

Coronavirus Policy

NQS

QA2	2.1.2	Health practices and procedures Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
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National Law

Section	167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
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National Regulations

Reg	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
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Aim

To ensure all employees and families implement appropriate risk management procedures to prevent the spread of coronavirus or reduce the potential for the illness to spread.

Related Policies

- Excursion Policy
- Fees Policy
- Food, Nutrition and Beverage Policy
- Health Hygiene and Safe Food Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Infectious Diseases Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Relationships with Children Policy
- Sleep, Rest, Relaxation and Clothing Policy
- Work, Health and Safety Policy

Implementation

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause illnesses similar to the common cold, but it can also cause more serious respiratory diseases. Most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not coronavirus. People at higher risk of catching the virus include older people, those with underlying medical problems and Indigenous Australians. The threats posed by the virus mean serious steps must be taken to stop the spread of the disease.

As outlined in our Infectious Disease and Health, Hygiene and Safe Food Policies, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators and staff implement strict hygiene and infection control

procedures at all times to prevent or minimise the spread of contagious illnesses. Hygiene measures and exclusion principles outlined in these policies continue to apply, and will be informed by current guidance on coronavirus issued by relevant Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments including:

- [Federal Department of Health coronavirus health alerts](#) which are updated daily
- [State/Territory Education Departments](#) which may issue coronavirus updates directly to service providers. Latest updates and resources can also be reviewed online
- [Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment Information](#) including [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and email updates [Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#)
- [Federal Department of Health](#) coronavirus Information Sheets which include:
 1. [‘Information on the use of surgical masks’](#)
 2. [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#)
 3. [COVID-19-Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 4. [‘Information for employers’](#) which covers when staff cannot go to work, what to tell staff, cleaning precautions and how to help prevent spread of Coronavirus.

If in doubt about current coronavirus guidance, the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will contact the **Federal coronavirus hotline on 1800 020 080** or their State/Territory health Department.

What must employees and families do?

Comply with government guidance

The Approved Provider, employees and volunteers and families must:

- **comply with guidance issued by Government agencies, including in relation to attendance, quarantine and self-isolation.** This includes ensuring they/a child/a family member comply with isolation requirements and stay home for 14 days where required eg arriving in Australia from overseas or close contact with someone who has the virus ie face to face for at least 15 minutes or in the same closed space for at least 2 hours
- **seek medical attention** if they develop symptoms of coronavirus including fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath. Call ahead before visiting the doctor/hospital to advise them of your symptoms, and wear a surgical mask when visiting the medical facility
- **comply with all service policies including Infectious Diseases Policy** which requires ill children and adults to remain at home and comply with relevant Exclusion periods. Note employees, volunteers and families must comply with any isolation/exclusion periods in relation to coronavirus implemented by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor including periods which exceed government requirements
- **agree to have their temperature tested & recorded** before entry to the service if the Nominated Supervisor or staff reasonably believe a child or adult may have a fever. If a fever of 37 degrees or higher is returned you will be unable to enter the service.
- **advise the service** if they develop symptoms of the virus or are confirmed to have the virus. This is particularly important if they have been at the service before a positive test
- **provide written clearance** from a doctor after a period of isolation or quarantine related to coronavirus confirming they/child/family member are not contagious and may return to the service

- **complete a Health Declaration** if requested by staff declaring they are healthy and do not have any symptoms of coronavirus before entering the service.

Implement effective hygiene process

The coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through droplets of saliva produced when a person coughs or sneezes. Droplets cannot go through skin and people can only be infected if they touch their mouth, nose or eyes once their skin (ie hands) is contaminated. Droplets usually travel no farther than 1 metre through the air. This means the transmission of droplets can occur when people:

- have direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
- have close contact with an infected person who coughs or sneezes
- touch objects or surfaces like door handles or tables contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touch their mouth or face.

The Approved Provider will ensure all staff complete the online [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) made available by the Federal Department of Health. Employees and volunteers will ensure they continue to implement hygiene processes outlined in the Health, Hygiene and Safe Food Policy to ensure high standards of hygiene and infection control at all times. This includes ensuring they and where relevant children:

- wash hands frequently with soap and water including before and after eating or handling food, going to the toilet, changing a nappy, handling play dough, using gloves, and after wiping or touching nose and cleaning up spills of body fluids
- wash hands in ways that meet the principles recommended by the World Health Organisation in the following videos [wash hands with soap and water](#) and [wash hands with alcohol based sanitiser](#)
- cough and sneeze into their inner elbow, or use a tissue to cover their mouth and nose and placing tissues in the bin immediately after use

If using alcohol-based hand sanitiser in place of soap it will contain 60-80% alcohol and antibacterial soap/gel will never be used.

In addition the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure educators engage in regular handwashing with children and cleaning requirements are documented and completed more frequently than usual. This includes regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces like door knobs, bathrooms (eg taps, toilets), tables and chairs, phones, tablets, keyboards. Cleaning staff, including contracted cleaning staff, will implement the procedures outlined in the '[Information for employers](#)' and [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#) Information Sheets including:

- wearing gloves and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after wearing gloves
- wearing surgical masks and eye protection if person with the virus or in isolation has been in the area being cleaned or there are spills of body fluids which could be infected with the virus
- disinfecting surfaces with an anti-viral disinfectant after cleaning with detergent and water.

