

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MANAGEMENT POLICY

Effective from 5 May 2022

Introduction

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. With the significant increase in transmission of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in all states and territories, our *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Management Policy* has been amended to reflect the changes in the processes for testing, tracing, isolating and quarantining.

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 |

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| 110 | Ventilation and natural light |
| 162 | Health information to be kept in enrolment record |
| 168 | Education and care service must have policies and procedures |
| 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 |

RELATED POLICIES

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

To provide consistency and clarity on the management of COVID-19 in education and care services including preschool, long day care, out of school hours care, vacation care, family day care, mobile and occasional care services.

SCOPE

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

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is guided by recommendations and health measures by the Australian Government, local Public Health Units and the Regulatory Authority in Victoria to promote evidence-based COVID-safe 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. [National Return to School Framework \(PDF, 498KB\)](#).

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



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

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

Risk Management

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 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 where possible
- where possible, moving 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:
 - use of QR codes for all visitors to our Service
 - using signage and markings on the floor to indicate a 1.5 metre mark for parents/families to use
 - ensuring face masks are worn by all adults (staff and visitors) at all times in indoor settings (subject to exemptions)
 - ensuring face masks are worn by staff when engaging with other adults, such as during pick up and drop offs
 - requiring all staff to wear face coverings when not working directly with children in areas of the 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 Victorian 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 has their own Public Health Orders related to mandatory vaccinations for education and care services.

VIC Services

- COVID-19 vaccinations are a requirement for staff who work in early childhood education and care (ECEC) including long day care, kindergarten, family day care and outside hours school care (OSHC) services.
<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-settings-guidance-early-childhood-education-and-care>

Handwashing/personal hygiene measures

Effective handwashing remains a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Our Service will ensure:

- o 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
- o educators and staff must adhere to our *Handwashing Policy* at all times
- o children are supervised when washing hands
- o educators and staff must adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures
- o educators will wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitiser, before wearing gloves and wash their hands after wearing gloves
- o hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- o 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. [[COVID-19 Test and Isolate National Protocols](#)]. Mandatory requirements now only apply for 'household contacts'.

To assist our service, manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 (especially the Omicron variant) 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

As per press release from the Victorian Government on the 08/02/2022 – "free rapid antigen tests to be available to all children aged 3 to 5 attending early childhood education services." Families are advised to contact the director for further information if this applies.

In the event of a positive case, management will:

- ensure daily attendance records for staff, children and visitors are up to date
- determine who is a COVID-19 contact in the service
- send all contacts (parents, staff, visitors) a notification of a positive case (letter, email)
- 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
- anyone who tests positive to COVID-19 to self-isolate for at least 7 days from the day they test positive.
- Household contacts must also stay home for 7 days and take a RAT self-test or PCR test. You are a household contact if you have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation or care facility.
 - Your household contact period is 7 days.
 - You don't have to quarantine during this 7-day period if you:
 - test negative using a rapid antigen test on 5 days of the 7-day period (with tests spaced at least 24 hours apart)
 - wear a mask indoors when outside your home
 - do not visit hospitals or care facilities
 - notify your employer or education facility
 - If you do not follow these steps, you must quarantine for the 7-day period – and you are required to get tested on Day 1 and Day 6.
 - If you test positive on a rapid antigen test, you must report your result and isolate for 7 days. Visit [Reporting your result](#) page for more information.
 - Household contacts are also referred to as *close contacts*.

STATE SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| VICTORIA | Managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 in early childhood education and care services |
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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
- 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

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.

Allowable Absences from childcare

For the 2021-22 financial year, all Australian families can access 10 extra allowable absence days per child in this current financial year (i.e., 52 days).

This is in addition to the 10 extra allowable absences provided for families in NSW, Victoria and the ACT during extended lockdowns in 2021. These extra absences are to help services and families affected by COVID-19 but can be used for any reason. They will be applied automatically.

Waiving of gap fees

The gap fee is the difference between the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) the Government pays to a service and the remaining fee paid by the family. Until 30 June 2022, services can waive the gap fee and receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) if a child is unable to attend care for one of four reasons:

1. **The child, or a member of their immediate household, must isolate due to COVID-19.**
2. **The child is at a higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19.** This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
3. **The service, or a room at the service, is closed due to COVID-19.** This includes where a service closes based on general guidance from a state or territory government agency, or because educator to child ratios cannot be safely met as the educator/s must isolate. Written advice specific to the impacted service is not required.
4. **The state or territory has restricted access to child care in a region due to COVID-19.** This includes where the state or territory has restricted school attendance, in the case of Outside School Hours Care.

