FOOD STORAGE AND PREPARATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that all food provided, stored and served by Bilingual Care's staff is handled and prepared in accordance with food safety standards, to ensure it does not become unsafe or unsuitable for consumption. This policy and procedure aims to:

- protect consumers from foodborne illness and related health risks
- promote safe food handling practices in home and community settings
- support the health, wellbeing, dignity, and independence of consumers, and
- ensure compliance with relevant legislation, standards, and guidelines, including food safety standards and aged care quality requirements.

This policy and procedure covers all stages of food handling, including:

- purchasing and transport of food
- storage and temperature control
- preparation and cooking
- serving and consumption
- cleaning and waste disposal

It should be read in conjunction with Bilingual Care's *Mealtime Management and Providing Meals Policy and Procedure*, and applies to all staff, associated providers, contractors and volunteers involved in food provision, covering:

- meal preparation within a consumer's home
- assistance with cooking, reheating, and serving meals
- grocery shopping and food handling on behalf of consumers
- meal delivery services arranged or coordinated by [Business Name], and
- supporting consumers with safe food storage, including refrigeration and pantry management.

This policy and procedure meets relevant legislation, regulations, and Standards

Applicable Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

- *Standard 1. The Individual*
- *Standard 3. The Care and Services*
- *Standard 6. Food and Nutrition*

Policy

Bilingual Care is committed to maintaining high standards of hygiene and food safety across all services involving food handling and meal support. All food-related activities will be undertaken in a manner that minimises the risk of contamination and foodborne illness and supports the health and wellbeing of consumers.

Safe food handling practices will be consistently applied in accordance with relevant food safety legislation, guidelines, and best practice. This includes ensuring that all food is appropriately sourced, stored, prepared, transported, and served.

Food safety practices will be applied in a manner that respects consumer choice, independence, and cultural preferences while ensuring safety is not compromised.

Procedures

Personal Hygiene and Cleanliness

Staff are expected to report to work each day in clean clothing. Hair should be clean, tidy, and secured in place. Appropriate hair covering must be worn if hair is longer than shoulder length.

Clean gloves must be worn while preparing food and should be changed regularly.

Smoking, eating, and drinking are not allowed in areas where food is stored, prepared, or served.

Tongs or other appropriate utensils must be used in handling food where gloves are not appropriate.

Hands must be kept clean and must be washed regularly with soap and hot water, especially:

- when entering a food handling area
- before touching any cooked or prepared food and after handling raw food
- after using the toilet
- after having a cigarette or e-cigarette/using a vaping device
- after handling garbage or cleaning equipment and chemicals
- after using a handkerchief or tissue or stifling a sneeze or cough
- after handling money
- before resuming work after any break or change in work area or
- after touching hair, face, or other parts of the body.

Staff involved in food preparation should immediately report the following to the Managing Director:

- any skin irritations (eczema, dermatitis etc.) especially on the hands
- any stomach complaints or bowel conditions
- feeling generally unwell
- any changes in health which may affect their ability to perform duties and
- all cuts, scratches and wounds which may contaminate food.

Staff should report any observed practice by any other person that they believe to conflict with general hygiene standards to the Managing Director immediately, to rectify the problem.

Depending on the nature of the report/situation, the Managing Director will reallocate duties, if necessary, to ensure that food safety is not compromised and record any risks to safety in Bilingual Care's *Risk Register.*

All staff involved in food preparation and storage must familiarise themselves with this policy and procedure and follow all control measures to prevent food contamination/illness. Where further guidance is required, refer to the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* and *Safe Food Australia - A Guide to the Food Safety Standards*.

Storage

Where food is not consumed immediately after preparation, it must be stored in way that keeps it safe and suitable to eat. Staff must:

- keep storage areas clean, dry, and free of pests
- use food-safe containers, covers and packaging to protect food
- store potentially hazardous food at 5°C or colder – check it with a thermometer
- store raw food like meat and seafood separately or below ready-to-eat foods to avoid contamination from meat juices
- make sure frozen food stays frozen hard
- check that food packaging is undamaged
- not store food in warm or humid areas or in direct sunlight if this could spoil the food or make it unsafe
- store food, containers, and packaging off the ground and away from chemicals like cleaners and insect sprays and
- follow the manufacturer's storage instructions to be sure food stays safe and suitable for its expected shelf life. Generally, unpackaged, potentially hazardous, ready-to-eat food should not be stored for more than 5 days. Food containing raw or low-cooked eggs should generally not be kept longer than 24 hours.[1]

Staff must ensure that food prepared for consumers who require meal preparation (see the *Mealtime Management and Providing Meals Policy and Procedure*) are clearly labelled with the:

- consumer's name (if living with others)
- type of meal
- date the meal was prepared and
- date by which the meal should be consumed.

