

POLICY 2.31

INCIDENTS, ILLNESS, ACCIDENT AND TRAUMA

RATIONALE AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

All children, employees and contractors within the service have a right to a safe environment that is free from hazards that may cause harm or injury.

The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 requires that approved provider/nominated supervisor/coordinators take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection.

The service has a duty of care to respond effectively to accidents and emergencies that occur at the service.

LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Federal and State Workplace Health and Safety Legislation

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (SA)

Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Children's needs

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Regulations: 4, 12; 85 - 89; 97; 136 – 137(e); 168(2)(b)(e); 245

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care – Elements 2.1.4, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.

Policy Statement

The health and safety of all staff, children, families and visitors to our Service is of the utmost importance. We aim to reduce the likelihood of incidents, illness, accidents and trauma through implementing comprehensive risk management, effective hygiene practices and the ongoing professional development of all staff to respond quickly and effectively to any incident or accident.

We acknowledge that in early education and care services, illness and disease can spread easily from one child to another, even when implementing the recommended hygiene and infection control practices. Our Service aims to minimise illnesses by adhering to all recommended guidelines from relevant government authorities regarding the prevention of infectious diseases and adhere to exclusion periods recommended by public health units.

When groups of children play together and are in new surroundings accidents and illnesses may occur. Our Service is committed to effectively manage our physical environment to allow children to experience challenging situations whilst preventing serious injuries.

In the event of an incident, illness, accident or trauma, all staff will implement the guidelines set out in this policy to adhere to National Law and Regulations and inform the regulatory authority as required.

Strategies for Policy implementation

IDENTIFYING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

Early Childhood Educators are not doctors and are unable to diagnose an illness or infectious disease. To ensure the symptoms are not infectious and to minimise the spread of an infection, medical advice may be required to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

Children who appear unwell at the Service will be closely monitored and if any symptoms described below are noticed, or the child is not well enough to participate in normal activities, parents or an emergency contact person will be contacted to collect the child as soon as possible. A child who is displaying symptoms of a contagious illness (vomiting, diarrhoea) will be moved away from the rest of the group and supervised until he/she is collected by a parent or emergency contact person.

Symptoms indicating illness may include:

- Behaviour that is unusual for the individual child
- High temperature or fevers
- Loose bowels
- Faeces that are grey, pale or contains blood
- Vomiting
- Discharge from the eye or ear
- Skin that display rashes, blisters, spots, crusty or weeping sores
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine
- Headaches
- Stiff muscles or joint pain
- Continuous scratching of scalp or skin
- Difficulty in swallowing or complaining of a sore throat
- Persistent, prolonged or severe coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- A stiff neck or sensitivity to light

HIGH TEMPERATURES OR FEVERS

Children get fevers or temperatures for all kinds of reasons. Most fevers and the illnesses that cause them last only a few days. However sometimes a fever will last much longer and might be the sign of an underlying chronic or long-term illness or disease.

Recognised authorities suggest a child's normal temperature will range between 36.0°C and 37.0°C, but this will often depend on the age of the child and the time of day.

Any child with a high fever or temperature reaching 37.5°C or higher will not be permitted to attend the Service until 24 hours after the temperature/fever has subsided.

WHEN A CHILD HAS A HIGH TEMPERATURE OR FEVER

- Educators will closely monitor the child focusing on how the child looks and behaves and be alert to the possibility of vomiting, coughing or convulsions.
- For infants under 3 months old, parents will be notified immediately for any fever over 37.5°C for immediate medical assistance. If the parent cannot take the child to a GP immediately, permission will be required for the Service to arrange for urgent medical assistance.
- Educators will notify parents when a child registers a temperature of 37.5°C or higher.
- The child will need to be collected from the Service and will not be permitted back for a further 24 hours
- Emergency services will be contacted should the child have trouble breathing, becomes drowsy or unresponsive or suffers a convulsion lasting longer than five minutes.
- Educators will complete an *Illness, Accident & Trauma* record and note down any other symptoms that may have developed along with the temperature (for example, a rash, vomiting, etc.).

