

## Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy

### Policy Statement

We aim to provide a safe and hygienic environment that will promote the health of the children. As the care needs of a sick child cannot be met without dramatically reducing the general level of supervision of the other children, or risking other children's health, parents will be asked not to bring sick children to the service and to collect children who are unwell. All care and consideration will be given to the child who becomes ill while at the service. Children with infectious diseases will be excluded from the service for the period recommended by the Department of Health.

### Links Education and Care Centres National Regulations 2018, National Quality Standard 2018

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Sec. 172	Offence to fail display prescribed information
Sec. 174	Serious incident – any emergency for which emergency services attended
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(2)(c)	(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
NQS	Quality Area 2 – Children Health and Safety
	2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2

### Procedure

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.

- A child or adult will be considered sick and unfit to attend the service if he/she:
  - has a fever over 38 degrees
  - is crying constantly from discomfort
  - vomits or has diarrhoea
  - is in need of one to one care
  - has an infectious disease
  - Has extreme, continuous bouts of coughing

- His unable to participate in the activities of the day.
- If a child is unwell at home parents will be asked not to bring the child to the service.
- If a staff member is unwell then they should refrain from coming to work. Staff should contact the service as soon as possible to inform them that they are unable to attend work.
- If a child becomes ill or develops symptoms at the centre the parents will be contacted to collect the child. If parents are unable to be contacted then the emergency contacts will be contacted.
- If a staff member becomes ill or develops symptoms at the service they can return home if able or organise for someone to take them home. The Staff will organise a suitable replacement as soon as possible.
- The child who is ill will be comforted, cared for and placed in a quiet isolated area with adult supervision until the child's parent or other authorised adult takes them home.
- During a fever other methods will be employed to bring the child's temperature down until the parents arrive or help is sought. Such methods include: provision of fluids, tepid sponges administered. If a child's temperature is very high, cannot be brought down and parents cannot be contacted, the child's doctor will be contacted and permission sought to give paracetamol. If the situation becomes serious for the child an ambulance will be called.

### **Infectious Diseases**

**Definition :** 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- National Regulations).

- Educators are informed of the symptoms of excludable illnesses and disease and of infection control through staff meetings and professional development, and are provided with educational materials. They are alert to the signs of illness in children and respond accordingly. The signs include:
  - severe, persistent or prolonged coughing
  - breathing difficulties (e.g. noisy, wheezy)
  - yellowish skin or eyes
  - irritated eyes, eye lining red, pus from eyes
  - unusual spots or rashes
  - vomiting and/or diarrhoea
  - temperature over 38 degrees Celsius
  - behaviour exhibited that is not 'normal' for the child (e.g. sleeping, being unable to participate in the daily activities as usual).
- The service's roster ensures sufficient educators with first aid qualifications are on site at all times children are present.
- All instances of illnesses and infectious diseases (children and staff) are recorded in the Illness and Infectious Disease Register so that they may be tracked and any spread minimised. The Register is kept in the main office.
- Educators intentionally teach children health and safety practices to prevent the spread of contagious diseases.
- The service strictly adheres to the National Health and Medical Research Council's recommended minimum exclusion periods for infectious conditions. See attachment. This will also include the exclusion of siblings from coming into the service when unwell with an infectious disease. If a child

arrives at the service unwell the family will be asked to leave the centre with the unwell child. Educators can assist with escorting the enrolled child out of the service to a family member if required.

- If an outbreak of an infectious disease occurs in the service, parents are informed verbally and by notices displayed throughout the service. Information given to parents will include the nature of the illness, symptoms, incubation and infectious periods and the service's exclusion requirements for the illness.
- The service maintains a Register of Non-Immunised Children (due to medical reasons only) and a Register of Non-Immunised Staff. Where an outbreak is a vaccine preventable disease, the service will notify the relevant health authority, and will follow that authority's recommended guidelines and directives.
- A doctor's clearance certificate will be required for all infectious diseases such as measles, mumps diphtheria, hepatitis A, polio, tuberculosis, typhoid and paratyphoid before returning to the service.
- The Co-ordinator will follow the recommendations as outlined in the NSW Public Health Department document. See attachment for exclusion periods
- Parents will be informed about the occurrence of an infectious disease in the service ensuring that the individual rights of staff or children are not infringed upon.
- All staff will ensure proper hygiene practices are carried out as outlined in the Hygiene policy.
- Under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1991 and Regulation, doctors, hospital chief executives (or general managers), pathology laboratories, directors of childcare centres and school principals are required to notify the following diseases:
  - Diphtheria
  - Mumps
  - Poliomyelitis
  - Tetanus
  - Measles
  - Pertussis (whooping cough)
  - Rubella (german measles)

Notification requested by phone, if possible.

### **Excluding Children, Families, Staff from our Centre**

Excluding unwell children, staff, or families helps reduce the spread of infection in education and care settings. The need for exclusion and the length of time away from the Service depends on the type of illness, its severity, how easily it spreads, and how long a person is infectious.

