



BOURKE AND DISTRICT CHILDREN'S SERVICES

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDRENS HEALTH AND SAFETY

POLICY NAME: INFECTIOUS DISEASES

POLICY STATEMENT

The spread of infections in the early childhood environment is facilitated by microbial contamination of the environment, as well as the greater exposure to young children who are still developing hygienic behaviours and habits. Our service will minimise children's exposure to infectious diseases by adhering to all recommended guidelines from relevant government authorities regarding the prevention of infectious diseases, promoting practices that reduce the transmission of infection, ensuring the exclusion of sick children and educators, supporting child immunisation, and implementing effective hygiene practices.

Our service will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and state NSW Ministry of Health about infectious diseases as required. Recommendations from the Health Departments will be strictly adhered to at all times.

BACKGROUND

The Education and Care Services National Regulations requires Approved Providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place in relation to dealing with infectious diseases. Our Service has adopted the 'Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (Fifth Edition)' publication recommendations developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council to guide our practices to help limit the spread of illness and disease. We refer staff members and families to the recommended minimum exclusion periods table and use this to determine the exclusion period of an unwell child or staff member from the service.

We are also guided by decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases by the Australian Government- Department of Health and local Public Health Units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act. The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded from the service depends on:

- How easily the infection can spread.
- How long the person is likely to be infectious.
- The severity of the infectious disease or illness.

OVERALL STRATEGIES / HOW WILL IT BE DONE?

PREVENTING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Children enter education and care services when their immune systems are still developing. They have not been exposed to many common germs and therefore are susceptible to bacteria that may cause infections. Given the close physical contact children have with other children in early childhood and care, it is very easy for infectious diseases and illnesses to spread through normal daily activities. Our service implements effective hygiene and infection control measures to limit the spread of illness and infectious diseases including:

- Effective hand washing hygiene.
- Cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Appropriate use of gloves.
- Exclusion of children or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus.
- Thorough end of day cleaning as well as spot cleaning throughout the day.
- Ensuring adequate ventilation.

IMMUNISATION REQUIREMENTS

Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent many childhood infectious diseases. All families are supported to keep their children's immunisations up-to-date. The relevant vaccinations are those under the National Immunisation Program (NIP), which covers the vaccines usually administered before age five. These vaccinations must be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). Educators and other staff at our service are highly recommended to keep up to date with all immunisations including yearly influenza vaccinations. These include vaccinations recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Children who are unimmunised are unable to commence at our service unless:

- They are on a recognised catch-up schedule.



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- Are unimmunised due to medical reasons as described in the Australian Immunisation Handbook. (In both of these cases, an appropriate form signed by a medical practitioner who meets the criteria stated by the Australian Government must be provided).
- We acknowledge that unforeseen circumstances can sometimes result in vaccinations becoming slightly overdue. We therefore allow children to continue to attend our service for up to four weeks after their vaccinations are due however, if their vaccinations are not completed by this date the child will be excluded from the service until one of the below documents are provided:
 - AIR Immunisation History Statement to show that vaccinations are now up to date.
 - AIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form to show that there is an appropriate medical reason for the vaccinations to be out of date.
 - AIR Immunisation History Form to show that the child is on an approved catch up schedule.
- In the event of a specified vaccine preventable disease outbreak, children who are not fully vaccinated for that disease will be excluded during the entirety of the outbreak to protect them from infection and prevent them from passing the disease to others.
- Due to the severity of the risks involved, exclusion during an outbreak will happen immediately and the four week period where children could previously continue to attend the service while their vaccinations were out of date will not apply.
- See Enrolment and Orientation Policy for more information.

REPORTING OUTBREAKS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Outbreaks of communicable diseases and contagious viruses represent a threat to public health. To help prevent outbreaks, the Department of Health monitors the number of people who contract certain infectious diseases and their characteristics, the recent travel or attendance of infected people in a public place or on public transport and works with health specialists and doctors to help prevent the transmission of diseases to other people.

