



Coronavirus Policy

Date adopted: 13th March 2020Date last reviewed:
05.09.2023Reviewed by:
Board of Management, Staff, FamiliesDate of next review:
05.09.2025

Policy context:

This policy relates to:

National Quality Standards.	<p>QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY</p> <p>2.1.1 Wellbeing and comfort Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.</p> <p>2.1.2 Health practices and procedures Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.</p> <p>2.2 Safety Each child is protected.</p>
Legislation/Act.	<p>National Law</p> <p>Section 167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Regulations</p> <p>77 Health, hygiene and safe food practices</p> <p>85 Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures</p> <p>86 Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness</p> <p>87 Incident, injury, trauma and illness record</p> <p>88 Infectious diseases</p> <p>90 Medical conditions policy</p> <p>93 Administration of medication</p> <p>110 Ventilation and natural light</p> <p>162 Health information to be kept in enrolment record</p> <p>168 Education and care service must have policies and procedures</p> <p>173 (2)(g) Prescribed information to be displayed- centre based service and family day care service, a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises or venue</p>

Documents related to this policy

Related policies	<p>This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Service policies:</p> <p>Sick Children Policy</p> <p>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy</p> <p>Medical Conditions Policy</p> <p>Handwashing Policy</p> <p>Health and Safety Policy</p> <p>Interactions with Children, Families and staff Policy</p> <p>Payment of Fees Policy Risk Management</p> <p>Medical Conditions Policy</p> <p>Nappy Change & Toileting Policy</p> <p>Payment of Fees Policy</p> <p>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</p> <p>Physical Environment Policy</p> <p>Sick Children Policy</p> <p>Work Health and Safety Policy</p>
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Forms or other organisational documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 Risk Assessment
References	Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations Fair Work Ombudsman 'Coronavirus and Australian Workplace laws' Federal Department of Health coronavirus information sheets National Quality Standard Work, Health and Safety Laws and Regulations Childcare Centre Desktop

Policy Review:	
Policy review frequency: This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Organisations Review Policy.	Responsibility for review: The Board of Management.
Where appropriate staff will be part of the review process.	
Documentation and communication: Policy documentation to be held in Policy and Procedure manuals. Where appropriate copies of new or reviewed policies will be given to staff, volunteers and families.	

Purpose

To provide consistency and clarity on the management of COVID-19 at Woy Woy Peninsula Community Childcare to children, families, educators, staff, management and visitors of the Service.

Rationale

Our Service has been responding to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic since March 2020 by implementing a range of explicit measures to manage the risk of COVID-19. Our duty of care and responsibilities to children, parents, families, educators and staff to provide a safe environment remain our priority.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still active in Australia, however management of COVID-19 in the community and workplace has changed significantly in each state and territory as the majority of the ECEC workforce is vaccinated and the Omicron COVID-19 variant is less severe than the original Delta strain.

However, Australia is currently seeing a third wave of COVID-19 due to sub variants BA.4 and BA.5. The chances of reinfection of COVID-19 is higher due to these sub variants being better able to evade immunity from vaccination. Vaccination, and booster vaccinations are still recommended to strengthen protection against COVID-19.

This policy has continued to be updated over the past few years to reflect current Public Health Orders related to vaccinations, wearing of face masks, and self-isolation for close contacts, use of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) and other COVIDSafe requirements.

Policy

This policy is guided by recommendations and health measures by the Australian Government, local Public Health Units and the Regulatory Authority in NSW to promote evidence-based COVIDsafe behaviours to help minimise the community transmission of COVID-19. The *National Guiding Principles*

for Managing COVID-19 in Schools and Early Education and Care Services state that ECEC services are essential and should remain open wherever possible in outbreak situations. ECEC workers are designated as 'essential workers' in all jurisdictions.

Our Service has a *COVID-19 Safe Plan* in place and a copy is available on our premises at all times.

Our Service has effective and systematic risk management processes in place to identify any possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices related to COVID-19. Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised these risks as are reasonably practicable. Control measures are reviewed in consultation with staff members and effectively communicated with families and visitors. Due to the constant changes in managing our Service during the pandemic, our approach to risk management is ongoing and fluid.

Our Service implements health and safety procedures as stated in the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (Fifth Edition) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council as part of our day-to-day operation of the Service. During the pandemic, we have increased our health and safety procedures by implementing a combination of COVID-safe practices including:

- adhering to mandated COVID-19 vaccinations for all ECEC staff and visitors (including booster vaccinations in state/territories where this is mandated by a PHO)
- maintaining an accurate workplace attendance register for all staff, parents, visitors at all times (including contact phone numbers) as per National Regulations
- wearing of face masks and other PPE (as required)
- ensuring staff maintain physical distancing of 1.5m from each other, especially in tea rooms (where possible)
- enhanced personal hand and respiratory hygiene for children, staff and parents (including cough and sneeze hygiene)
- improving ventilation in indoor spaces and adhering to any 'ventilation plans' implemented in schools or buildings as per your state/territory Public Health Unit advice
- where possible, moving lessons and activities to outdoors to reduce transmission between groups
- Managing situations where children are required to queue- waiting their turn to use bathroom for handwashing or toileting, waiting their turn to use a piece of equipment etc.
- full adherence to the NHMRC childcare cleaning guidelines and cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces at least twice daily, washing and laundering play items and toys
- restricting the number of visitors to our service
- communicating with parents of children who have chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression as they may be at an increased risk of disease and require additional ongoing support/care
- conducting COVID-safe risk assessments for any group outings to public places (excursions to local shops, schools, libraries)
- conducting COVID-safe risk assessments for any large group celebrations and adhering to [your state/territory] restrictions for groups size, square metre allowance and other measures

Mandatory Vaccinations for COVID-19 in ECEC settings

As children aged 0-4 years are not currently eligible for COVID-19 vaccination, reinforcing prevention strategies in ECEC settings is a priority. Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Each State/Territory have had their own Public Health Orders related

to mandatory vaccinations for education and care services. While no longer mandated, decisions about vaccination can be made at a local level based on the requirements of each service.