Our OSHC Service follows exclusion guidance from the Public Health Unit (PHU) and *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th Edition, 2024)*. Even where exclusion is not formally required, anyone showing symptoms is encouraged to stay home and seek medical advice.

Key practices include:

- Displaying illness alerts and fact sheets to families when an infectious disease is present.
- Excluding non-immunised children if a vaccine-preventable disease occurs; unvaccinated staff will also be excluded.
- Requiring children and staff with diarrhoea and/or vomiting to remain home for at least 24 hours symptom-free, or 48 hours if caused by norovirus. Food-handling staff must remain excluded for up to 48 hours after symptoms stop.

### **Notification Mechanisms**

#### **Infectious diseases:**

- Infectious diseases should be directed to the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055, and should be notified within 24 hours of diagnosis.
- All infectious diseases notification forms are available from Public Health Units.

## **COVID-19**

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 the 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

### **Hygiene practices**

Our Service will ensure signs and posters remind employees and visitors of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread including hand washing and hand rub procedures and information about COVID-19. These will also be 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. Our Service will supply disposable tissues and have bins with plastic liners available in several locations for disposing used items.

### **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 with your hand 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
- equipment, resources and surfaces including high-touch surfaces- taps, door handles, light switches, toys, keyboards and laptops/iPads will be cleaned more frequently as required using detergent and water followed by disinfectant

#### Suspected cases of COVID-19 at our Service

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

- 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 or
- if we have reasonable grounds to believe that a child has a contagious or infectious disease (this includes COVID-19)

If your child becomes ill whilst at the Service, educators/staff will respond to their individual symptoms of illness and provide comfort and care. The child will be cared for in an area that is separated from other children in the service to await pick up from their parent/carer.

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. All items/resources touched by the child will be cleaned and disinfected to avoid possible cross 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.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- All obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations are met.
- Educators, staff, students, visitors, and volunteers are familiar with and follow this policy and procedure.
- New employees receive a copy of this policy during induction, and families are made aware of it on enrolment.
- Children are protected from harm by implementing effective health and safety practices.
- Immunisation records are collected and maintained for both children (AIR statement) and staff.
- The Service follows recommendations from *Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services (6th Edition)* and other recognised health authorities.
- Government-recommended exclusion periods for infectious diseases are implemented for all staff, children, and visitors.
- The Public Health Unit is notified of any vaccine-preventable disease or gastroenteritis outbreak, and families are informed promptly while maintaining confidentiality.
- Families are encouraged to notify the Service of any infectious illness, including COVID-19.
- Accurate attendance records are maintained, and safe hygiene and cleaning practices are consistently followed.
- Children are supported to learn health and hygiene practices as part of daily routines.
- Families are provided with reliable information on immunisation, exclusion guidelines, and infectious diseases.
- Confidentiality of children's health information is always maintained.
- Staff with infectious diseases or symptoms (e.g., diarrhoea, vomiting) do not handle food and are excluded until symptom-free for at least 48 hours.
- Risk assessments are undertaken to support children and staff with complex medical needs during outbreaks.
- Incidents of infectious disease are documented within 24 hours, and practices are reviewed after outbreaks to identify improvements.
- Children must be symptom-free for at least 24 hours before returning to the Service.

Educators will ensure:

- Children suspected of having an infectious illness are supported, isolated from others, and supervised until collected by a parent/guardian.
- Families are contacted promptly to collect unwell children.
- PPE (gloves, masks) is used when caring for ill children, and affected resources/toys are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Their own immunisation status is up to date and provided to the Approved Provider.
- Children are given regular opportunities to practise hygiene skills such as handwashing and cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Grouping of children and daily routines are planned to reduce the risk of spreading illness.
- The Health and Safety Policy is followed at all times, including hand hygiene, food handling, cleaning, ventilation, and PPE use where needed.
- They maintain current knowledge of infection control best practices and apply these consistently to promote health and wellbeing.

Families will:

- Follow the Service's policies on infectious diseases, immunisation, hand washing, and illness reporting.

- Notify the Service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness (including COVID-19).
- Keep their child at home for the required exclusion period if they are unwell, show symptoms, or during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases if not fully immunised.
- Provide up-to-date immunisation and medical records, and advise the Service of any changes.
- Support the Service's risk minimisation strategies, especially for children with complex medical needs during outbreaks.

### **Notification**

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor is mandated by law to notify the Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or [Health Information hotline](#) on 1800 020 080 if there appears to be more than 5 children with the same infectious disease within a 7 day period, for gastroenteritis it is 2 or more children affected.

### **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. (2025). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)
- ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. (2021). [Dealing with Infectious Diseases](#).
- [Australian Government Department of Health Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\)](#)
- 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. 6<sup>th</sup> 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

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