



NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS CHILD CARE

COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES LICENSING PROGRAM

There are requirements in the Child Care Licensing Regulation to ensure appropriate food and drink are provided to children in licensed facilities. Here are some suggestions to help you comply with those requirements:

1. Use Canada's Food Guide to plan your menu, for example:
 - Offer foods from at least two food groups for each snack (for example: one medium sized fruit and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup yogurt).
 - Offer foods from three or four food groups at each meal (for example: grilled cheese sandwich on whole wheat toast and an apple).
 - Offer healthy choices from Canada's Food Guide most of the time, while limiting foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar, or salt (sodium) (for example: cakes, pastries, chocolate, candy, cookies, granola bars, doughnuts, muffins, french fries, potato chips, etc.).
 - Choose pre-meal activities that help calm children and get them ready for eating (for example: small group and/or quiet activities like listening to a story or singing, helping to prepare food, or setting tables).
 - Role model healthy eating, cooperation and pleasant conversation at the table (for example: promote positive talk when referring to food – "there are no 'good' and 'bad' foods").
2. Support age appropriate learning experiences during food preparation and mealtimes, for example:
 - Encourage the children's acquisition of new skills by allowing them to pour their own water, or use a fork. These activities may be a little messy but are important steps to learning.
 - Assist children to learn about hand washing, personal safety and food safety (for example: wash your hands before preparing food, sit down while eating and refrain from sharing the veggie dip).
3. Follow the parent's instruction and/or the written care plan regarding the child's individual nutrition needs (for example: follow the parent's written request to cut up their child's meals, or to not provide sweets to their child).
4. Ensure that the appropriate modifications are made to snack and meal planning for children with allergies or other dietary requirements (for example: provide alternatives to dairy products for the child who is lactose intolerant).
5. Concentrate on providing an adequate amount of food that is nutritious, respectful of culture, each child's likes/dislikes, the child's age and how many hours they are in care, for example:
 - Decide who will provide the snacks and/or lunch, either the facility or the parents, and work with the parents to ensure children are bringing nutritious lunches and snacks.
 - Offer children a variety of foods at snack and lunch, respecting their individual likes and dislikes.
 - Ensure that familiar foods are available when introducing a new food (some children must be exposed to a new food several times before enjoying it).
 - Feed infants and toddlers individually, or in small groups, and permit them to eat at their own pace.
 - Allow preschool and school age children to help in the planning and preparation of snacks and meals.
 - Respect that children's appetites vary, and what they have eaten before they arrived may have an impact on this.
6. Respect each child's choices around food and provide a safe environment during snacks and meals through active supervision, for example:
 - Participate in a variety of ways when children are eating and drinking. This will ensure safety, learning and a built-in opportunity to make personal connections with children of all ages.
 - Do not use food to punish, reward, or for making "deals" with children.
 - Remember that the what, where and when of food is provided by parents and staff. The whether child eats and how much food they is their responsibility.
 - Do not praise or scold children for the amount of food they eat, or for the type of food their parents have provided.

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7. Consider communicating to parents that water is the preferred drink at your facility (unless it is an infant program) (for example: have a water cooler, or jug with single use cups. If juice is offered, serve 100% fruit juice, and only provide ½ cup, no more than once a day).
8. Each child care facility should develop a method to ensure that parents are informed regarding the food and drink given to their child each day, for example:
 - Post a message to parents stating what was served at snack/lunch each day, or
 - Inform each parent verbally of the foods served to their child when the parents arrive for pick-up.

Section 56 of the Child Care Licensing Regulation states:

- (1) A licensee must keep current records of each of the following:
 - (e) written policies and procedures respecting food and drink to be given to children.

What your Licensing Officer will be looking for during a visit is that the facility has a written policy that describes for parents and the child care staff the specifics around the provision of healthy food and beverages. Consider the following when developing the policy:

- Using Canada's Food Guide as a resource.
- Are there any foods that you prefer that parents refrain from sending and what are the reasons for your request?
- Your program's strategies for promoting healthy eating habits and strong bodies.
- How you will promote regular communication between parents and staff regarding the children's experiences with food.
- Infant and toddler considerations, e.g. storage and preparation of their food and the introduction of new foods.
- How snack and mealtimes will be opportunities to support healthy eating habits, e.g. food is provided in small portions and children are not forced to eat certain foods before others.
- List of foods that will be available on special occasions and celebrations.
- How special dietary needs, allergies and sensitivities will be addressed.
- The provision of healthy beverages.
- Your plans to provide opportunities for nutrition education.
- How the facility will partner with parents regarding the introduction of new foods.
- What food and drink cultural experiences will be provided by your facility?

Note: many of the ideas gathered here are from the "Food Flair for Child Care" resource which can be accessed from the Licensing website: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/community-care-facilities-licensing/child-care-licensing>
To access Canada's Food Guide: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>.