Handwashing/personal hygiene measures

Effective handwashing remains a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Our Service will ensure:

- all employees, parents, children and visitors must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser provided upon arrival to the Service
- educators and staff must adhere to our Handwashing Policy at all times o children are supervised when washing hands
- educators and staff must adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures
- educators will wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitiser, before wearing gloves and wash their hands after wearing gloves
- hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- cough and sneeze etiquette must be used- cover your cough and sneeze with your hand or elbow

Managing a positive case of COVID-19

Testing and isolation are no longer mandatory in ECEC settings as per the updated health advice and National Protocols.

To assist our service manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 (especially the Omicron and other sub variants) management will:

remind families that any person (employee, enrolled child, parent, caregiver, visitor or contractor) who is displaying symptoms such as: **fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath**, should have a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test and not attend our Service **under any circumstance until they receive a negative test result.**

In the event of a positive case, management will:

- follow ECEC service actions/guidance provided by state regulatory authority
- ensure daily attendance records for staff, children and visitors are up to date
- provide Health Fact Sheets to families (NSW Health fact sheet for families)
- provide information about getting tested for COVID-19
- conduct a thorough clean of the service

National Protocols require:

- any person who tests positive to COVID-19 to inform their workplace/employer, school and early childcare facility and any other social contact they have spent time with from the 2 days they started having symptoms or 2 days before they tested positive. COVID-19 can be confirmed by a positive Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) or a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.
- register positive test results (refer to each State/territory Health Department)
- Anyone who tests positive to COVID-19 to stay at home until acute symptoms have gone and in the case of high risk settings for at least 7 days from the day they test positive.

Close Contacts

Updates have been made to the 'close contact' requirements in most states and territories [May 2022].

Close contacts are required to:

- wear a face mask at all times when outside the home
- undertake rapid antigen tests on 5 during the 7 days after exposure OR test for COVID-19 if symptoms develop
- not attend vulnerable settings for 7 days unless in exceptional circumstances
- work from home where possible
- notify employer, early childcare setting or education setting

State Specific Information

NSW	Managing COVID cases (nsw.gov.au) NSW Health household and close contact guidelines NSW Government
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Unwell children at our Service

As per our Sick Child Policy we reserve the right to refuse a child into care if they:

- have a contagious illness or infectious disease
- have been in close contact with someone who has a positive confirmed case of COVID-19 and display COVID symptoms [or are unable to provide a negative RAT test- [check your state/territory requirements] [See changes to close contact requirements]
- are unwell and unable to participate in normal activities or require additional attention
- have had a temperature/fever, or vomiting in the last 24 hours
- have had diarrhoea in the last 48 hours
- have been given medication for a temperature prior to arriving at the

What happens if our Service is forced to close?

The current health advice is that ECEC services should continue to remain open unless otherwise directed with risk mitigation measures in place. (DESE, 2022). Any decision to temporarily close our Service will be made in collaboration with our Regulatory Authority and all families will be notified immediately via email and/or phone.

The Approved Provider must notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of any closure via the NQA IT System and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software provider.

Caring for a family member or emergency

If an employee cannot attend work due to caring for a family member due to COVID-19, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave. Casual employees are eligible to have 2 days unpaid carer's leave

per occasion. See Fair Work Act for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees. Reasonable evidence is required to justify the absence.

Waivers

The Approved Provider may apply to the Regulatory Authority for waivers for staff qualifications to minimise disruptions to our provision of care. Waivers for ratios will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Waivers will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Talking to children about COVID-19

As per our Interactions with Children Policy, our Service is committed to maintaining positive interactions and relationships with children and their families. Information provided to children about COVID-19 will be age appropriate and sensitive to their emotional wellbeing. Educators will both acknowledge children’s concerns and be open to discussions about COVID-19.

Communicating with families

Our Service will continue to provide regular communication with families and share information about COVID-19 as required. Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the necessity for some staff members to be absent to care for their own children, our Service will endeavour to inform parents and families of any staff changes on a daily basis.

Caring for our community

Our Service is committed to continue to provide quality education and care to all children and support families responsibly during these unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowing how to look after yourself, and others is very important during this crisis.

We will promote a safe and supportive environment by:

- reassuring children they are safe
- acknowledging and listening to children’s questions
- promoting and implementing hygiene routines for handwashing and cough and sneezing
- keeping regular and familiar routines within our Service
- ensuring children eat well throughout the day
- engaging children in play, games and other physical activities
- being alert to children’s level of anxiety and provide quiet and relaxing activities
- ensuring children are provided with rest and sleep when needed
- providing information to families and support services as required

Disclaimer

The information contained in this policy is based on current information from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Government- The Treasury, Family Assistance Law and Fairwork Ombudsmen (27 July 2022)

Information and resources

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line	1800 020 080 Call 131 450 for translating and
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	interpreting service
Health Direct	1800 022 222
Local state and territory health departments Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care	