METHODS TO REDUCE A CHILD'S TEMPERATURE OR FEVER

- Encourage the child to drink plenty of water (small sips), unless there are reasons why the child is only allowed limited fluids.
- Remove excessive clothing (shoes, socks, jumpers, pants etc.) Educators will be mindful of cultural beliefs.
- If requested by a parent or emergency contact person, staff may administer paracetamol or ibuprofen (Panadol or Nurofen) in an attempt to bring the temperature down. However, a parent or emergency contact person must still collect the child.
- Parental written permission to administer paracetamol or ibuprofen should be provided during enrolment and filed in the child's individual record
- Before giving any medication to children, the medical history of the child must be checked for possible allergies
- The child's temperature, time, medication, dosage, and the staff member's name will be recorded in the Illness Register. Parents will be requested to sign the Medication Authorisation Form for the administration of Panadol or Nurofen when collecting the child.

DEALING WITH COLDS/FLU (RUNNY NOSE)

Colds are the most common cause of illness in children and adults. There are more than 200 types of viruses that can cause the common cold. Symptoms include a runny or blocked nose, sneezing and coughing, watery eyes, headache, a mild sore throat, and possibly a slight fever.

Nasal discharge may start clear, but can become thicker and turn yellow or green over a day or so. Up to a quarter of young children with a cold may have an ear infection as well, but this happens less often as the child grows older. Watch for any new or more severe symptoms—these may indicate other, more serious infections. Infants are protected from colds for about the first 6 months of life by antibodies from their mothers. After this, infants and young children are very susceptible to colds because they are not immune, they have close contact with adults and other children, they cannot practice good personal hygiene, and their smaller nose and ear passages are easily blocked. It is not unusual for children to have five or more colds a year, and children in education and care services may have as many as 8–12 colds a year.

As children get older, and as they are exposed to greater numbers of children, they get fewer colds each year because of increased immunity. By 3 years of age, children who have been in group care since infancy have the same number of colds, or fewer, as children who are cared for only at home.

Management have the right to send children home if they appear unwell due to a cold or general illness.

Children can become distressed and lethargic when unwell. Discharge coming from a child's nose and coughing can lead to germs spreading to other children, educators, toys, and equipment.

Management will assess each individual case prior to sending the child home.

DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING (GASTROENTERITIS)

Gastroenteritis (or 'gastro') is a general term for an illness of the digestive system. Typical symptoms include abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, and vomiting. In many cases, it does not need treatment, and symptoms disappear in a few days.

However, gastroenteritis can cause dehydration because of the large amount of fluid lost through vomiting and diarrhoea. Therefore, if a child does not receive enough fluids, he/she may require fluids intravenously.

If a child has diarrhoea and/or vomiting whilst at the Service, Management will notify parents or an emergency contact to collect the child immediately

Children that have had diarrhoea and/or vomiting will be asked to stay away from the Service for 48 hours after symptoms have ceased to reduce infection transmission as symptoms can reappear after 24 hours in many instances.

INFECTIOUS CAUSES OF GASTROENTERITIS INCLUDE:

- Viruses such as rotavirus, adenoviruses and norovirus
- Bacteria such as Campylobacter, Salmonella and Shigella
- Bacterial toxins such as staphylococcal toxins
- Parasites such as Giardia and Cryptosporidium

NON-INFECTIOUS CAUSES OF GASTROENTERITIS INCLUDE:

- Medication such as antibiotics
- Chemical exposure such as zinc poisoning
- Introducing solid foods to a young child
- Anxiety or emotional stress

The exact cause of infectious diarrhoea can only be diagnosed by laboratory tests of faecal specimens. In mild, uncomplicated cases of diarrhoea, doctors do not routinely conduct faecal testing.

Children with diarrhoea who also vomit or refuse extra fluids should see a doctor. In severe cases, hospitalisation may be needed. The parent and doctor will need to know the details of the child's illness while the child was at the education and care Service.

Children, educators and staff with diarrhoea and/or vomiting will be excluded until the diarrhoea and/or vomiting has stopped for at least 48 hours.

Please note: If there is a gastroenteritis outbreak at the Service, children displaying the symptoms will be excluded from the Service until the diarrhoea and/or vomiting has stopped and the family are able to get a medical clearance from their doctor.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS

To reduce the transmission of infectious illness, our Service implements effective hygiene and infection control routines and procedures.

