

# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MANAGEMENT POLICY

Effective from 17/11/2022

## 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. Our *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Management Policy* has been amended multiple times to reflect changes in the law, health advice, and to balance the needs of the Centre, staff and families.

## 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

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

- Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
- Fees Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Childsafe Environment and Wellbeing Policy
- Occupational Work Health and Safety Policy

## PURPOSE

To provide consistency and clarity on the management of COVID-19 at the Service.

## 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 (see the [National Framework for Managing COVID-19 in Schools and Early Childhood Education and Care \(ECEC\)](#))

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



This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Service policies (as noted above).

## **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 and adjusting as appropriate a combination of COVID-safe practices including:

- adhering to mandated COVID-19 vaccinations for all ECEC staff and visitors
- 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:
- 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 were 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>
- Once this mandate was removed, RSCCC has made the decision to make vaccination against COVID-19, including required boosters, a condition of employment for all current and future staff until which time this policy may be updated.

### **Handwashing/personal hygiene measures**

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

Our Service will ensure:

- alcohol-based hand sanitiser is provided for use upon arrival to the Service
- educators and staff must adhere to our *Handwashing Procedure* 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
- 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

### **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. It is recommended that individuals who are close contacts of a known case take reasonable precautions, and that individuals who test positive do what they can to limit the spread of COVID-19. This includes staying home where possible, and in any emergency situations where one may need to leave, wearing a mask and keeping distance between others. [<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/im-a-covid-case-contact>].

To assist our service, manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 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 have been relaxed, however the advice strongly encourage those who have symptoms, are a close contact, or test positive, to stay at home and limit exposure.

#### STATE SPECIFIC INFORMATION

VICTORIA	<a href="#">Managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 in early childhood education and care services</a>
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### **Unwell children at our Service**

We reserve the right to refuse a child into care if they:

- have a contagious illness or infectious disease
- have tested positive to 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 2023, 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 following website for further information regarding gap fee waiving general information [COVID-19 and early childhood education and care](#).

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.

## 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 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, including any staff changes.

## 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:

- 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

## Information and resources

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
November 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-write of Policy to reflect COVID-19 National Protocols and changes to requirements relating to vaccination, isolation and exclusion.</li> </ul>		
May 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul>		
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-write of Policy to reflect COVID-19 National Protocols and changes to managing a positive COVID-19 case in education and care settings</li> </ul>		
FEBRUARY 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-write of Policy to reflect COVID-19 National Protocols and changes to managing a positive COVID-19 case in education and care settings</li> <li>Update of WA links to Regulatory Authority</li> <li>Policy Version 31 available in COVID-19 Archives</li> </ul>		
16 MARCH 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>original policy drafted</li> </ul>		