

Childcare and children's health

HEALTH CARE INFORMATION FOR CHILDCARE STAFF AND FAMILIES
FROM THE ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, MELBOURNE

Food Safety Plans – What are they?

Over the last few years there has been an increased demand from federal, state, and local government regulators for organisations that provide and/or serve food to ensure the food is safe. Many food borne illnesses are caused by poor food handling practices during the preparation and/or serving stages. In July 2000, as a result of a number of well publicised food poisoning cases, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) (formerly ANZFA), introduced three national, uniform food safety standards which have been adopted by all Australian states and territories.

These standards are:

<i>Standard 3.1.1</i>	<i>Interpretation and Application</i>
<i>Standard 3.2.2</i>	<i>Food Safety Practices and General Requirements</i>
<i>Standard 3.2.3</i>	<i>Food Premises and Equipment</i>

A fourth standard *Standard 3.2.1 Food Safety Programs* was adopted as a model standard for each state and territory to decide if and when it brings it into law. (Currently, Victoria is the only state enforcing this standard.)

The National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc. (NCAC) manages three Quality Assurance (QA) Systems designed to promote a high standard of care in long day care centres, family day care schemes and outside school hours care services. Each of the QA Systems has a Quality Area/Element with a focus on health/nutrition/safety and requires documented policies that are in line with current/relevant health authority requirements.

All child care services are responsible for the health and well being of the children during the time they are in care. In order to meet each child's physical needs, and assist in the establishment of healthy lifelong eating habits and food attitudes, your service needs to ensure that food, provided by either your service or the families, is



nutritious, appetising, culturally and developmentally appropriate and above all SAFE.

Documentation of Food Safety Programs

Ensuring the safety of food consumed at your service is an essential part of protecting the health of children. The current trend in legislative and/or regulatory requirements is towards adopting a preventive, proactive, risk management approach and increasingly, children's services are being asked to provide *documented evidence* of how they meet their 'duty of care' and 'due diligence' requirements.

Therefore, all carers need to be aware of the risks associated with handling and serving food and all services need to implement and document procedures (sometimes referred to as *food safety programs* and/or *food safety plans*) to manage food safely.

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Your food safety plan does not need to be complicated. It should be based on HACCP Principles. HACCP is an acronym for Hazard Assessment (at) Critical Control Points and Critical Control Points (CCPs) are simply limits which define acceptable risks from unacceptable risks. Common CCPs are cleaning/hygiene and temperature controls.

To meet current regulatory requirements, there are six key areas you need to address in your food safety plans. They are:

1. *Hazard identification* – identify the potential hazards that may be reasonably expected to occur at each stage of the food handling cycle (for example at the ordering, delivery, storage, thawing, preparation, cooking, cooling, post cooking handling, reheating and/or serving stage of the food handling cycle).
2. *Control points and preventive measures* – identify what controls you can implement that will prevent, reduce or eliminate the hazard(s) from occurring. Typical control measures include: ordering/purchasing from reputable food suppliers, adequate refrigeration, regular calibration of thermometers, proper cooking techniques, effective cleaning techniques, hand washing, personal hygiene etc.
3. *Monitoring* – ensure the controls you have implemented are actually working. When developing a monitoring process it is important to identify what is being checked, how it is checked, when it is checked and by whom. Monitoring techniques may include temperature and/or time measurements; visual observation of use by dates, the cleanliness of work areas and equipment; stock rotation (for stored food) etc.
4. *Corrective action* – what you do when monitoring indicates there is a problem.
5. *Review* – regular reviews of your food safety plans are necessary to ensure your food safety plan is working effectively. Reviews should be undertaken at least once per year. A review of your plan should also be carried out when corrective action is required, or when you make a change to a procedure/process at any stage of your food handling cycle.
6. *Records* – records are a way of providing evidence that your food safety plan is being implemented, is working and is being monitored. They are also useful for assisting staff to know what is required and to audit for improvement.

Operating Procedures

As well, your food safety program should include a range of standard operating procedures that address more general hazard control and which underpin all of your food safety plans. You should consider documenting a procedure to address:

- staff training – to ensure relevant staff acquire/maintain/update their food safety skills
- personal hygiene – including hand washing, gloves, protective clothing, jewellery, hair etc.
- cleaning – a cleaning schedule should be documented for your equipment and work areas
- a pest control program – including prevention and elimination
- waste disposal
- calibration control – regular checks that your thermometers/microwave ovens etc. are operating correctly
- approved chemicals for use in food storage, handling and serving areas.

Remember food safety programs/plans are a means of preventing problems. There is no prescribed method for documenting your food safety plans - they should be simple, clear messages that are easy for staff to follow. A well designed food safety plan should include the following sub-headings:

- Hazard
- Preventive measures
- Control limits
- Monitoring procedures
- Corrective action
- Records
- Review date.

Getting Started on Food Safety Planning

If you haven't started documenting your food safety program you should:

- prepare a flow chart of the food handling cycle as it applies in your service
- determine areas of responsibility and the person(s) responsible
- document and implement your food safety program.

Make sure all aspects of the food handling cycle are covered and that the relevant staff understand what control measures have been implemented, how they are monitored and how often.

Once implemented,

- regularly review your program to ensure that it is effective and operating as it should.

Finally when employing new staff, make sure they are familiar with their obligation to maintain food safety and the food safety program operating at your service.

