DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY

The National Quality Standard requires early childhood education and care services implement specific strategies to minimise the spread of infectious illness and maintain a healthy environment for all children, staff, educators and families. 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 and staff'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.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
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 LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
Sec. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
Sec.174(2)(a)	Serious incident- any emergency for which emergency services attended
12	Meaning of serious incident
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
83	Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs
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

89	First aid kits
90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
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- (2) any circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of Medication Policy Bottle Safety and Preparation Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Code of Conduct Policy Dental Health Policy Enrolment Policy Family Communication Policy Governance Policy Hand Washing Policy Health and Safety Policy	Immunisation Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Medical Conditions Policy Nappy Change and Toileting Policy Physical Environment Policy Pregnancy in Early Childhood Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Work Health and Safety Policy

PURPOSE

Children encounter many other children and adults within the Service environment which can result in the contraction of infectious illnesses. Our Service has a duty of care to ensure that children, families, educators, and visitors of the Service are provided with a high level of protection during the hours of the Service's operation. 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.

This policy communicates clear directions and guidance about protocols and actions to be followed to avoid adversely affecting the safety and health of children, other staff members and visitors to the service. A simple, safe and effective way of protecting individuals and others within the community against harmful diseases is immunisation.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the approved provider must ensure policies and procedures are in place in relation to dealing with infectious diseases. (ACECQA, August 2021).
Our Service is committed to minimise the spread of infectious diseases and viruses by implementing recommendations as stated in the Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th Edition) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council and advice provided from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

We are 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. Recommendations for managing positive cases of COVID-19 in early education and care is provided by Department of Education and Training.

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 and
- the severity of the infectious disease or illness.

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Quality Area 2 policies:

- Immunisation Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy and
- Handwashing Policy

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 as germs can be picked up directly from an infected person or from the environment. It is important to understand that an infected person may not show any signs or symptoms of illness.

Our Service implements rigorous hygienic practices to limit the spread of illness and infectious diseases including:

- immunisation- for children and adults
- effective hand washing hygiene
- respiratory hygiene- cough and sneeze etiquette
- appropriate use of gloves and other PPE
- exclusion of children, educators or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus
- effective environmental cleaning including toys, resources and bedding
- encouraging use of the outdoors environment
- requesting parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure at the Service
- ensuring adequate ventilation
- encouraging children, educators or staff to seek medical attention and get tested if they show symptoms of an infectious disease or virus, including COVID-19.

IMMUNISATION REQUIREMENTS

- Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent many child hood infectious diseases. Unvaccinated children due to their parent's objection are no longer able to be enrolled in approved early childcare services.
- Children who cannot be fully vaccinated due to a medical condition or who are on a recognised catch-up schedule may still be enrolled upon presentation of the appropriate form signed by a medical practitioner who meets the criteria stated by the Australian Government.
- Only parents of children who are fully immunised or are on a recognised catch-up schedule or have an approved medical exemption recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) can receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS). 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). The Australian Government

recommends all people over the age of 6 months have an annual Influenza (flu) vaccine and all adults receive COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters.

- Vaccination is important as not only can staff members catch a potentially serious infection such as measles or whooping cough, but they could also 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.

EXCLUDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS FROM THE SERVICE

'*Excluding children, staff and parents who are at risk of transmitting infection to others limits the spread of infection in education and care services*.' (Staying healthy, 2024, p. 75)

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded from the Service depends on:

- the type of infection
- if symptoms are present and how severe they are
- how easily the infection or disease can spread
- how long the person is likely to be infectious

When a child or adult has symptoms or has been diagnosed with an illness or infectious disease, the Service will refer to information about recommended exclusion periods from the Public Health Unit (PHU) and *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services, 6th edition.*

Although some illnesses will state '*not excluded*', any child or staff member displaying symptoms of an illness or condition are encouraged to stay at home and/or seek medical advice for any concerning symptoms or if symptoms continue.

