

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MANAGEMENT POLICY

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that was originally identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared that COVID-19 outbreak as a 'pandemic' - a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (effective 11 March 2020). This is mainly due to the speed and scale of transmission of the virus in countries around the world, including Australia.

COVID-19 is transmitted from someone who is infected with the virus to others in close contact through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing or by contact with contaminated hands or surfaces. According to Department of Health, the time of exposure to the virus and when symptoms first occur is anywhere from 2-14 days.

Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID-19 may experience:

- fever
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue
- shortness of breath

The [Australian Government](#) is constantly updating the current status of COVID-19 including health recommendations, travel restrictions, and a vast collection of resources and information to help people make informed decisions.

As this information is changing rapidly, our Service is constantly monitoring health alerts and implementing measures suggested by key health experts to minimise the transmission of COVID-19.

Our Service has a range of comprehensive policies in place to guide best practice in relation to health and safety, dealing with infectious diseases and maintaining a child safe environment. Our duty of care and responsibilities to children, parents, families and all staff to provide a safe environment is of utmost importance.

The evolving nature of COVID-19 and the unprecedented steps required to protect our community as recommended by the Australian Government, has resulted in the development of a specific policy to assist our Service manage this pandemic.

This policy will change as required to ensure the protective measures against COVID-19 as advised by our government are implemented by our Service.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
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 REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
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
90	Medical conditions policy
93	Administration of medication
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record

RELATED POLICIES

Control of Infectious Diseases Policy Family Communication Policy Hand Washing Policy Health and Safety Policy Immunisation Policy Incident, Illness, Accident & Trauma Policy Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy	Medical Conditions Policy Nappy Change & Toileting Policy Payment of Fees Policy Physical Environment Policy Sick Children Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Our Service will minimise children’s exposure to COVID-19 by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the Australian Government- Department of Health and local Public Health Units to slow the spread of the virus. We will implement practices that help to reduce the transmission of the virus including the exclusion of any person (child, educator, staff, parent, visitor or volunteer) that is suspected or has tested positive to having COVID-19. Our Service will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures.

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government, Department of Health and state Ministry of Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Health Department will be strictly adhered to at all times.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus by implementing recommendations provided by the [Australian Government- Department of Health](#).

Our Service implements 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.

We are guided by explicit decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of any infectious disease by the *Australian Government- Department of Health* and local Public Health Units in our jurisdiction under the **Public Health Act**. COVID-19 is a notifiable condition in all states and territories of Australia.

In the event of any child, educator, staff member or visitor attending our Service who is suspected or confirmed to have the infection, the Approved Provider will contact their Public Health Unit.

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line
1800 020 080 Call 131 450 for translating and interpreting service
Public Health Unit- Local state and territory health departments

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Service policies:

- Sick Children Policy
- Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy and
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Handwashing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Interactions with Children, Families and staff Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy

Minimising the transmission of COVID-19

Effective 15 March 2020, the *Australian Health Protection Principal Committee* has made recommendations to the general public to help manage the spread of COVID-19. These measures include implementing good hygiene, self-isolation and social distancing.

Our Service will ensure hand hygiene posters and procedures (including alcohol-based hand sanitiser) and information about COVID-19 is clearly displayed at the front entry and communicated to families through email, newsletters and social media. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser will be kept out of reach of young children and only available for adults to use. If parents decide to apply this to their child, they must supervise the child to avoid rubbing it into their eyes or a child swallowing the gel/liquid.

Information provided to families may include:

- symptoms of COVID-19
- transmission of the virus
- self-isolation and exclusion
- prevention strategies- including hygiene and self-isolation
- contact details for health assistance
- payment of fees

Our Service will supply disposable tissues and have bins available with plastic liners available in several locations for disposing used items.

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, families and visitors will comply with the following:

Exclusion/ Self-isolation/ Self-quarantine

- any person employed or visiting our Service must sign a statement confirming that they have not returned from overseas travel in the past 14 days prior to entering the Service

- effective 16 March 2020, any person entering Australia from any destination, will be required to self-isolate for 14 days
- any person who has been in close contact with someone who has a positive diagnosis, or suspected diagnosis of the virus, must self-isolate for 14 days
- household members of a person (including children) who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 must also be isolated from the childcare Service and general public
- the Public Health Unit will provide further information on a case-by-case basis as to the length and place of isolation. (see: [COVID-19 home isolation](#))
- families must immediately advise the Service if they, or anyone in their family, develops any symptoms of the virus or receives a positive result of the virus whilst in isolation
- 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**, must seek urgent medical attention to determine if they need to be tested for COVID-19 and not attend our Service **under any circumstance**
- a medical certificate is not required to return to care following the 14 days of isolation.

