

DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES

POLICY

The Education and Care Services National Regulations require early childhood education and care services implement specific strategies to minimise the spread of infectious illness and maintain a healthy environment for all children, staff, educators and families. The spread of infections in the early childhood environment is facilitated by microbial contamination of the environment, as well as the greater exposure to young children who are still developing hygienic behaviours and habits. Our Service will minimise children's and staff's exposure to infectious diseases by adhering to all recommended guidelines from relevant government authorities regarding the prevention of infectious diseases, promoting practices that reduce the transmission of infection, ensuring the exclusion of sick children and educators, supporting child immunisation, and implementing effective hygiene practices.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
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.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration - safety, rights and best interests of children
Sec. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
Sec.174(2)(a)	Serious incident- any emergency for which emergency services attended
12	Meaning of serious incident
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
83	Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures

86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases
89	First aid kits
90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
173	Prescribed information to be displayed
175(2)(c)	Prescribed information to be notified to the Regulatory Authority- (2) any circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of Medication Policy Bottle Safety and Preparation Policy Child Protection Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Code of Conduct Policy Dental Health Policy Enrolment Policy Family Communication Policy Governance Policy Hand Washing Policy Health and Safety Policy	Immunisation Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Medical Conditions Policy Nappy Change and Toileting Policy Physical Environment Policy Pregnancy in Early Childhood Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Children encounter many other children and adults within the Service environment which can result in the contraction of infectious illnesses. Our Service has a duty of care to ensure that children, families, educators, and visitors of the Service are provided with a high level of protection during the hours of the Service's operation. We aim to minimise cross contamination and the spread of infectious illnesses by implementing best practice and high standards of personal hygiene, infection control and supervision while supporting children's emotional wellbeing during illness and exclusion periods.

This policy communicates clear directions and guidance about protocols and actions to be followed to avoid adversely affecting the safety and health of children, other staff members and visitors to the service. A simple, safe and effective way of protecting individuals and others within the community against harmful diseases is immunisation. All decisions relating to illness management, exclusion, outbreak response and attendance during infectious disease risks are guided by the paramount consideration of children's safety, health, rights and best interests.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, educators, staff, visitors, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the approved provider must ensure policies and procedures are in place in relation to dealing with infectious diseases. (ACECQA, August 2021).

Our Service is committed to minimise the spread of infectious diseases and viruses by implementing recommendations as stated in the [Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services \(6th Edition\)](#) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council and advice provided from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

We are guided by decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases by the *Australian Government- Department of Health* and local Public Health Units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act.

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded from the Service depends on:

- how easily the infection can spread
- how long the person is likely to be infectious and
- the severity of the infectious disease or illness.

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Quality Area 2 policies:

- Immunisation Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy and

- Handwashing Policy
- Child Protection Policy

Infectious disease management practices will be implemented in a manner that upholds child safe principles, including adequate supervision, respectful interactions, protection of children's dignity and privacy, and emotional wellbeing, particularly when children are isolated or unwell.

DEFINITION OF AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE

In relation to a participating jurisdiction, means an infectious disease that is designated under a law of that jurisdiction or by a health authority (however described) as a disease that would require a person with the disease to be excluded from an education and care service (Definitions- Education and Care Services National Regulations).

PREVENTING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Children enter education and care services when their immune systems are still developing. They have not been exposed to many common germs and therefore are susceptible to bacteria that may cause infections. Given the close physical contact children have with other children in early childhood and care, it is very easy for infectious diseases and illnesses to spread through normal daily activities as germs can be picked up directly from an infected person or from the environment. It is important to understand that an infected person may not show any signs or symptoms of illness.

Our Service implements rigorous hygienic practices to limit the spread of illness and infectious diseases including:

- immunisation- for children and adults
- effective hand washing hygiene
- respiratory hygiene- cough and sneeze etiquette
- appropriate use of gloves and other PPE
- exclusion of children, educators or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus
- effective environmental cleaning including toys, resources and bedding
- encouraging use of the outdoors environment
- requesting parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure at the Service
- ensuring adequate ventilation

- encouraging children, educators or staff to seek medical attention if they show symptoms of an infectious disease or virus, including COVID-19.

IMMUNISATION REQUIREMENTS

- Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent many childhood infectious diseases. Unvaccinated children due to their parent's conscientious objection are no longer able to be enrolled in approved early childcare services.
- Children who cannot be fully vaccinated due to a medical condition or who are on a recognised catch-up schedule may still be enrolled upon presentation of the appropriate form signed by a medical practitioner who meets the criteria stated by the Australian Government.
- Only parents of children who are fully immunised, are on a recognised catch-up schedule or have an approved medical exemption recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) can receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS). The relevant vaccinations are those under the *National Immunisation Program* (NIP), which covers the vaccines usually administered before age five. These vaccinations must be recorded on the AIR
- Educators and other staff at our Service are highly recommended to keep up to date with all immunisations including yearly influenza vaccinations. These include vaccinations recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The Australian Government recommends all people over the age of 6 months have an annual Influenza (flu) vaccine and all adults receive COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters.
- Staff are required to provide an *Immunisation History Statement* from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) and/or records from their general practitioner to management for their staff record.
- Vaccination is important as not only can staff members catch a potentially serious infection such as measles or whooping cough, but they could also then inadvertently pass it onto children in their care who are too young to have had their vaccinations or to women who may be pregnant.