The Public Health Act 2010 lawfully requires and authorises doctors, hospitals, laboratories, school principals and childcare centre directors to confidentially notify the Public Health Unit (PHU) of patients with certain conditions, and to provide the required information on the notification forms. Specialist trained public health staff review this information and if necessary, contact the patient's doctor, and sometimes the patient, to provide advice about disease control and to complete the collection of information. All information is held confidentially in order to protect the patient's privacy. Both the NSW and Commonwealth Privacy Acts only release/disclose patient information where it is lawfully required or authorised.

Our service is required to notify the local PHU (Phone: 1300 066 055) as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled at the service is suffering from one of the following vaccine preventable diseases:

- Diphtheria.
- Mumps.
- Poliomyelitis.
- Haemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib).
- Meningococcal disease.
- Rubella ('German measles').
- Measles.
- Pertussis ('whooping cough').
- Tetanus.
- (Although not a vaccine preventable disease, a notification is also required for an outbreak of 2 or more people with gastrointestinal or respiratory illness).

In addition, the Nominated Supervisor must notify the Regulatory Authority of any incidence of a notifiable infectious disease or illness via the [NQA-ITS](#).

MANAGING A POSITIVE CASE OF COVID-19



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Changes may occur to how our service manages positive cases of COVID-19 and we will be directed by our Regulatory Authority as to what procedures need to be followed to ensure the health and safety of all staff, children and families.

Although it is no longer a legal requirement for a child or adult to self-isolate if diagnosed with COVID-19 our service strongly recommends that any person who tests positive to COVID-19 informs their workplace/employer and education and care service as soon as possible. Children, educators and staff who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to be excluded whilst displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE APPROVED PROVIDER AND NOMINATED SUPERVISORS WILL:

- Ensure there are policies and procedures in place for dealing with infectious diseases and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed.
- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Ensure educators (including casual staff) receive information and induction training to fulfil their roles effectively, including being made aware of the Infectious Diseases Policy, their responsibilities in implementing it, and any changes that are made over time.
- Ensure students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy.
- Ensure that all information regarding the prevention of infectious diseases is sourced from a recognised health authority.
- Develop an enrolment form that captures all required information regarding a child's health history, including their immunisation status (Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) as evidence) and any medical conditions.
- Upload enrolment information to the child's Xplor profile, including their Immunisation History Statement and any other relevant documentation, all of which will be kept up-to-date.
- Ensure the Immunisation History Statement confirms the child is fully immunised for their age or has a medical reason not be immunised or is on a recognised catch up schedule.
- Review children's immunisation regularly, updating the child's records kept at the service, and provide reminders to families as required.
- Report outbreaks to the Public Health Unit as required and ensure that all necessary requirements are met and advice is followed.
- Notify the Regulatory Authority of any incidence of a notifiable infectious disease or illness via the [NQA-ITS](#).
- Notify families as soon as practicable when an infectious disease occurs through various channels of communication. For example, verbally, sign at the entry of the service, Facebook.
- Provide families with information regarding an infectious disease that is present at the service and display the Infectious Diseases Notification Form (as soon as practicable after the occurrence). This information is to include:
 - The nature of the illness.
 - The incubation period.
 - Infectious and exclusion periods.
- Provide families with relevant sourced materials and information on infectious diseases, health, and hygiene including:
 - The National Immunisation Program (NIP).
 - Exclusion guidelines in the event of a vaccine preventable illness at the Service for children that are not immunised or have not yet received all their immunisations
 - Advice and information regarding any infectious diseases in general, and information regarding any specific infectious illnesses that are suspected/present in the service.
- Closely monitor health alerts and guidelines from Public Health Units and the Australian Government - Department of Health for any advice and emergency health management in the event of a contagious illness outbreak.
- Ensure exclusion periods for people with infectious diseases recommended by Government Authorities are implemented for all staff, children, parents, families and visitors.
- Ensure recommendations from Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (fifth edition) are implemented to maintain a healthy environment.