Implement effective hygiene measures

The national campaign *Help Stop The Spread and Stay Healthy*, launched by the Australian Government has emphasised that effective handwashing is a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds whenever you cough, sneeze or blow your nose, prepare food or eat, touch your face or use the toilet is recommended.

Our Service will adhere to National Regulation requirements, and Government guidelines to ensure all educators, children, families and visitors to the Service implement best practice.

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
- Hands must be thoroughly dried using disposal paper and disposed of in the bin provided
- Disposable tissues must be used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use
- Hands must be washed following the use of tissues
- 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 into a tissue or elbow

- Educators and staff must adhere to our *Handwashing Policy* at all times
- 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
- Educators and staff must adhere to our *Health and Safety Policy* for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and equipment (such as toys, puzzles, outdoor toys, bedding, playdough etc) as per *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* recommendations
- Staff will maintain a cleaning register of all surfaces and equipment conducted
- Equipment, resources and surfaces including taps, door handles etc will be cleaned daily (or more frequently as required) using detergent and water followed by disinfectant
- Cleaning contractors hygienically clean the Service to ensure risk of contamination is removed as per [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#)

NOTE: According to the World Health Organisation, COVID-19 may survive on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. (March 14, 2020)

Social distancing in childcare

Social distancing is important because COVID-19 is most likely spread from person-to-person through close contact with a person while they are infectious, close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes or from touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection and then touching your nose or mouth. (source: Australian Government Department of Health. Coronavirus disease)

To reduce the spread of germs:

- If your child is sick, do not send them to our Service
- Do not visit our Service if you or another family member is unwell
- Sanitise your hands at regular intervals throughout the day and when entering our Service
- Avoid physical contact with other people who may be sick- such as older people and people with existing health conditions
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly (door handles, car seats, mobile phone, toys, dummies)
- Promote strictest hygiene measures when preparing food at home and at the Service

- Where possible, outdoor play will be promoted within our Service to provide children with additional personal space
- Large groups will be monitored to provide flexible learning to ensure groups are smaller in both the indoor and outdoor environment
- Ventilation within the Service will be increased
- Contact parents of children who have chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression as they may be at an increased risk of disease and require additional support/care
- Our Service will cancel all group outings to public places (excursions to local shops, schools, libraries, aged care facilities)
- Our Service will cancel large group celebrations (Easter, Grandparent's Day, special day celebrations)

Suspected cases of COVID-19 at our Service

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

- We have reasonable grounds to believe that a child has a contagious or infectious disease (this includes COVID-19)
- 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 Service
- Have started a course of anti-biotics in the last 24 hours

If your child becomes ill whilst at the Service, educators/staff will respond to their individual symptoms of illness and provide comfort and care.

Educators will take your child's temperature. If the temperature is above 38°C you will be contacted immediately and required to collect your child within 30 minutes. If you are unable to collect your child, an emergency contact person will be contacted, and they must collect your child within 30 minutes.

Educators will attempt to lower your child's temperature by:

- Removing excessive clothing (shoes, socks, jumpers)
- Encourage your child to take small sips of water
- Move your child to a quiet area where they can rest whilst being supervised

Educators will wear disposable gloves and a face mask to avoid possible contamination.

Educators will keep accurate records of the child's temperature, time taken, time parent/s were contacted, staff member's name and time of collection.

All information will be recorded in our *Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma* Record. Parents will be required to sign this record upon collection of their child.

Parents are reminded to ensure their contact details are current and emergency contact details are updated if required.

Our Service also reserves the right to prevent employees, parents, family members or visitors to enter our premises if the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor suspects instances of COVID-19.

Notification

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor is mandated by law to notify the Public Health Unit or [Health Information hotline](#) on **1800 020 080** of any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. In addition, the Approved Provider must also notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) in their state or territory within 24 hours.

Management reserves the right to request employees to self-isolate if they suspect they have come into contact with someone who has a confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Talking to children about COVID-19

As per our *Interactions with Children, Families and Staff 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.

Educators will inform children about the virus and emphasise preventative measures such as handwashing, use of tissues, cough and sneeze techniques and limiting touching other children's faces.

Posters to demonstrate correct handwashing methods will be referred to and educators will model techniques.

Children's emotional well-being will be closely monitored by all educators and staff and any concerns communicated with parents and families.

Children's questions will be respected and supported.

In the event of the Service being closed as a precaution to limit the spread of the virus, information will be provided to parents/families to help explain the situation to young children.

Payment of Fees

Fees are payable to the Service for all enrolled children including pupil free days, sick days and family holidays. Child Care Subsidy can only be paid where services are open and providing care. The only exclusion is for public holidays or when a period of local emergency has been declared (eg: bushfire).