Services must keep a record of the advice by a state or territory authority advising that they close and accurately reflect waived gap fees in the fee statements provided to parents. Check the [COVID-19 information for the early childhood education and care sector - Department of Education](#),

[Skills and Employment, Australian Government \(dese.gov.au\)](https://www.dese.gov.au) for further information regarding gap fee waiving general information.

The Raleigh St CoM will make a decision on the waiving of gap fees during any period of restrictions that limit access to childcare at Raleigh St, in respect of children who are not attending due to COVID-19 related reasons. The CoM will make a decision on waiving gap fees with reference to:

- current government advice,
- the anticipated financial impact on the Centre (including having regard to the availability of any government subsidies to offset the loss of revenue),
- the desirability of supporting the Raleigh St community,
- the need to ensure the ongoing viability of the Centre, and
- any other relevant considerations.

Decisions of the CoM regarding the waiving of gap fees will generally apply for the current period of restrictions that limit families' access to Raleigh St. The CoM may change its decision, or make a different decision, in respect of any extended or new period of restrictions as necessary, having regard to the above considerations and any relevant new information. The Director will communicate to families any CoM decision regarding the waiving of fees as soon as possible. Where gap fees are waived by the CoM, families must notify Raleigh St 2 days in advance (where possible) if their child or children will not be attending during the period.

Gap fees will NOT be waived if:

- a family chooses to cease enrolment at our Service or
- a child or children attend the centre for care.

Families can continue to receive CCS for 52 absence days within each financial year.

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.

Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment

This lump sum payment is available for people who can't work and earn an income due to:

- Self-isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19
- You are caring for someone who has to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19.



From 10 January 2022 Services Australia will accept both Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) results. See: [pandemic leave](#) for further information.

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. see: [NQA ITS Portal Emergency Management Help Guide](#)

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.

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 of self-isolation for some staff members, 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:

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

- o providing information to families and support services as required

Information and resources

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| National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line | 1800 020 080 Call 131 450 for translating and interpreting service |
| Health Direct | 1800 022 222 |
| Public Health Unit- Local state and territory health departments | |

Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment- [absences from child care due to local emergency](#)

Beyond Blue [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supporting educators, children and young people](#)
CCS Helpdesk 1300 667 276

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

[COVID-19 Infection control training](#)

[Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit](#)

[Fairwork Australia- Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)

[Healthdirect Coronavirus hub](#)

[Information on Social distancing](#)

[Local state and territory health departments](#)

[Raising Children](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

[Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

Sources

Australian Council of trade unions Coronavirus (COVID-19) Privacy at work
<https://www.actu.org.au/coronavirus>

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

Australian Government Department of Health *Health Topics*

Australian Government Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Australian Government Department of Health. (2022). COVID-19 Test & Isolate National Protocols
Australian Government Department of Health. Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) statement on COVID-19, schools and early childhood education and care ([15 November 2021](#)).

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

Australian Government Department of Health

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).

Fair Work Ombudsman Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws (2020)

<https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

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

childhood education and care services.

NSW Government. Department of Education. (2021). COVID safety in early childhood education and care services:

Guidance.

Public Health Act 2010

Public Health Amendment Act 2017

Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria

The Australian Parenting website Raising Children <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Safe Work Australia (2020)

REVIEW

| POLICY REVIEWED | May 2022 | NEXT REVIEW DATE | As required |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| May 22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-write of Policy to reflect COVID-19 National Protocols and changes to managing a positive COVID-19 case in education and care settings removing requirements for exclusion | | |
| April 2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-write of Policy to reflect COVID-19 National Protocols and changes to managing a positive COVID-19 case in education and care settings | | |
| FEBRUARY 2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-write of Policy to reflect COVID-19 National Protocols and changes to managing a positive COVID-19 case in education and care settings Update of WA links to Regulatory Authority Policy Version 31 available in COVID-19 Archives | | |
| 16 MARCH 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> original policy drafted | | |