If a child is unwell or displaying symptoms of a cold or flu virus, parents are requested to keep the child away from the Service. Infectious illnesses can be spread quickly from one person to another usually through respiratory droplets or from a child or person touching their own mouth or nose and then touching an object or surface.

Prevention strategies

Practising effective hygiene helps to minimise the risk of cross infection within our Service.

Educators model good hygiene practices and remind children to cough or sneeze into their elbow or use a disposable tissue and wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after touching their mouth, eyes or nose.

Handwashing techniques are practised by all educators and children routinely using soap and water before and after eating and when using the toilet and drying hands thoroughly with paper towel.

After wiping a child's nose with a tissue, educators will dispose the tissue in a plastic-lined bin and wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry using paper towel.

All surfaces including bedding (pillows, mat, cushion) used by a child who is unwell, will be cleaned with soap and water and then disinfected.

Parents, families and visitors are requested to wash their hands upon arrival and departure at the Service or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. (Note: alcohol-based sanitizers must be kept out of reach of children and used only with adult supervision.)

Parents will be notified of any outbreak of an infectious illness (eg: Gastroenteritis) within the Service via our notice board, online app or email to assist in reducing the spread of the illness.

Exclusion periods for illness and infectious diseases are provided to parents and families and included in our Parent/Family Handbook and Sick Children Policy.

SERIOUS INJURY, INCIDENT OR TRAUMA

In the event of any child, educator, staff, volunteer or contractor having an accident at the Service, an educator who has a First Aid Certificate will attend to the person immediately.

Adequate supervision will be provided to all children.

Procedures as per our *Administration of First Aid Policy* will be adhered to by all staff.

DEFINITION OF SERIOUS INCIDENT:

Regulations require the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor to notify Regulatory Authorities within 24 hours of any serious incident at the Service through the NQA IT System

a) The death of a child:

- (i) while being educated and cared for by an Education and Care Service or
- (ii) following an incident while being educated and cared for by an Education and Care Service.

(b) Any incident involving serious injury or trauma to, or illness of, a child while being educated and cared for by an Education and Care Service, which:

(i) a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner or

(ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital.

For example: whooping cough, broken limb and anaphylaxis reaction

(c) Any incident or emergency where the attendance of emergency services at the Education and Care Service premises was sought, or ought reasonably to have been sought (eg: severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis)

(d) Any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an Education and Care Service

(i) appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for or

(ii) appears to have been taken or removed from the Education and Care Service premises in a manner that contravenes these regulations or

(iii) is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the Education and Care Service premises or any part of the premises.

A serious incident should be documented as an incident, injury, trauma and illness record as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident, with any evidence attached.

Trauma is defined as the impact of an event or a series of events during which a child feels helpless and pushed beyond their ability to cope. There are a range of different events that might be traumatic to a child, including accidents, injuries, serious illness, natural disasters (bush fires), assault, and threats of violence, domestic violence, neglect or abuse and war or terrorist attacks. Parental or cultural trauma can also have a traumatising effect on children. This definition firmly places trauma into a developmental context:

"Trauma changes the way children understand their world, the people in it and where they belong." (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010).

Trauma can disrupt the relationships a child has with their parents, educators and staff who care for them. It can transform children's language skills, physical and social development and the ability to manage their emotions and behaviour.

Behavioural response in babies and toddlers who have experienced trauma may include:

- Avoidance of eye contact
- Loss of physical skills such as rolling over, sitting, crawling, and walking
- Fear of going to sleep, especially when alone
- Nightmares
- Loss of appetite
- Making very few sounds
- Increased crying and general distress
- Unusual aggression
- Constantly on the move with no quiet times
- Sensitivity to noises.

Behavioural responses for pre-school aged children who have experiences trauma may include:

- New or increased clingy behaviour such as constantly following a parent, carer or staff around
- Anxiety when separated from parents or carers
- New problems with skills like sleeping, eating, going to the toilet and paying attention
- Shutting down and withdrawing from everyday experiences
- Difficulties enjoying activities
- Being more jumpy or easily frightened
- Physical complaints with no known cause such as stomach pains and headaches
- Blaming themselves and thinking the trauma was their fault.