Further information relating to the food standards and food safety programs can be found at the following websites:

www.anzfa.gov.au

www.foodstandards.gov.au

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au (go to Services and Information Directory-Food Safety)

www.dpi.qld.gov.au/food

www.foodsmart.vic.gov.au

www.health.act.gov.au

www.health.nsw.gov.au

(go to A-Z Health Topics - F- Food Safety)

www.health.nt.gov.au (go to Topic- Food Hygiene)

www.healthysa.gov.au

www.wa.gov.au

For sample plans, templates and advice email:

nutrition@gowrie-sydney.com.au

QIAS Principles 7.1, 7.4.

FDCQA Principles 4.1.

Sue Tarrant

Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Sydney

Sun Protection in Early Childhood

Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world with 270,000 skin cancers treated every year. More than 1300 Australians die from skin cancer each year despite it being one of the most preventable cancers. Skin cancer is a major health issue; it is the most costly cancer for the Australian health system.

The early childhood years are a unique and critical developmental period in many respects, including the potential for sun damage from ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Most skin cancers are caused by exposure to UV radiation from the sun. Evidence shows that the more UV exposure children receive, the greater their risk of developing skin cancer in adulthood.

As skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, early childhood educators and parents have a responsibility to implement sun protection strategies for children's and their own long-term health.

Sun Protection Strategies for Early Childhood Services

- Clothing is the first line of defence against UV radiation damage. Longer style sleeves, skirts and pants, and collars made from close weave fabrics are recommended.
- Broad brimmed or legionnaire style hats provide the best protection for the face, neck and ears.
- Broad spectrum, water resistant SPF 30+ sunscreen is the last line of defence against UV radiation. Apply to exposed skin 20 minutes before going outdoors and re-apply every two hours. For infants under 1 year, clothing and hats rather than sunscreen are encouraged.
- Provide shady places for outdoor play e.g. verandahs, trees, sun sails, especially for infants.
- Schedule outdoor play times and excursions early or



late in the day to avoid the middle of the day when UV radiation is strongest.

- Encourage staff, parents and visitors to act as role models by practicing sun protection strategies.
- Use play experiences to reinforce the SunSmart message with young children. (The new national resource booklet 'Be SunSmart Play SunSmart' provides a range of play experiences)
- Educate staff and parents and reinforce the SunSmart message through policy, newsletters and displays.

The time of year for implementation of sun protection strategies varies from state to state. UV radiation levels relate to our proximity to the equator and change with the seasons. During the summer months, UV radiation levels are generally very high throughout Australia. Over the winter months, the UV levels are much lower in southern regions. For this reason, each state cancer council should be contacted regarding the appropriate times for implementation of sun protection strategies in early childhood services.

The current National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) accreditation systems for Long Day Care, Family Day Care and Out of School Hours Care require services to develop and implement a sun protection policy. Cancer councils across Australia can provide expertise to assist in this process. In particular, cancer councils in Victoria,

Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania have SunSmart accreditation programs for early childhood services. SunSmart accredited services receive regular bulletins, new resources and ongoing support from SunSmart. Also, in New South Wales, various regional cancer council offices conduct local SunSmart Child Care Award Programs.

For further information, details about the SunSmart accreditation programs or resources to promote sun protection please contact your local cancer council.

The Cancer Council Australia

Telephone (02) 9036 3100 Facsimile (02) 9036 3101
Web site: www.cancer.org.au

The Cancer Council South Australia

Telephone: (08) 8291 4111 Facsimile: (08) 8291 4122
Web site: www.cancersa.org.au
Email: tcc@cancersa.org.au

Queensland Cancer Fund

Telephone: (07) 3258 2200 Facsimile: (07) 3257 1306
Web site: www.qldcancer.com.au
Email: qldcf@qldcancer.com.au

Cancer Foundation of Western Australia

Telephone (08) 9212 4333 Facsimile: (08) 9212 4334
Web site: www.cancerwa.asn.au
Email: education@cancerwa.asn.au

The Cancer Council Victoria

Telephone: (03) 9635 5000 Facsimile: (03) 9635 5260
Web site: www.cancervic.org.au or
www.sunsmart.com.au

Email: sunsmart@cancervic.org.au

The Cancer Council ACT

Telephone: (02) 6262 2222 Facsimile: (02) 6262 2223
Web site: www.actcancer.org
Email: actcancer@actcancer.org

The Cancer Council Tasmania

Telephone: (03) 6233 2030 Facsimile: (03) 6233 2123
Web site: www.cancertas.org.au
Email: infotas@cancer.org.au

The Cancer Council NSW

Telephone: (02) 9334 1900 Facsimile: (02) 93269328
Web site: www.cancerCouncil.com.au
Email: suninfo@nswcc.org.au

The Cancer Council Northern Territory

Telephone: (08) 8927 4888 Facsimile: (08) 8927 4990
Web site: www.cancerCouncilnt.com.au
Email: uvstop@cancernt.org.au

Sue Elliott

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QIAS Principle: 8.2.

FDCQA Principle 4.2.

Editors Note: The Cancer Council Australia is working on a national position statement on Vitamin D and sun exposure. When this is available further advice will be published. As we are approaching the summer months all services across Australia need to implement the SunSmart strategies listed in the article.



Log into our website that has been designed to provide up to date information for parents and professionals working with young children.

This site will make it easier to find reliable information and encourage professionals to connect with one another through the mail list.

www.ecconnections.com.au

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