

## 3.8 PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

Our service has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the rights and best interests of the child are paramount and that we will provide training, resources, information and guidance to support this in order to:

- ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times.
- ensure that people educating and caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child;
- protect and advocate the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times;
- maintaining a culture in which children's rights are respected;
- encouraging active participation from families at the service, supporting a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development.
- Ensure the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are implemented and regularly reviewed.

### PURPOSE

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.

### STRATEGIES

#### The Physical Environment

In order to promote a safe physical environment, we will:

- Ensure all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards.
- Conduct daily checks of the environment and equipment.
- 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 the health and safety are minimised.
- Conduct a risk assessment of the service environment at the start of each term 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.
- Ensure storage of hazardous products including chemicals and medications.

### **Digital Technologies and the Online Environment**

- All stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure online safety, as their children grow up in digital contexts. Children will be provided information about online safety.
- Services are recommended to be following the four fundamental principles and recommended practices:
  - Young children’s relationship with adults and peers matter in digital contexts
  - Young children’s health and wellbeing is actively supported in digital contexts.
  - Young children’s citizenship is upheld and fostered in digital contexts.
  - Play and pedagogy promotes young children’s exploration, social interaction, collaboration and learning in digital contexts.

### **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.

### **Staff**

- 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.
- Working with vulnerable people/children check details must be included on volunteer staff records.
- Ensure rigorous induction processes for staff, volunteers and students that embed Child Safe Standards and practices of a child safe culture.
- Respond proactively to emerging staff performance concerns.

## Child Protection

- Ensure that all staff including educators, students and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent as required by state or territory specific legislation.
- Ensure that all staff are given information and/or training about child protection law and any obligations they have under that law.
- Refer to the Child Protection Policy.
- All educators and volunteers of our service are required to familiarise themselves with child protection legislation in NSW and take appropriate measures according to NSW protocols if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and have current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person.
- Complaint handling policies include policies and procedures for managing complaints about children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.
- Complaint handling policies and procedures are child focussed, in accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe organisations.
- Staff will undertake training 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 processed s. mandatory reporter.
  - Be able to recognise the factors that increase a child's vulnerability to maltreatment.
  - Be aware of the vulnerabilities which may indicate the need to assess, monito, or curtail the behaviour of individuals in relation to children and young people within organisations.
  - Implement procedures for releasing children only into the care of authorised persons.

## Preventing other harms and hazards

The service will ensure that:

- At a governance level, Approved Providers/Nominated supervisors identify and manage risk that align with the Child Safe standards.
- Risk assessments are conducted regularly for excursions and transportation provided or arranged by the service in conjunction with the Service's excursion and / or transportation of Children policies.
- Risk minimisation practices are in place for the management of medical conditions in conjunction with the service's Medical Conditions policy.
- Emergency evacuation plans specific to the service are implemented in conjunction with the service's Emergency and Evacuation Policy.
- If staff consume hot drinks, they are made and consumed away from children.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Approved Provider

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011 with regard to the delivery and collection of children at all times.
- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development, by including this in our annual budgets.
- Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84).

### Nominated Supervisor

- Provide all staff and educators working directly with the children with access to the *Mandatory Reporter Guide* to assist them in their reporting – <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>
- Ensuring screening and suitability processes are maintained to meet policy and legislated requirements.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers, and students to implement this policy, as required
- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Cooperate with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.
- Ensure that families are made aware of support services available to them and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Ensure that all staff who work with children are supported to implement this policy in the service
- Protect the rights of children and families, and encourage their participation in decision-making at the service.

### 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.
- Cooperating 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 those 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.
- Offering support to the child and their family, and to other staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at the service.
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- Adhering to the service policies.

### **Families**

- Reading and complying with this policy.
- Reporting any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisor.

### **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 18 months.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

<b>Relevant Legislation</b>	Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. Reg. 82, 83, 84, 99, 103, 115, 122, 123, 158, 159, 165, 168(2)(h), 175, 176 Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 Sections 18, 20, 162A, 165, 166, 167 Australian Child Protection Legislation Australian Privacy Principles <a href="http://www.oaic.gov.au">www.oaic.gov.au</a> Privacy Act 1988
<b>Related to NQS QA</b>	2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 7.1, 7.2
<b>Related Policies</b>	Child Protection Policy Interactions with Children Policy Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
<b>Sources &amp; Further Reading</b>	Policy written by Community Early Learning Australia <a href="http://www.acecqa.com.au">www.acecqa.com.au</a> Working with children check - <a href="http://kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check">kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check</a> <a href="http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe">www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe</a> Mandatory Reporter Guide and Training including e learning presentation - <a href="http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au">www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au</a> Childsafety Australia - <a href="http://childsafetyaustralia.com.au">childsafetyaustralia.com.au</a> Australian Childhood Foundation - <a href="http://www.childhood.org.au">www.childhood.org.au</a>

<b>POLICY REVIEWED</b>	<b>MODIFICATIONS</b>	<b>NEXT REVIEW DATE</b>
February 2022	Checked regulations, updated copy	2024
October 2023	Updated to be in line with CELA sample	2025
February 2024	Added in 'Digital Technologies' section and 2 bullets regarding Complaints Procedures in the Child Protection section.	2026