Exclusion for common or concerning conditions

- When an infectious disease has been diagnosed or suspected, the Service will display appropriate documentation and alerts for families including information on the illness/disease, symptoms, infectious period and the exclusion period. (Fact sheets are available Staying Healthy Guidelines)
- If a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the Service, children who have not been fully immunised will be excluded from care; staff who are not vaccinated will be notified and should be excluded from the workplace. Management will check all children's immunisation records and alert parents as required.
- Staff and children that have had diarrhoea and/or vomiting will be excluded from the Service until there has not been any diarrhoea or vomiting for at least 24 hours. If the diarrhoea or vomiting are confirmed to be norovirus, they will be excluded until there has not been any diarrhoea or vomiting

for at least 48 hours. Staff who handle food will be excluded from the Service for up to 48 hours after they have stopped vomiting or having diarrhoea. [Staying healthy, 2024.]

- A medical clearance from the child's General Practitioner stating that the child is cleared to return to the childcare setting will also be required before the child returns to care

REPORTING OUTBREAKS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY(REG. 175 (2) (C)

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. Under the Commonwealth Privacy Acts, patient information is only released/disclosed where it is lawfully required or authorised. Management is required to notify the local PHU by phone 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

Notification is also required for:

- Gastroenteritis (if 2 or more people are affected and an outbreak is suspected)

Management will 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. The Approved Provider must also notify the Regulatory Authority of any incidence of a notifiable infectious disease or illness or when there is an outbreak of 5 or more people with COVID-19 within a 7-day period via the NQA-ITS .

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL ENSURE:

- that obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations* are met
- educators, staff, students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy and associated procedure
- all new employees are provided with a copy of this policy as part of their induction process
- families are aware of this *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy* upon enrolment
- children are protected from harm by ensuring relevant policies and procedures are followed regarding health and safety within the Service
- an Immunisation History Statement for each child is collected on enrolment and maintained/updated regarding the child's immunisation status (AIR) and any medical conditions
- a staff immunisation record that documents each staff member's previous infection or immunisations (including dates) is developed and maintained
- the Service implements recommendations from *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services- 6th Edition* to maintain a healthy environment
- that all information regarding the prevention and transmission of infectious diseases is sourced from a recognised Government Health authority Australian Government Department of Health
- exclusion periods for people with infectious diseases recommended by Government Authorities are implemented for all staff, children, parents, families and visitors
- the Public Health Unit is notified as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled has a vaccinated preventable disease
- the Public Health Unit is notified in the event of an outbreak of viral gastroenteritis. Management must document the number of cases, dates of onset, duration of symptoms. An outbreak is when

two or more children or staff have a sudden onset of diarrhoea or vomiting in a 2-day period. (NSW Government- Health 2019)

- after confirmation that a child is suffering from an infectious disease, and as soon as practical, the family of each child enrolled in the Service must be notified whilst maintaining the privacy of the ill/infectious child. Communication may be:
    - verbal
    - through a letter from the educator or approved provider
    - via electronic message- text message or email
    - notice clearly displayed at the Service
- families are advised that they are requested to alert the Service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness, including COVID-19
- daily attendance records for staff, children and visitors are up to date at all times
- safe health and hygiene practices are implemented at all times throughout the day
- educators and staff routinely role model hand washing, hand drying, cough and sneeze etiquette
- infection control practices are implemented for nappy changing and toileting
- effective environmental cleaning policies and procedures are adhered to all times
- 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)
- families are provided with relevant sourced materials and information on infectious diseases, health, and hygiene including:
    - the current National Immunisation Schedule
    - 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.
- all educators are mindful and maintain confidentiality of individual children's medical circumstances
- that opportunities for educators to source pertinent up to date information from trusted sources on the prevention of infectious diseases and maintaining health and hygiene are provided
- that opportunities for staff, children, and families to have access to health professionals by organising visits/guest speakers to attend the service to confirm best practice are provided
- families are advised to keep children at home if they are unwell and not return to the Service until they have improved

