RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE AND PROCEDURE

Maintaining children's health, safety and wellbeing is pivotal in the early childhood setting. The Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations require Services to conduct risk assessments to identify, assess and minimise the risk of harm to children, staff and visitors of the Service. Policies and procedures are required to be prepared and reviewed to *ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury* (S.167).

When working in children's services the health, safety, and wellbeing of each child is paramount and while the majority of childcare facilities have much in common in the area of 'risk' there will be some attributes and influences unique to each. Risk assessments should involve nominated supervisors, educators and anyone who has a duty of care for those in the Service.

This document is a tool to assist you to:

- identify hazards or potential hazards in the Service environment
- assess the risk of harm or potential harm by considering the likelihood and consequences of possible situations
- determine if modifications are required to minimise or eliminate any risks by implementing control measures
- develop a risk assessment action plan
- record any risk assessment for the Service on the *Risk Assessment Register*
- check the *Risk Assessment Register* monthly to evaluate and review risk assessments on a regular and systematic basis.

Since an emergency can rarely be foreseen, it is imperative that the Service has well-rehearsed procedures and policies to cater for any likely incident. To meet regulatory requirements, emergency and evacuation procedures should be practiced every 3 months with educators, children, families, and any other visitor to the Service and ensure these rehearsals are documented [Reg. 97(3)(b)].

Rehearsals for other potential incidents or situations help identify and mitigate possible risks to children and may include incidents such as: a dangerous animal entering the Service, an emergency anaphylaxis incident, an injury/accident of an educator or an outbreak of a potentially dangerous disease (COVID-19).

GUIDELINES

These guidelines aim to assist the Service effectively manage risks and provide basic direction for risk management in early education and care services. They outline the broad steps involved which can be applied to various emergency situations or potential hazards relevant the individual Service's needs. It is important to comprehend the diverse emergency events that may more likely happen in particular geographical areas than others. The list below will help identify risks specific to your Service. However, there may be other risks not covered within this document that will need to address with an appropriate policy and procedure.

- natural disaster
- fire
- flood
- severe storm (dust storm, hail, blizzard, or ice)
- accident or injury to child or staff member
- road accident
- gas leak
- bomb threat
- act of terrorism/ hostage situation
- chemical or hazardous leaks and spills
- loss of power or water
- violent or potentially violent individual
- snake or other potentially dangerous animal
- outbreak of potentially dangerous disease or illness
- death of a child or adult

INTRODUCTION

The main consideration for risk management is the protection of children and staff within the Service. Managing risk involves identifying and assessing potential hazards and developing a Risk Assessment Action Plan implementing actions and control measures to manage identified risks. The *Risk Assessment Register* enables you to see when each risk assessment is due for review, with continual monitoring, evaluation and review of risk assessments the Service will be able to effectively manage risks.

Whilst emergencies can never be totally prevented, it is important to be aware of past situations, both within the Service, and in the local area. If you are unsure of possible potential hazards, a Google search can help. Simply search for the event and the suburb to locate relevant information. For example, a search for '*Bushfire Denmark*

Western Australia', will provide recent Emergency Bushfire warnings and Department of Fire and Emergency Services information.

Risk assessments must be reviewed at least annually or as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the safe evacuation of children. All risk assessments will be regularly assessed and evaluated to facilitate continuous improvement in our Service.

If a risk concerning the safe evacuation of a child is identified during the risk assessment, the approved provider must update relevant policies, for example the *Emergency and Evacuation Policy,* and procedure as soon as possible. The risk assessment is to be stored safely and securely and kept for a period of 3 years.

REQUIRED RISK ASSESSMENTS

In accordance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, Services are required to conduct comprehensive risk assessments across various operational areas. These assessments are crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of children under their care. Regulations where risk assessments are required include:

- Regulation 84C - *Sleep and Rest*
- Regulation 90 - *Medical Risk Minimisation (Medical Conditions)*
- Regulation 97 - *Potential Emergencies*
- Regulation 100, 101 - *Excursions*
- Regulation 102AAC - *Safe Arrival of Children (Not required by LCCC)*
- Regulation 102B, 102C – *Transport*
- Regulation 116 – *Assessment of Family Day Care residence and venue (Not required by LCCC)*

RISK ASSESMENT STEPS

STEP 1	Identify the hazard or potential hazard. Use *Guiding Questions* to be aware of potential risks.
STEP 2	Assessing the risk of harm or potential harm. *Likelihood and Consequences*.
STEP 3	Risk Rating Matrix
STEP 4	Risk Assessment Action Plan
STEP 5	Evaluate and Review

STEP 1: GUIDING QUESTIONS - Identify the hazard or potential hazard		
1	Each question on the **Guiding Questions** aims to assist in determining the severity of the consequences of any unplanned event.	
2	Identify potential threats or developing risks associated to the Service by reflecting on the guiding questions. Answer '*Yes*' or '*No*' to each question. For any question answered 'no', consider if any adjustment or modification can be implemented to minimise or eliminate the risk.	
3	Identify potential events or activities which may be unique to the Laverton Community Childrens Centre or local geographical area and as a team develop other guiding questions.	
4	There may be many questions in Step 1 that will not relate to the identified risk but continue to work through each one. These are prompts to determine: policy adjustments, procedures, purchases and education so the team have the ability to take quick and effective action if and when required.	
IMPORTANT: answers form critical content for your RISK ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN		