EXCLUDING CHILDREN FROM THE SERVICE

Excluding individuals who may transmit infection is essential to reducing the spread of illness within education and care services.

Decisions regarding exclusion and exclusion periods will be based on:

- the type of infection

- the presence and severity of symptoms
- how easily the infection spreads
- the period of infectiousness
- The Service will refer to current advice from the Public Health Unit (PHU) and *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th edition)* to determine appropriate exclusion requirements.
- Children, staff, and visitors displaying symptoms of illness—even where exclusion is not formally required—are encouraged to remain at home and seek medical advice if symptoms are ongoing or concerning.
- Where an infectious disease is suspected or confirmed, the Service will notify families by displaying relevant information, including symptoms, infectious period, and required exclusion timeframes, in accordance with recognised health guidelines.
- In the event of a vaccine-preventable disease:
 - children who are not fully immunised will be excluded from care
 - unvaccinated staff will be notified and excluded as appropriate
 - immunisation records will be reviewed and families informed as required
- Exclusion requirements for gastrointestinal illness are as follows:
 - individuals with diarrhoea and/or vomiting must be excluded until symptom-free for at least 24 hours
 - where norovirus is confirmed, exclusion must continue until symptom-free for at least 48 hours
 - staff involved in food handling must be excluded for at least 48 hours after symptoms cease

REPORTING OUTBREAKS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY (REG. 175 (2) (C))

Outbreaks of communicable diseases pose a significant risk to public health. Public Health Units (PHUs) monitor infectious diseases and work with health professionals to prevent transmission within the community.

In accordance with public health legislation, authorised professionals—including doctors, hospitals, laboratories, school principals, and childcare service providers—must confidentially notify the PHU of specified infectious diseases and provide required information. PHUs may contact relevant parties to support disease control and complete data collection.

The Service will ensure all notifications and communications protect the privacy of children, families, and staff in accordance with applicable privacy legislation and the Service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy. Information will only be disclosed where lawfully required or authorised.

The Approved Provider must notify the local PHU by telephone as soon as practicable (within 24 hours) upon becoming aware that a child enrolled at the Service has a vaccine-preventable disease, including:

- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
- Measles
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Meningococcal disease
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Rubella (German measles)
- Tetanus

Notification is also required for outbreaks of gastroenteritis where two or more cases occur.

The Service will monitor advice and alerts issued by PHUs and the Australian Government Department of Health and follow recommended guidance in managing infectious disease outbreaks.

The Approved Provider must also notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of any notifiable infectious disease or illness that poses a risk to the health, safety, or wellbeing of children

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL ENSURE:

- The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will ensure:
 - compliance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
 - all educators, staff, students, volunteers and visitors are aware of and follow this policy and associated procedures
 - this policy is provided to new staff during induction and made available to families at enrolment
 - children's health and safety are protected through effective implementation of health and hygiene practices
 - Immunisation History Statements (AIR) are collected, maintained and kept up to date for each child
 - staff immunisation records are maintained, including history of illness and vaccinations
 - practices align with *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th Edition)* and advice from recognised authorities (e.g. Australian Government Department of Health)
 - required notifications to the Public Health Unit (PHU) are made promptly for:
 - vaccine-preventable diseases
 - outbreaks of gastroenteritis (defined as two or more cases of vomiting/diarrhoea within 48 hours), including documentation of cases, onset and duration
 - families are notified of infectious diseases as soon as practicable while maintaining confidentiality, using appropriate communication methods (e.g. verbal, written, electronic, or notices)
 - families are encouraged to inform the Service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness

- accurate daily attendance records are maintained for children, staff and visitors
- effective infection control practices are implemented, including:
 - hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
 - safe nappy changing and toileting procedures
 - environmental cleaning and hygiene practices
 - educator role modelling and child education on hygiene practices
- families are provided with current information on:
 - immunisation requirements and schedules
 - exclusion guidelines
 - infectious disease alerts and prevention strategies
- confidentiality of children's and families' medical information is maintained
- staff have access to current professional information and learning opportunities regarding infection control, including engagement with health professionals where appropriate
- children who are unwell are excluded from attendance and only return once well (generally at least 24 hours symptom-free)
- exclusion periods recommended by health authorities are followed
- illness and infectious disease incidents are documented within 24 hours (Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness records)
- practices are reviewed following any outbreak to identify improvements
- staff with diarrhoea or infectious illness do not handle food and do not return to work until symptom-free for at least 24 hours
- risks to children or staff with complex medical needs are assessed and managed, including consideration of attendance during outbreaks

EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- children suspected of having an infectious illness are supported, with their health, safety and emotional wellbeing prioritised
- unwell children are separated from others, appropriately supervised, and families are contacted for prompt collection
- child safe practices are maintained at all times, including respectful interactions, maintaining dignity, privacy, and appropriate physical contact when providing care
- supervision is adjusted as required during periods of increased illness or outbreaks to ensure children's safety
- appropriate infection control measures are implemented when caring for unwell children, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and masks where required
- environments, equipment and resources used by unwell children are cleaned and disinfected thoroughly
- families are informed of their responsibility to collect unwell children as soon as practicable
- their own immunisation status is current and any updates are communicated to the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor
- children are actively supported to develop and practice effective hygiene habits, including hand washing and respiratory etiquette
- daily routines and groupings of children are planned to minimise the risk of infection transmission
- the Service's Health and Safety Policy is followed at all times, including:
 - effective hand hygiene practices

- use of gloves when in contact with bodily fluids
- safe food handling and preparation
- routine cleaning and environmental hygiene
- use of face masks where required by health authorities
- ensuring adequate ventilation
- knowledge of health, hygiene and infection control is maintained through ongoing professional development
- bedding is cleaned after each use and disinfected where contamination is suspected
- playdough and sensory materials are managed hygienically, including:
 - preparation of fresh playdough weekly
 - suspension of use during outbreaks of infectious illness
 - ensuring hand washing before and after use

PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR MINIMISING THE SPREAD OF DISEASE WITHIN OUR SERVICE

STAFF AND EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- a clean and hygienic environment is maintained in accordance with *Staying Healthy* cleaning guidelines
- appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), including wearing and cleaning utility gloves between uses
- surfaces are cleaned with detergent and water prior to disinfection
- high-touch surfaces (e.g. door handles, tables, light switches, equipment) are cleaned daily and more frequently during outbreaks
- bodily fluid incidents (e.g. vomit, faeces, urine) are managed safely using appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures
- contaminated clothing is placed in a sealed bag labelled with the child's name for collection
- cleaning equipment (e.g. cloths, mops) is colour-coded and used for designated areas to prevent cross-contamination
- toys and equipment are cleaned and maintained hygienically, including:
 - immediate removal and cleaning of mouthed toys
 - routine (at least weekly) cleaning of all toys, with records maintained
 - appropriate cleaning methods for washable and non-washable items
 - maintaining a toy cleaning register
- dummies are stored hygienically, kept out of reach, and not shared between children
- cleaning procedures are documented using the Service's Cleaning Checklist
- soft furnishings (e.g. cushions) have removable covers and are laundered regularly or when contaminated
- floors are cleaned daily, including after meals
- bathrooms and toileting areas are cleaned at least twice daily and as required, using detergent followed by disinfectant
- bedding and surfaces contaminated by bodily fluids are cleaned and disinfected appropriately
- additional cleaning and hygiene measures are implemented during outbreaks to reduce transmission risk
- pregnant staff are informed of workplace health risks (including Cytomegalovirus) and appropriate risk management strategies are implemented, such as modifying duties to reduce exposure to high-risk activities

FAMILIES WILL:

- adhere to and support the Service's policies regarding *Dealing with Infectious Diseases, Immunisation, Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness* and exclusion requirements
- alert the Service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness, including COVID-19
- exclude their child from care for the recommended minimum exclusion period if they display symptoms of an infectious illness or disease [Exclusion for common or concerning conditions](#)
- adhere to exclusion periods in the event of a vaccine preventable disease occurring in the Service and their child is not fully immunised
- adhere to the Service's restrictions of entry into the Service in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus
- adhere to the Service's policy regarding *Hand Washing*
- advise the Service of their child's immunisation status, by providing a current Immunisation History Statement recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) for the Service to copy and place in the child's file
- advise the Service when their child's medical management plan is updated
- provide sufficient spare clothing, particularly if the child is toilet training
- adhere to the Service's risk minimisation strategies if their child has complex medical needs in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus.

RESOURCES

[Gastro Pack NSW Health](#)

[Common cold fact sheet](#)

[Exclusion for common or concerning conditions](#)

NSW Health [Stopping the spread of childhood infections factsheet.](#)

Pregnancy Birth and Baby. [Cytomegalovirus \(CMV\) during pregnancy.](#)

[RSV Fact Sheet](#)

[Time Out Keeping your child and other kids healthy!](#) (Queensland Government)

Time Out Brochure [Why do I need to keep my child at home?](#)

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with children, families, staff, educators and management.

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2021). [*Dealing with infectious diseases Policy and procedures guidelines.*](#)

Department of Human Resources: [National Immunisation Program Schedule](#)

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations.](#) (Amended 2023).

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2024). [*Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services. 6th Edition.*](#)

NSW Government. Department of Education. [Managing COVID cases](#)

NSW Government Department of Health. [Vaccination requirements for child care.](#)

Public Health Act 2010

Public Health Amendment Act 2017

Public Health Regulation 2012

Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria

Safe Work Australia

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Celeste Shaw	Quality & Compliance Partner	
POLICY REVIEWED	MARCH 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	MARCH 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V19.03.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • definition of Infectious Disease added to policy • review of practices is conducted following an outbreak of an infectious disease added		