- the recommended minimum exclusion periods from *Staying healthy* are followed for children or staff depending on their symptoms or disease and whether a medical professional has diagnosed a specific condition
- to minimise the chance of disease/illness spreading, children must be well for 24hrs before returning to the Service
- to complete the register of *Incident, Injury, Trauma or Illness* and/or document incidents of infectious diseases no later than 24 hours of an illness or infectious disease occurring in the Service
- educators or staff who have diarrhoea or an infectious disease do not handle food for others and are not to return to work until they have been symptom free for 48 hours
- any risk to a child or adult with complex medical needs is minimised in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus. This may require a risk assessment and decision-making regarding the suitability of attendance of the child or staff member during this time.

EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- that any child suspected of having an infectious illness is responded to and their health and emotional needs supported at all times
- any child suspected of having an infectious illness is seperated from other children and supervised whilst waiting for collection by parents or guardian or emergency contact person
- that appropriate health and safety procedures are implemented when treating ill children- [wear disposable gloves, face mask or other PPE if needed]
- families are aware of the need to collect their unwell child/ children as soon as practicable from the Service
- all resources or items touched by a child with a suspected illness are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected- (cushions, pillows, toys)
- their own immunisation status is maintained, and the approved provider/nominated supervisor is advised of any updates to their immunisation status
- opportunities are provided for children to participate in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities, and intentional practice such as hand washing, sneezing and cough etiquette
- consideration is given to the combination of children to decrease the risk of attaining an infectious illness when planning the routines/program of the day
- they adhere to the Service's *Health and Safety policy* including:
    - hand washing
    - daily cleaning of the Service

  - wearing gloves (particularly when in direct contact with bodily fluids- nappy changing and toileting)
  - appropriate and hygienic handling and preparation of food
  - providing adequate ventilation to reduce the transmission of diseases that are airborne
- they maintain up-to-date knowledge regarding best practice principles and high standards of hygiene to reduce the spread of spread of infectious disease and promote good health and safety
- bedding is cleaned using detergent and water after each use and if the surface is known to be contaminated with a potential infectious disease, disinfectant is also used to clean beds
- that all play dough is freshly made every week. If there is an outbreak of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, or any other contagious communicable disease, play dough is to be discarded at the end of each day and a new batch made each day for the duration of the outbreak
- children and adults wash their hands before and after using play dough.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR MINIMISING THE SPREAD OF DISEASE WITHIN OUR SERVICE

STAFF AND EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- a healthy environment is provided through adherence to the Staying Healthy cleaning guidelines
- utility gloves are worn and washed and dried between uses
- surfaces are cleaned first with detergent and water before using disinfectants.
- mops with detachable heads used for toilet accidents are to be soaked in disinfectant in a bucket in the laundry sink and then air-dried
- that a daily clean is carried out on other surfaces that may transmit germs such as high touch objects including doorknobs, tables, light switches, handles, remotes, play gyms, low shelving, etc. This will be increased to several times a day if an outbreak of an infectious disease/virus has been recorded in the Service or to minimise the risk of transmission of a virus such as COVID-19
- that if a child has a toileting accident, the items are placed in a nappy bag with the child's name on it. Families are encouraged to buy reusable waterproof wet bags to put soiled clothing in.
- cloths and mops are colour coded so that a separate cloth or mop is used to clean floors, bathroom, art and craft, and meal surfaces
- detachable mop heads and cloths are washed in a washing machine using hot water
- that any toy that is mouthed by a child is placed immediately in the 'toys to be washed' basket located on the top shelf in the nappy change area and washed in the dishwasher at the end of the day. All washable toys out on display for the children are to be washed on a weekly basis to decrease the risk of cross contamination and recorded with the date and a signature as evidence.

