**Canossa Kindergarten**

**Background**

Healthy teeth and gums are necessary for general good health. They play an important part in the digestion of food, correct speech and self-confidence through enhancing our appearance. Keeping healthy primary (baby) teeth until they fall out naturally is crucial in maintaining the space for permanent (adult) teeth.

Given the number of children who attend childcare and the length of time they spend in care, childcare plays a significant role in the prevention of teeth and gum diseases in young children, and in the development of healthy teeth and gums. Further, childcare provides the ideal opportunity to instil in children long-term oral health habits.

**Policy statement**

The Service promotes good dental habits, and is also committed to minimising any risk to children’s dental health from food and drink consumed at the Service. The Service follows recommendations from Queensland Health (Oral Health Unit), and provides this information to families.

**Strategies and practices**

* The *Dental Health Policy* is explained to parents when they enrol their child in the Service, and their attention is specifically drawn to their responsibilities under this Policy. The *Dental Health Policy* is also included in the Parent Handbook given to all parents.

* The oral health message is promoted amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, verbal communication, parent-educator meetings, pamphlets and dental health educational materials such as Happy Teeth (Queensland Health), and the celebration of Dental Awareness Month (August). Due consideration is given to home languages.
* Educators are provided with professional development opportunities in oral health and receive resources, such as the Happy Teeth Resource Kit, and updates from the Oral Health Unit (Queensland).
* Children are given water when thirsty.
* Parents are asked to provide healthy foods in their children’s lunchboxes, particularly fruit and vegetables for morning tea. Foods high in sugar in children’s lunchboxes are returned home, and educators may suggest alternatives.
* Children are encouraged to drink water or rinse their mouth out after eating.
* Educators use opportunities that arise during children’s play and at meal and snack times to talk to the children about dental health issues. The Service resources include plastic ‘healthy food,’ and toys and dolls with teeth. When appropriate to children’s interest and the program, educators intentionality teach children about looking after their teeth through activities such as: action songs and rhymes; books puzzles and games; food preparation; and, cooking experiences.
* To ensure that children receive early positive experiences, the Service arranges for dentists and appropriate allied dental health professionals to visit the Service to talk to the children about dental hygiene.

**Responsibilities of parents**

* To provide nutritious foods and drinks according to information contained in the *Dental Health Policy* and in the *Nutrition, Food and Beverages Policy*. Food and drinks brought from home should be nutritious, provide variety and follow current dietary guidelines.

**Procedure and forms**

* N/A

**Links to other policies**

* Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy
* Nutrition, Food and Beverage Policy

**Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011**

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| Regs | 77 | Health, hygiene and safe food practices  |

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|  QA | 2.1.2 | Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented |
|  | 2.1.3 | Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child |

**Sources**

* Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
* Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011hnh
* Queensland Health. *Happy Teeth Resource Kit.* <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/promo_programs/happy_teeth.asp> accessed 24 December 2017

**Further reading and useful websites**

* Centre for Community Child Health – [http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/](http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/%20%20)  accessed 24 December 2017
* Queensland Health. (2016). *Prevention and Promotion Programs and Resources.* <http://health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/promo_programs/> accessed 24 December 2017
* Queensland Health – [http://www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/) accessed 24 December 2017
* The Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne. *Childcare and children’s health: An information sheet for parents (Oral Health)* Vol 14 No 2 June 2011

<http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/CCH_Fact_Sheet_-_Oral_health.pdf> accessed 24 December 2017

**Policy review**

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service’s commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

**Version Control**

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| **Version** | **Date Reviewed** | **Approved By** | **Comments/Amendments** | **Next Review Date** |
| 1 | 8 January 2018 | Dr Brenda Abbey (Author) | Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.  |  |