

D-24 Child Safe Environment

National Quality Standards (NQS)

2.2	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
2.2.2	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
2.2.3	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
3.1	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
5.1	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
7.1	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
7.1.1	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the service.

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Reg. 82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
Reg. 83	Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs
Reg. 84	Awareness of child protection law
Reg. 99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
Reg. 103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
Reg. 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
Reg. 155	Interactions with children
Reg. 156	Relationships in groups
Reg. 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
Reg. 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Reg. 181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider

My Time, Our Place

1.1	Children feel safe, secure and supported
1.4	Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

Policy Statement

We provide an environment that ensures the safety, health and wellbeing of children at all times. The welfare and protection of all children is of paramount importance. Educators will maintain the premises and equipment, adhere to procedures regarding safe practices and operate in line with legislative requirements relating to child protective practices and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations and Law*. Educators and management are aware of their legal responsibility as Mandatory Reporters to take action to protect and support children they suspect may be at significant risk of harm. Educators will ensure that children are adequately supervised at all times and that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury or trauma.

Related Policies

- Arrivals and Departures Policy
- Building Equipment Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Conditions of Employment Policy
- Facility Management and Security Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Indoor and Outdoor Environment Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Maintenance of Records Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Professional Development Policy
- Relief Staff Policy
- Staff Child Ratios Policy
- Staff Orientation and Induction Policy
- Staff Professionalism and Code of Conduct Policy
- Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Storage Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Volunteers / Students / Visitors Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

Procedure

All children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that promotes opportunities to thrive with adults who safeguard and advocate for their health, safety, security, and wellbeing including the right to:

- be asked to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults.

- feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children and young people; and
- understand, as early as possible, what is meant by 'feeling and being safe.'

Physical Environment

To promote a safe physical environment, we will:

- Ensure all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards.
- Remove, repair, or replace worn and damaged buildings, structures, equipment and resources which may provide a safety risk for children in a timely manner.
- Ensure learning environments are established that provide appropriate child groupings, sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment.
- Organise indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure risks to health and safety are minimised.
- Conduct a risk assessment of the service environment on a quarterly basis to determine any risks to children's health and safety.
- Analyse and evaluate the risks associated with identified hazards.
- Determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control identified hazards.
- Review risk assessments after any serious incident report is made to the Regulatory Authority.
- Ensure smoking is banned within the grounds of, and within four meters of any entrance of an enclosed public space.

Staffing and Supervision

- Ensure that sufficient numbers of educators are employed to ensure adequate supervision of children at all times.
- Manage rosters to not only ensure that adequate numbers of educators are on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements, but that duty of care implications are considered to always ensure adequate supervision.
- Ensure screening and suitability of staff, volunteers as per the legislation and policy at the time of employment and as part of an ongoing process.
- Respond proactively to emerging staff performance concerns.

Child Protection

Every staff member or member of the Management Committee has a legal and ethical obligation to act to protect any child who is at risk of abuse or neglect. Staff are informed upon commencement that they are Mandatory Reporters and have their responsibilities outlined. Staff will undergo training in relation to child protection and notification as part of the training budget.

Areas of concern include:

- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological harm

- Relinquishing care
- Parent / carer domestic violence
- Parent / carer substance abuse
- Parent / carer mental health

Any staff member who forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is being abused or neglected should discuss their concerns with the Director or the Responsible Person on duty. To confirm if notification is required, staff members will use the online Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) which is available at: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/>

Staff will undertake training in order to effectively:

- make appropriate responses to all disclosures of abuse and any allegation of abuse against staff members of the service;
- understand the responsibilities and processes as a mandatory reporter;
- be able to recognise the factors that increase a child's vulnerability to maltreatment;
- be aware of the vulnerabilities which may indicate a need to assess, monitor or curtail the behaviour of individuals in relation to children and young people within organisations.

Staff will attend Accredited Child Protection Training within 12 months of starting employment, and will attend a refresher every 12 months.

Responding to a child's disclosure

If a child discloses allegations of abuse, it is vital that the staff member involved is ready to listen attentively and remain calm and supportive. Finding a quiet, private place to talk and allowing the child to tell their story in their own words is important. Staff should avoid asking leading questions or probing for information that the child is not ready to disclose. It is important that the child is reassured that they have done the right thing in telling someone what has happened and that they have a right to feel safe. The staff member should assure the child that they believe them and will try and help.

Responsibilities of all Educators

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the site/service.
- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Follow all record keeping requirements.
- Undertaking appropriate training and education on child protection.
- Identifying any potential for risk and harm to a child at the service and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the approved provider and the nominated supervisor.
- Co-operating with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.

- Informing families of support services available to them and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Ensuring that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at the service.
- Implementing the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse.
- Notifying the nominated supervisor or the approved provider immediately on becoming aware of any concerns, complaints or allegations regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child at the service.

Sources

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- Child Stories Reporting – Mandatory Reporting Guide
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Family and Community Services (FaCS)
- Framework for School Age Care in Australia – My Time, Our Place
- National Quality Standard – Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – www.unicef.org.au
- Working with Children Check NSW

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Version Control			
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