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- Ensure that should a child show signs of an infectious disease, an "Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness" record is completed as soon as practicable and on the same day of the illness occurring and that this is shared with the child's parents.
- Complete the register of Incident, Injury, Trauma or Illness and/or document incidents of infectious diseases no later than 24 hours after an illness or infectious disease occurring in the service.
- Ensure that all educators are aware of individual children's circumstances, including medical conditions.
- Ensure all educators are mindful and maintain confidentiality of individual children's medical circumstances.
- Ensure safe health and hygiene practices are implemented and a hygienic environment is promoted and maintained.
- Ensure children are supported in their understanding of health and hygiene practices throughout the daily program and routine (hand washing, hand drying, cough and sneeze etiquette).
- Ensure educators and staff are aware of relevant immunisation guidelines for children and themselves as per The Australian Immunisation Handbook.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- Ensure that any child suspected of having an infectious illness is responded to and their health and their needs are supported at all times.
- Ensure families are aware of the need to collect or arrange for collection of their unwell child as soon as practicable from the service.
- Ensure that any child suspected of having an infectious illness is isolated from other children and supervised whilst waiting to be collected by a parent/guardian or authorised nominee.
- Ensure appropriate health and safety practices are implemented when treating ill children including; Wearing disposable gloves, a face mask or other PPE if needed.
- Complete an "Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness" record as soon as practicable and on the same day of the illness occurring and share with the child's parents.
- Ensure families are aware of the need to collect their unwell child/ children as soon as practicable from the Service.
- Be mindful of confidentiality of individual children's medical circumstances and ensure this is maintained.
- Ensure all resources or items touched by a child with a suspected illness are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Consider the combination of children to decrease the risk of attaining an infectious illness when planning the routines/program of the day.
- Ensure that our programs and daily routines provide opportunities for children to learn how to keep themselves healthy and to learn appropriate hygiene practices.
- Role model health and personal hygiene practices with children, allowing them to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing and to reduce the transmission of infection.
- Follow the exclusion periods recommended in Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (fifth edition) if they are unwell.

FAMILIES WILL:

- Adhere to the service's restrictions of entry into the service in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus.
- Not send their child to the service if they display symptoms of an infectious illness or disease.
- Follow the exclusion periods recommended in Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (fifth edition) if their child is unwell.
- Alert the service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness.
- Provide the service with a copy of one or more of the following documents:
 - An Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement which shows that the child is 'up to date' with their scheduled vaccinations.
 - An AIR Immunisation History Form on which the immunisation provider has certified that the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule.
 - An AIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form which has been certified by a GP.
- Advise the Service when their child's medical records are updated and provide an updated Medical Action Plan (if applicable).



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- Provide the service with an updated copy of their child's current immunisation record when the next scheduled immunisation has been completed. (A current AIR Immunisation History Statement can be accessed at any time by the parent/guardian through logging in to their Medicare online account [myGov website](#).)
- When possible, encourage children to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing and encourage effective hygiene practices.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with children, families, staff, educators, and management.

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Standard 1	Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture
Standard 2	Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 3	Families and communities are informed and involved
Standard 4	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
Standard 5	People working with children are suitable and supported
Standard 7	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
Standard 10	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

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2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
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 AND NATIONAL LAW

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
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172(2)(g)	A notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises
173	Prescribed information to be displayed
175(2)(c)	Prescribed information to be notified to the Regulatory Authority including any circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service

STATUTORY LEGISLATION & CONSIDERATIONS

[Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 \(Amended 2023\)](#)

[Education and Care Services National Regulations \(Amended 2023\)](#)

[Public Health Act 2010](#)

[Public Health Amendment \(Review\) Act 2017](#)

[Public Health Regulation 2012](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

SOURCES

Acknowledgement to Community Early Learning Australia and Childcare Centre Desktop.



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- Regulation amendments incorporated
- Extra information added including:
 - Immunisation requirements
 - Reporting outbreaks to the public health unit and regulatory authority
 - Managing a positive case of COVID-19

PREVIOUS REVIEW

POLICY AUTHORISED BY

Prue Ritchie

DATE

January 2021