

SICK STAFF POLICY

Rationale and Policy Considerations

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations and Workplace Health and Safety legislation require early childhood education and care services to implement specific measures to minimise the spread of infectious illness and maintain a healthy environment for not only children, but also educators, staff and other adults who may visit the service. Whilst we urge families to keep their child away from childcare when they are sick, we also urge staff to take leave if they are unwell to minimise the transmission of infectious disease and illness to others.

Our Service relies on employees being at their best every day. Educators often overlook their own health resulting in exhaustion, stress and illness. When an educator is unwell with an illness or injury, it is critical that they take care of their own health and take time to recover before returning to the demands and responsibilities of an early childhood education and care setting.

Legislation and Government Requirements

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (SA)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Privacy Act (1988)
- Commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Regulations 12, 77, 83, 85, 88-90, Sec.174(2)(a)

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education Elements 2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2

Policy Statement

We promote and maintain the health and wellbeing of all staff by ensuring as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of our staff and others at the workplace. Our Service maintains an environment where measures are in place to eliminate or manage hazards and risks of illness or injury. This policy communicates clear directions and guidance about protocols and actions employees should follow to avoid adversely affecting the safety and health of children, other staff members and visitors to the service.

Strategies for Policy implementation

Our Service promotes the need for a safe, healthy and inclusive workplace. Staff who are healthy provide the best possible education and care to children and are able to provide support to their colleagues. To enable compliance with *Work Health and Safety legislation* and our *Code of Conduct Policy*, all staff must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and others in the workplace.

Minimizing the spread of illness, infections and diseases

We aim to minimise cross contamination and the spread of infectious illnesses by implementing best practice and high standards of personal hygiene within our Service. Recommendations by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council publication, *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (Fifth Edition) and Safe Work Australia, guide our policies and protocols.

Staff are provided with information about the recommended vaccines for early childhood educators including yearly influenza vaccinations as per our South Australian recommendations. Staff are required to provide an *Immunisation History Statement* from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) and/or records from their general practitioner to management for their staff record.

Vaccination is important as not only can staff members catch a potentially serious infection such as measles or whooping cough, they could then inadvertently pass it onto children in their care who are too young to have had their vaccinations or to women who may be pregnant.

The Australian Government recommends everyone over the age of 6 months have an annual Influenza (flu) vaccine and all people over 12 years receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Whilst our Service cannot require employees to be vaccinated against coronavirus, we strongly recommend all staff receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they are eligible to reduce the health, social and emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases are guided by the *Australian Government- Department of Health* and local public health units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act. These apply to children and staff at the Service.

In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease at our service, staff who are not vaccinated will be notified and should be excluded from the workplace.

To help minimise the spread of illness and infectious diseases within our Service, rigorous hygiene and infection control procedures are implemented including:

- effective and frequent hand washing hygiene
- cough and sneeze etiquette
- use of gloves by staff when administering medication, nappy changing, wiping children's noses, cleaning etc
- effective cleaning of the environment, toys and resources
- requesting parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure at the Service and
- exclusion of children, educators or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus.
- wearing of face masks when mandated by Public Health Orders.

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- staff members are informed about sick leave entitlements during the induction process
- staff members provide an Immunisation History Statement at time of employment and update this record whenever they receive a seasonal vaccination
- all staff are aware of the required procedure of informing management when they are sick and unable to attend the workplace
- staff members are encouraged to disclose any health problems that may be life threatening or may affect their work [risk of anaphylaxis, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy]
- where a staff member applies for sick leave of three (3) days or more, a certificate stating the nature of the illness and period of time the person is unfit for work must be provided by a registered medical practitioner
- in the case of carer's leave, staff may be asked to provide a medical certificate or statutory declaration if they are required to care for family member
- staff are aware of their accrued leave balance each year
- management monitors and review staff absences regularly
- staff are provided with information about available vaccinations to help protect them from serious illnesses such as whooping cough and COVID-19
- staff are encouraged to have yearly influenza vaccinations
- staff adhere to our *Work Health and Safety Policy*
- incidents and accidents are reported in accordance with Education and Care Services National Regulations and Work Health and Safety guidelines
- return to work programs are facilitated to assist employees return to work following an injury or incident as per Workers Compensation obligations
- the regulatory authority is notified of any serious incident for which emergency services attend the service within 7 days.
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Employees will:

- monitor their own health and not attend the workplace if they have an infectious illness or display symptoms of an illness
- provide management with their *Immunisation History Statement* or other records from their general practitioner to provide evidence of immunisations
- consider disclosing any health diagnosis that may be life threatening or may affect their work [risk of anaphylaxis, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy]
- provide a health care plan to provide guidance on management of their health care need in case of an emergency e.g. ASCIA Anaphylaxis Action Plan
- inform the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person the location of their EpiPen® if they are at risk of anaphylaxis

- regularly review their health care plans if they have ongoing medical needs such as asthma or anaphylaxis, epilepsy or diabetes [or any other medical condition that requires ongoing management]
- notify management as soon as reasonably practicable if they are unable to attend work due to illness or injury
- provide evidence of their illness or injury as soon as practicable if sick leave exceeds three (3) days
- communicate their recovery time/plan openly and honestly with management
 - abide by management's decision if requested, to take leave due to an outbreak of an infectious disease and they are considered 'at risk'
 - regularly review their health care plans if they have ongoing medical needs such as asthma or anaphylaxis
 - update their emergency contact details in staff records annually or when required
 - assist work colleagues to understand their own health, safety and wellbeing accountabilities and responsibilities
 - be excluded from the Service if they have had diarrhoea and vomiting for 48 hours after symptoms have ceased to reduce infection transmission
 - adhere to exclusion/isolation periods if they have any infectious disease
 - inform management if their medical condition/illness or injury affects their ability to perform their job
 - inform management if prescribed medication may cause health or safety issues for themselves or others (eg: medication making them drowsy)

Leave entitlements

Staff are eligible for sick leave, also known as personal leave, to take time off work for personal illness and in certain circumstances, time off work to help care for ill or injured family members. Sick leave must not be used absences are not connected with ill health.

Under the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, full time and part time employees are entitled to 12 days of sick and carer's leave for each year of employment. Sick leave accumulates in days each year. Casuals are not entitled to paid sick or carer's leave.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Employees are required to notify management if they are affected by an infectious disease. Privacy laws, however, protect staff members from disclosing other non-infectious illnesses to their employer.

Information about an employee's health cannot be shared with others without their consent. This may be applicable for employees who have cancer or a mental illness.

Employees should inform management if reasonable adjustments need to be made to their duties to allow them to continue to work due to their illness.

Advice from a registered medical practitioner may be required to assist in managing work duties and ensuring the wellbeing and safety of others.

Returning to work after surgery

Staff members who have undergone any type of surgery will need to take advice from their doctor/surgeon as to when it is appropriate and safe to return to the workplace.

A medical clearance statement will be required to ensure the staff member is fit and able to return to normal duties.

Reporting outbreaks to the public health unit

The Approved Provider is required to notify the local Public Health Unit (PHU) by phone (call 1300 066 055) as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled at the Service or **staff member** is suffering from one of the following vaccine preventable diseases or highly infectious illnesses:

- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Haemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella ('German measles')
- Measles
- Pertussis ('whooping cough')
- Tetanus
- An outbreak of 2 or more people with gastrointestinal or respiratory illness
- any confirmed case of coronavirus- (COVID-19)

Policy Evaluation

Our Service relies on employees being at their best every day and we are committed to promote the health, safety and well-being of staff members at all times. This policy will be evaluated and reviewed annually as part of our review cycle.

Links to other Policies

Code of Conduct Policy

Control of Infectious Diseases Policy

Handwashing Policy

Immunisation Policy

Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Sick Child Policy

Sourced from

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

Australian Government- Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/>

Department of Health NSW Vaccination of staff working in Early Childhood Services

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Factsheets/vaccination-early-childhood-staff.pdf>

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

Fair Work Ombudsman <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/sick-and-carers-leave>

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020).

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012) (updated June 2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.*

Public Health Act 2010

Privacy Act 1988

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Safe Work Australia – www.safework.nsw.gov.au

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth).

Work Health and Safety Regulations 2017

Ratified by Management Committee November 2021

Review October 2024