STEP 2: ASSESSING THE LIKELIHOOD AND CONSEQUENCES		
1	Consider Laverton Community Children's centre physical attributes and preparedness (policies and procedures) that may also affect the outcome of any given situation. When assessing risks, it is imperative to think about all possible consequences of a single situation or event.	
2	Consider the likelihood that the potential hazard will occur at the Service. Use the *Assessing the Likelihood* table below to identify the likelihood for each activity or event.	
3	Consider and evaluate the consequences should this event/emergency/situation happen. Use the *Assessing the Consequences* table below to identify the consequence for each activity or event.	
IMPORTANT: *Do not attempt to assess multiple events or activities at the same time. Open a new risk assessment action plan for each event or activity.*		

ASSESSING THE LIKELIHOOD

ALMOST CERTAIN	Has occurred on an annual basis (or more frequently) in the past
LIKELY	Has occurred in the past few years
POSSIBLE	May occur at some stage (has occurred at least once in the history of the Service)
UNLIKELY	Has never occurred within the Service but has been known to infrequently occur in similar early education and care services in the local geographic area
PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE	It is not known to have occurred in any similar early education and care service within the local geographic area

ASSESSING THE CONSEQUENCES

CRITICAL	**Extreme risk**. Death or permanent disability or multiple serious injuries. Loss of or catastrophic damage to premises. Risk needs careful planning and consideration required before going ahead- consultation and guidance required-policies/procedures/external professionals.
MAJOR	**High risk.** Complete a risk assessment and consider if risk is worth accepting. Serious long-term injury or illness could occur. Major damage to premises.
MODERATE	**Medium risk**. Deal with the hazard as soon as possible. Complete risk assessment to implement control measures to manage and reduce risk. Medical attention may be required. Damage to premises may occur.
MINOR	**Low risk**. Deal with the hazard when able-implement effective control measures to reduce risk. First aid may be required. Minor damage to premises. Unlikely to cause long-term problems.
INSIGNIFICANT	**Very low risk.** Deal with the hazard when able. No first aid required. No interruption to general operations. Damage to premises unlikely.

STEP 3: RISK RATING MATRIX		
1	Reflecting on the guiding questions, the following table shows the risk rating when combining the **likelihood** of an event happening with the **potential** consequences.	
2	Remember that the consequences may be altered due to answers given above. However, these can be reviewed and amended if changes are consequently made to the premises or the Service procedures that will minimise or eliminate a particular risk.	
IMPORTANT: *A final risk rating can be selected once you have considered the **likelihood** and **consequences** of a potential event.*		

RISK RATING MATRIX

LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE LEVEL					
		Critical	Major	Moderate	Minor	Insignificant
	Almost Certain	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	High	Medium
	Likely	Extreme	Extreme	High	Medium	Medium
	Possible	Extreme	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Unlikely	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very Low
	Practically Impossible	Medium	Medium	Low	Very Low	Very Low

STEP 4: RISK ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN		
1	Using the **Risk Assessment Action Plan** template, record the potential risks for the event or activity. Use the table to prioritise policies and procedures that may need updating or reviewing. For example, if procedures are not currently in place for an item with a risk rating of 'Extreme', this would be a matter requiring urgent attention. At the other end of the scale, you may not need a policy or procedure for an item with a risk rating of 'Very Low', unless required by Regulations.	
2	Identify any potential emergency events or activities that may occur within the local area that may be a risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of children, staff or visitors.	
3	Determine appropriate elimination or control measures to minimise risk of harm.	
4	Consider if the level of risk is acceptable. If the level of risk is not acceptable, additional control measures or elimination will need to be identified and implemented. These may include the following options: - sharing the risk (outsourcing, professional assistance) - terminate (cease the activity) - accept (accept the level of risk with appropriate authorisation) - reduce (reduce the risk level by applying additional control measures until the risk is acceptable. Consultation with relevant authorities may assist- e.g., Rural Fire Service, SES/local government)	
5	Identify responsibilities and provide date of when this must be completed.	

STEP 5: EVALUATE AND REVIEW		
1	A Risk Assessment must be monitored and evaluated to determine how well it has eliminated or managed the identified hazard. Alternative control measures may be required to achieve the best outcome.	
2	The Risk Assessment should be reviewed *at least* annually or following a local emergency event such as severe storm or bushfire.	
3	A regular and ongoing review of Risk Assessments will ensure eliminations or control measures are appropriate and up to date. This ensures that the risks or potential harm can be managed as low risk.	

IMPORTANT:
This *Risk Assessment Guide* and *Risk Assessment Action Plan* are abridged versions and ultimately designed to help the Service begin the risk management process. Once these steps are completed, apply the mindset of 'continuous improvement' and consistently work toward the most efficient and effective procedures possible to assess and manage risks within your Service environment.

REVIEW OF PROCEDURE			
Date procedure created	14/06/2023	To be reviewed	April 2026
Approved by	Krystle Hills	Signature	
Procedure Reviewed Date	Modifications/Changes		
22 April 2025	Policy reviewed, minor edits • Required risk assessments added • Info added in guidelines and introduction		