

Guidelines

Guidelines are based on evidence and best practices. Guidelines are not mandatory but provide suggestions for recommended courses of action in regulated child care settings.

1.0 Family Involvement and Communication

Rationale: It is important for families and regulated child care settings to work together to ensure that young children eat well and develop positive attitudes towards healthy foods and nutrition. For these standards to be successful, it is important that families understand them and they support the efforts of the regulated child care settings to follow and implement it.

- 1.1 Regulated child care settings welcome families to participate in snacks and meals when possible.
- 1.2 Regulated child care settings provide families with recipes when requested.
- 1.3 Regulated child care settings invite families to participate in educational opportunities to learn about the Food and Nutrition Standards for Regulated Child Care Settings and the importance of healthy attitudes towards eating and nutrition in early childhood (e.g., Parent Teacher nights).
- 1.4 Staff and care providers create opportunities for families to share ideas and information on inclusive healthy food and nutrition practices, religious practices and cultural beliefs.
- 1.5 Regulated child care settings recognize the strengths and resources that parents and guardians can offer in enabling the setting to comply with the Food and Nutrition Standards for Regulated Child Care Settings.

2.0 Creating opportunities for children to learn about nutrition

Rationale: Children learn about food and nutrition through natural play experiences that emerge during the daily routine. Through observation and by listening to children, staff and care providers can build upon children's knowledge of and interest in healthy foods and nutrition. Through play and meaningful activities, children can explore and investigate their ideas about health and nutrition, building upon their interest and understanding of the importance of healthy eating and the wide variety of foods that may be found locally and around the world.

- 2.1 When opportunities occur naturally ("teachable moments") to share food and nutrition information with children, staff and care providers foster children's developing understanding of *healthy eating and food choices*.
- 2.2 Staff and care providers build upon and expand children's natural interest in food and nutrition concepts beyond meal and snack times (e.g., preparing food with the children, planting a garden, composting, opportunity for exploring foods and eating practices from other cultures, etc).
- 2.3 Children learn about breastfeeding as the natural and healthiest way to feed a baby.
- 2.4 Staff and care providers provide an environment that encourages learning, understanding and respect for diversity. Children have opportunities to learn about food and eating practices in many cultures.
- 2.5 Staff and care providers model and promote respectful practices toward food to ensure minimal food waste. Non-food items are used for art activities, sensory play and games.

3.0 Nova Scotia Produce and Products

Rationale: Nova Scotia produces an abundance of produce and food products. Buying food that is grown and produced within the province supports Nova Scotia agriculture and business and means that more money remains in the community. Locally grown, fresh food is often more nutritious if it is used shortly after harvest.

- 3.1 When possible, regulated child care settings serve local, seasonal food and beverages that are harvested, produced, or manufactured in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.

4.0 Food Packaging and Environmental Consciousness

Rationale: As future leaders and stewards of the earth, it is important for children to learn from an early age the importance of leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle. This encompasses an understanding of the value in composting and reducing waste. Nova Scotia is noted for its commitment to composting and recycling. Many communities and families teach their children the value of reducing, reusing and recycling. It is important to ensure that children receive consistent messages with respect to the environment in both home and child care settings.

- 4.1 Licensees encourage staff and care providers to find ways, to reduce consumer and food waste.
- 4.2 Licensees encourage and support staff and care providers to use energy-saving practices for food programs (e.g., energy saving equipment such as fridges and stoves that meet the Energy Star standard).
- 4.3 When possible, licensees ensure that staff and care providers use food-safe bulk containers rather than individual containers (e.g., pitchers/cartons of milk will be used rather than individual containers)
- 4.4 When possible, licensees ensure that staff and care providers use reusable plates and cutlery. When this is not possible, child care facilities ensure that plates can be recycled or composted.
- 4.5 Licensees strive to minimize food waste in regulated child care settings through appropriate menu planning and food preparation.

5.0 Food for Staff and Care Providers

Staff and care providers may bring food for their own consumption into the child care setting. It is important to recognize that children view adults as role models and often want to copy adult behaviour. Children will want to eat the same kinds of foods as they see the adults in their lives eating.

- 5.1 Regulated child care settings develop a clear policy for staff and care providers regarding foods brought into the setting. The policy must be consistent with all food-related policies and protocols that are in place.