Labels must remain intact, legible, and unaltered.

The preparation date of all meals should be marked on their containers so staff can monitor their age and promote the consumption of older meals first.

Temperature Control

Staff must ensure that the temperature of potentially hazardous food is either at 5°C or colder or at 60°C or hotter when it is received, served, transported, or stored.

The following are examples of potentially hazardous foods:

- raw and cooked meat or foods containing meat, such as casseroles, curries, and

[1] Food Standards Australia New Zealand 2023, *Storing Food Safely*, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, accessed 29 March 2023, https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodsafety/standards/Pages/Storing-food-safely.aspx

lasagne
- dairy products, for example, milk, custard, and dairy based desserts
- seafood
- processed fruits and vegetables, for example, salads
- cooked rice and pasta
- foods containing eggs, beans, nuts, or other protein rich foods, such as quiche and soy products and
- foods that contain these foods, such as sandwiches and rolls.

Staff do not have to keep potentially hazardous food at any specified temperature when preparing it because that would be impractical, but they must keep the processing or preparation time as short as possible so that bacteria do not get a chance to multiply to dangerous levels or form toxins.

Previously cooked and cooled potentially hazardous food must be reheated rapidly to 60°C or hotter. Ideally, food should be reheated to 60°C within a maximum of two hours to minimise the amount of time that food is at temperatures that favour the growth of bacteria or formation of toxins.

Potentially hazardous foods should be cooled to 5°C or colder as quickly as possible. There may be food poisoning bacteria in the food even though it has been cooked. Faster cooling times limit the time when these bacteria can grow or form toxins.

Food must be cooled from 60°C to 21°C in a maximum of two hours and from 21°C to 5°C within a further maximum period of four hours. To chill food quickly, divide it into smaller portions in shallow containers, taking care not to contaminate the food in the process.

Supporting Consumers with Food Safety

Staff can support consumers to manage food safety risks within their own home through education, prompting, and practical assistance, while respecting individual choice, independence, and dignity. This can be achieved through, for example:

- giving simple and easy to understand information about checking use-by and best-before dates, safe reheating and safe food storage (e.g. fridge temperatures and keeping cooked and raw foods separate)
- encouraging groceries to be put away as soon as practical, particularly cold/frozen foods, and helping to organise food to reduce contamination risks (e.g. separate food from cleaning products)
- identifying spoiled or expired food and supporting the consumer to safely dispose of it (seek consent to dispose of items unless there is immediate health risk)
- prompting regular checks in a respectful way, e.g. “Would you like me to help you check what’s still good in the fridge?”
- following safe food handling practices when assisting with meal preparation and encouraging handwashing before cooking or eating
- supporting the consumer to use utensils to handle food and keep surfaces clean, and
- if pre-prepared meals are delivered (e.g. Meals on Wheels), encourage the consumer to place them promptly in the fridge/freezer and explain reheating instructions (and if appropriate, what and when to eat them).

Staff must respect the consumer’s right to make choices about their food, and provide advice rather than direction wherever possible. It is important to balance safety with independence by considering cultural food practices, personal practices and lifelong habits to decide how best to approach the consumer about identified food safety risks.

Reporting

Staff should be alert to potential food safety risks, such as frequent food spoilage, incorrect storage practices and confusion about food safety, and report concerns to the Managing Director, as per Bilingual Care's *Personal Care Policy and Procedure* or *Care Review Policy and Procedure*.

Incidents relating to infection control or infectious diseases should be reported in accordance with Bilingual Care's *Incident Management* policies and procedures.

Supporting Documents

Documents relevant to this policy and procedure include:

- *Care Review Policy and Procedure*
- *Infection Control Policy and Procedure*
- *Mealtime Management and Providing Meals Policy and Procedure*
- *Personal Care Policy and Procedure*
- *Consumer Incident Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Workplace Incident Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure*
- *Risk Register*

Monitoring and Review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at least three yearly by the Leadership Team. Reviews will incorporate staff, consumer, and other stakeholder feedback.

Bilingual Care's *Continuous Improvement Plan* will be used to record improvements identified and monitor the progress of their implementation. Where relevant, this information will be considered as part of Bilingual Care's service planning and delivery processes.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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