If a child does not attend the Service as a precautionary measure, payment of fees is still required.

Absences from childcare – Child Care Subsidy

Whether a child is ill or not and does not attend care as part of the family's own precautionary measure against potential contact with COVID-19, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) can be paid for up to 42 absence days per child, per financial year without the need for families to provide documentation.

Once a child's 42 initial absences have been used, CCS can be paid for additional absences for a reason including illness from COVID-19 or where self-isolation is supported by a medical certificate. (see: Child Care Package Handbook).

If a child is not ill, and does not attend care, due to the family's own precautionary measure against contracting COVID-19, some medical practitioners (GP) may support families by providing a medical certificate if required. **Fees will still be payable if the child does not attend the Service.**

If a child is not ill and does not attend care for a longer period, the family may wish to follow the established advice around longer absences (as set out in the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#), noting that an enrolment automatically ceases when a child does not attend care for 14 weeks).

Families who care unsure about sending their child to child care for possible COVID-19 related reasons, should contact the National Coronavirus Health Hotline on 1800 020 080 for advice.

[source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment Version 1 (12/3/2020)]

What happens if our Service is forced to close?

The decision to close our Service will be made, and advised, by relevant state and territory governments or the Regulatory Authority. This may be due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our Service community.

Should this occur, all families will be notified immediately via email or phone.

The Approved Provider will notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) within 24 hours of any closure via the [NQA IT System](#)

As childcare cannot be offered if our Service is forced to close, fees cannot be charged as per Family Assistance Law.

Staff entitlements if sick or suspected to have COVID-19

Under workplace health and safety laws, our Service must ensure the health and safety of all employees.

Confirmed COVID-19

If an educator or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19, they are unable to attend the workplace and cannot return unless **they have a clearance from a General Practitioner of Public Health Unit.**

Full and part-time employees who cannot attend work due to illness can take paid sick leave.

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.

Self-isolation due to travel

As per Australian Government's new measures for COVID-19 effective 16 March 2020, any person returning from overseas must self-isolate for at least 14 days. The employee **is not entitled** to be paid (unless they use paid leave entitlements).

Self-Isolation directed by Service

Where an employee is directed to stay home and self-isolate, and the employee is not sick and able to work, **our Service will continue** to pay the employee as per their contract.

Should our Service be requested to close for a period of time due to COVID-19, permanent employees will be paid.

Self-isolation as a precaution

If an employee wants to stay home as a precaution of contracting COVID-19 they may negotiate to take unpaid leave, annual leave or long service leave with Management.

Employees who are stuck overseas or in quarantine

If an employee cannot return to Australia due to the COVID-19 virus, they must contact the Approved Provider immediately. Management will negotiate payment considering accrued sick leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.

Waivers

In the event of staff members requiring to self-isolate due to possible infection of COVID-19, the Approved Provider will apply to the Regulatory Authority for waivers for qualifications and/or ratios to minimise disruptions to our provision of care.

Community Child Care Fund Special Circumstance Grant Opportunity

To ensure services impacted by COVID-19 can continue to operate and provide continuity of care, in communities, Services can access funding to help cover business costs, including wages. The amount of funding will be determined on a case-by-case basis and includes Family Day Care educators. Further information is available through the [CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity](#) webpage.

Communicating with families

Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the necessity of self-isolation for some staff members, our Service will endeavour to inform parents and families of any staff changes on a daily basis.

Staff who have approved leave will be replaced with casual staff and families will be informed as per our usual practices to ensure continuity of care where possible.

Caring for our community

We understand that the outbreak of COVID-19 and the constant amount of information received through the media may be very stressful to young children and parents. The anxiety about this disease may be overwhelming and cause fear and anxiety to some people, especially children.

Our Service is committed to continue to provide quality education and care to all children and support families responsibly during this unprecedented challenge with the COVID-19 outbreak.

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

Dr Michelle Dickinson- Video for kids about COVID-19

<https://youtu.be/OPsY-jLqaXM>

More information and resources

[UNICEF- How to talk to your child about COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) frequently asked questions](#)

[Information for people with a suspected case](#)

[Home Isolation Information](#)

[Information for employers](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources](#)

[Local state and territory health departments](#)

[Information on Social distancing](#)

[Recently travelled overseas Poster](#)

[Simple Steps To Help Stop The Spread Poster](#)

Source

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Health *Health Topics* [Health Topics Coronavirus COVID-19](#)

Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman *Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws* (updated 13 March 2020) <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Information for child care providers and services* <https://docs-edu.govcms.gov.au/node/53362>

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020)

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.*

Public Health Act 2010

Public Health Amendment Act 2017

Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	March 2020	NEXT REVIEW DATE	March 2021
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New policy developed dedicated to management of COVID-19		