Children who have experienced traumatic events often need help to adjust to the way they are feeling. When parents, educators and staff take the time to listen, talk, and play they may find children begin to say or show how they are feeling. Providing children with time and space lets them know you are available and care about them.

It is important for educators to be patient when dealing with a child who has experienced a traumatic event. It may take time to understand how to respond to a child's needs and new behaviours before parents, educators and staff are able to work out the best ways to support a child. It is imperative to realise that a child's behaviour may be a response to the traumatic event rather than just 'difficult' behaviour.

Educators can assist children dealing with trauma by:

- Observing the behaviours and expressed feelings of a child and documenting responses that were most helpful in these situations.
- Creating a 'relaxation' space with familiar and comforting toys and objects children can use when they are having a difficult time.
- Having quiet time such as reading a story about feelings together.
- Trying different types of play that focus on expressing feelings (e.g. drawing, playing with play dough, dress-ups and physical games such as trampolines).
- Helping children understand their feelings by using reflecting statements (e.g. 'you look sad/angry right now, I wonder if you need some help?').

There are a number of ways for parents, educators and staff to reduce their own stress and maintain awareness, so they continue to be effective when offering support to children who have experienced traumatic events.

Strategies to assist Families, Educators and Staff to cope with children's stress or trauma may include:

- Taking time to calm yourself when you have a strong emotional response. This may mean walking away from a situation for a few minutes or handing over to another educator or staff member if possible.
- Planning ahead with a range of possibilities in case difficult situations occur.

- Remembering to find ways to look after yourself, even if it is hard to find time or you feel other things are more important. Taking time out helps adults be more available to children when they need support.
- Using supports available to you within your relationships (e.g., family, friends, colleagues).
- Identifying a supportive person to talk to about your experiences. This might be your family doctor or another health professional.

Living or working with traumatised children can be demanding so it is important to be aware of your own responses and seek support from management when required.

MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON AND EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- service policies and procedures are adhered to at all times
- parents or guardians are notified as soon as practicable and no later than 24 hours of the illness, accident, or trauma occurring
- an Illness, Accident or Trauma record is completed accurately and in a timely manner as soon after the event as possible (within 24 hours)
- parents are advised to keep the child home until they are feeling well, and they have not had any symptoms for at least 24-48 hours (depending upon the illness and exclusion periods)
- first aid qualified educators are present at all times on the roster and in the Service
- first aid kits are suitably equipped and checked on a monthly basis (see First Aid Kit Record).
- first aid kits are easily accessible when children are present at the Service and during excursions.
- first aid, anaphylaxis management training, and asthma management training is current and updated as required
- adults or children who are ill are excluded for the appropriate period (see *Sick Children Policy*)
- children are excluded from the Service if staff feel the child is too unwell to attend or is a risk to other children
- educators or staff who have diarrhoea or an infectious disease do not prepare food for others
- cold food is kept cold (below 5°C) and hot food, hot (above 60°C) to discourage the growth of bacteria
- if the incident, situation or event presents imminent or severe risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of any person present at the Service, or if an ambulance was called in response to the emergency (not as a precaution) the regulatory authority will be notified within 24 hours of the incident.
- parents are notified of any infectious diseases circulating the Service within 24 hours of detection
- staff and children always practice appropriate hand hygiene and cough and sneezing etiquette
- appropriate cleaning practices are followed

- toys and equipment are cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis which is recorded in the toy cleaning register or immediately if a child who is unwell has mouthed or used these toys or resources.
- all illnesses are documented in the *Service Illness Register*.

FAMILIES WILL:

- provide up to date medical and contact information in case of an emergency
- provide the Service with all relevant medical information, including Medicare and private health insurance
- provide a copy of medical management plans
- adhere to recommended periods of exclusion if their child has a virus or infectious illness.

Links to other policies

Administration of First Aid Policy
 Anaphylaxis Management Policy
 Asthma Management Policy
 Control of Infectious Disease Policy
 Family Communication Policy
 Health and Safety Policy
 Immunisation Policy
 Medical Conditions Policy
 Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
 Record Keeping and Retention Policy
 Work Health and Safety Policy

Sources

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