclusive environment** for children with food allergies and dietary restrictions. By refusing outside food items, educators and child care providers can monitor the foods offered, reducing the risk of allergic reactions and cross-contamination.

Additionally, expectations for parents and caregivers to provide food for celebrations or special events can **place unnecessary financial or social pressure on families**.

*Note: Exceptions may be made for children with food allergies who require safe alternatives.*

The [Child care setting] ensures that outside food and drinks brought by parents and caregivers are not permitted. Exceptions to this include:

- Special dietary considerations (such as food allergies, faith-based diets, etc.) that are detailed in written instructions from a caregiver
- Food for infants under one year of age, with written instructions from a parent or caregiver
- Expressed breast milk that is labelled with the child's full name and date
- Alternative arrangements (e.g., day camps, bagged lunches for kindergarten groups, etc.)
- Emergency situations

### Legislation/Guidelines:

Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (section 42 of Ontario Regulation 137/15)

[Child Care Menu Planning - Practical Guide, 2024](#)

[Date approved]

# Sample Policy:

## Responsive Feeding

[Date policy was developed]

### POLICY STATEMENT

[Child care setting] aims to support children to become competent eaters by practicing responsive feeding.

#### Rationale

Responsive feeding happens when educators recognize and respond appropriately to a child's hunger and fullness cues. It helps children develop eating competence by encouraging them to try a variety of foods, explore new tastes, and listen to their bodies. It also supports self-regulation and builds confidence in their eating habits.

Children thrive in safe, caring relationships that help them grow and handle challenges. In child care settings, **responsive feeding** supports this by meeting children's needs at mealtimes, helping them feel secure, and strengthening their bond with caregivers. This approach encourages healthy growth and well-being.

At its core, responsive feeding is based on trust—children trust that educators will provide food throughout the day, and educators trust that children will eat according to their needs.

#### The [Child care setting] is committed to the following responsive feeding practices:

- Educators and child care staff decide what foods are offered, and when and where children will eat. Children decide what foods to eat, whether and how much to eat.
- Meals and snacks are offered 2-3 hours apart, on a set schedule, and children have at least 20 minutes to eat giving them enough time to explore food. New foods are offered along with familiar foods.
- Involve children in some aspects of mealtimes in an age-appropriate manner (e.g., setting or cleaning the table, serving themselves in a family style meal, etc.)
- Educators and child care staff use positive strategies at mealtimes instead of pressure as outlined in the [Strategies for Mealtime Success](#) resource.
- When eating with children, educators and child care staff are encouraged to enjoy the same food and beverages offered to children. At least one child care staff sits with the children during snacks and mealtimes.
- Educators and child care staff act as role models by:

- Encouraging children to explore how food tastes, feels and looks instead of focusing on nutrients and health benefits
- Calling foods by their names
- Recognizing that all bodies can be healthy and active
- Refraining from conversations about diets, food preferences, bodies, and amounts and types of food eaten
- Encouraging mealtimes that are pleasant and positive social experiences where children are engaged in conversations without distractions (e.g., toys, books, screens, etc.)

**Legislation/Guidelines:**

Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (section 42 of Ontario Regulation 137/15)

[Date approved]

**Approved by:**

**Next review date:**