- toys and equipment (that are difficult to wash) will be washed with detergent (or soap and water) and air-dried in sunlight
- washable toys and equipment will be washed in detergent and hot water or the dishwasher and aired to dry (toys will not be washed in the dishwasher at the same time as dishes). All toys and equipment that have been cleaned will be recorded on the toy cleaning register.
- dummies are stored out of children's reach and never shared with other children
- all cleaning procedures will be recorded on the Service's Cleaning Checklist
- all cushions, including floor cushions, should have removeable cushion covers and will be laundered regularly as well as whenever they are visibly dirty or contaminated
- floor surfaces will be cleaned on a daily basis after each meal and at the end of each day
- toilets/bathrooms will be cleaned in the middle of the day, the end of the day and whenever needed throughout the day using detergent and water followed by disinfectant and paper towel
- when cleaning up spills of faeces, vomit or urine off beds, floors, bathrooms etc. educators will use disinfectant on the surface after cleaning it with detergent and warm water
- management must ensure pregnant women are aware of the occupational risks and exposure to specific infectious diseases including Cytomegalovirus (CMV). Occupational risks of CMV in childcare should be individually managed and control measures implemented. Risk management may include ensuring pregnant women do not work with children under two years of age including avoiding changing nappies or assist in toileting or cleaning up toileting accidents to prevent unexpected cross contamination and risk of contracting Cytomegalovirus (CMV). (see *Pregnancy in Early Childhood Policy)*

FAMILIES WILL:

- adhere to the Service's policies regarding *Dealing with Infectious Diseases*, *Immunisation*, *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness* and exclusion requirements
- alert the Service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness, including COVID-19
- exclude their child from care for the recommended minimum exclusion period if they display symptoms of an infectious illness or disease Exclusion for common or concerning conditions
- adhere to exclusion periods in the event of a vaccine preventable disease occurring in the Service and their child is not fully immunised
- adhere to the Service's restrictions of entry into the Service in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus
- adhere to the Service's policy regarding *Hand Washing*

- exclude their child from care if they display symptoms of an infectious illness or disease *or* in the event of a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the Service and their child is not immunised fully
- alert the Service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness, including COVID-19
- advise the Service of their child's immunisation status, by providing a current Immunisation History Statement recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) for the Service to copy and place in the child's file
- advise the Service when their child's medical management plan is updated
- provide sufficient spare clothing, particularly if the child is toilet training
- adhere to the Service's risk minimisation strategies if their child has complex medical needs in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus.

RESOURCES

Gastro Pack NSW Health

Common cold fact sheet

Exclusion for common or concerning conditions

NSW Health Stopping the spread of childhood infections factsheet.

Pregnancy Birth and Baby. *Cytomegalovirus (CMV) during pregnancy*.

RSV Fact Sheet

Time Out Keeping your child and other kids healthy! (Queensland Government)

Time Out Brochure Why do I need to keep my child at home?

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.

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2024). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. (2021). *Dealing with Infectious Diseases*.
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NSW Government. Department of Education. Managing COVID cases

NSW Government Department of Health. Vaccination requirements for child care.
Public Health Act 2010
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Public Health Regulation 2012
Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria
Safe Work Australia

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Krystle Hills	Centre Manager	15/01/2025
POLICY REVIEWED	January 2025	NEXT REVIEW DATE	January 2026
MODIFICATIONS	• review of policy following updated recommendations from Staying Healthy in Childcare 6th Edition • Links to Staying Healthy exclusion periods updated • Sources checked and updated as required		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
March 2024	• annual policy maintenance • deleted reference to 'Sick Children Policy' (now merged with Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy) • deleted managing COVID-19 positive case section • merged '*nominated supervisor/ responsible person educator'* section • order of some statements moved within paragraphs for consistency and repetition • minor formatting edits within text • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required		March 2025
MARCH 23	• Change of name of policy from *Control of Infectious Diseases* to *Dealing With Infectious Diseases* • Edits to COVID-19 practices and references • removal of reference to the COVID-19 Management Policy • policy maintenance • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required • minor formatting edits within text • continuous improvement/reflection section added • Childcare Centre Desktop Related resources section added		MARCH 2024