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure hand hygiene posters are displayed in areas which can easily be seen by families, including the front entrance, and require all employees

and families to use hand sanitiser provided at service entrances. They will also place signs and posters about physical distancing around the Service like those from [Safework Australia](#). Educators will ensure children's are sprayed with a disinfectant spray (eg: Glen 20) upon arrival and departure of the service.

Social distancing

We're also implementing the following social distancing strategies where possible to limit the potential spread of the infection:

- restricting number of parents in service dropping off or picking up children eg by asking parents to remain in car and wait for advice to enter service & using i-pad sign in /out.
- putting indicators (such as tape or mats) on the floor so families and visitors stand at least 1.5 metres away from each other and educators.
- deferring activities that lead to mixing of children and staff from different rooms/groups
- avoiding situations where children are required to queue, assemble in large groups or hold hands
- staggering lunch /snack times to reduce number of children playing outside at one time and number of staff in staff room to 2 only.
- staggering children's attendance where possible
- cancelling unnecessary visitors and all excursions to public areas where other members of the public may be (this excludes bush walks & excursions for exercising – permitted no members of the public are in the same area).
- arranging for deliveries to be dropped away from main entrance or collected from vehicles by one or two staff using contactless acceptance measures
- requiring essential visitors to sign a COVID-19 declaration that they are healthy and do not have any symptoms of the virus.
- increasing the use of technology like Skype and Zoom to ensure children can continue to communicate with community members in a protected environment
- maintaining 1.5 metres distance when children are seated where possible.
- maintaining 1.5 metres between cots, stretchers, between furniture and seating arrangements in staff common rooms.
- ceasing activities which may have a higher risk of infection including play dough, cooking and dress up activities
- providing children with set resources for the day rather than bringing new resources out throughout the day. Ensuring all resources are wiped clean throughout the day.
- serving food to children rather than providing sharing plates
- increasing supervision in bathrooms and only allowing 1 child at tap at a time to wash hands
- opening windows and adjusting air-conditioning for more fresh air
- conducting more learning and activities outside
- closing off and covering the water bubbler

Information and notification requirements

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will:

- report instances of (suspected) coronavirus to the local state/territory health department
- comply with notification requirements for serious incidents which include:
 - any incident involving serious illness of a child at the service where the child attended, or should have attended, a hospital

- any emergency where emergency services attended ie there was an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person at the service
- comply with other notification requirements including:
 - notifying the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours if directed to close or closing voluntarily because of coronavirus. Note where possible the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will contact the Authority before making decision to close because of low numbers. (If closing voluntarily, children cannot be reported as absent and CCS will not be paid unless the closure is determined as a local emergency by State/Territory Education Departments)
 - notifying the Regulatory Authority within 7 days about any changes to service days or operating hours
- apply for waivers from ratio and qualification requirements if required where staff are required to self-isolate
- provide families with current information about the coronavirus including relevant information and Fact Sheets from Federal or State Health and Education Departments.

Interactions with Children

Where appropriate, educators will speak with children about the coronavirus in ways that do not alarm them or cause unnecessary fear or distress. Educators may, for example, discuss with children their feelings in relation to the virus, remind children that the risk of catching the illness is very low, review hygiene measures they can take to reduce the risk of infection, discuss some of the good things happening in the world, or implement other strategies outlined in our Relationships with Children Policy. Educators will be careful not to speak to others in an alarmist way about the coronavirus if children are present or within hearing.

What else should families do?

Asthma Australia has advised doctors to ensure all patients with asthma have a current Asthma Action plan and to update it if needed via a phone consultation, with any new plan delivered electronically. The Nominated Supervisor will distribute any updated Plans to relevant educators.

Fees

On 2 April 2020 the Government announced that from 6 April 2020 until the week ending 28 June 2020, services that remain open and have children enrolled will receive weekly payments to ensure they can deliver early childhood education and care to families. The payments will be approximately 50% of the fees charged in the fortnight preceding 2 March 2020 up to a maximum of the hourly rate cap. Larger payments may be available in exceptional circumstances. These payments will be made instead of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) payments, and services will be able to waive out of pocket fees for enrolled families, even where children are not attending for COVID-19 reasons. This change will apply from 23 March 2020.

In order to receive these payments the Approved Provider will:

- keep the service open unless it's closed on public health advice or for other health and safety reasons (payments will continue in this event)
- ensure families are not charged a fee, including gap fee

- prioritise care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children
- continue to record attendance of children
- comply with all other provider obligations including National Quality Framework and other relevant conditions of approval under Family Assistance Law.

Families are encouraged to remain enrolled, or to re-enrol to ensure they maintain their eligibility for CCS, and do not have to wait for CCS claims to be assessed in the future.

Please read following in conjunction with JobKeeper Payments section below

Staff Entitlements - Employees are ill or need to care for family member

Permanent employees are entitled to paid sick leave if they're ill with coronavirus. Employees must provide a medical certificate confirming they have the virus. Permanent employees who need to look after a family member or someone in their household who's sick with the virus are also entitled to paid carer's leave, or unpaid carer's leave if they have no paid sick or carer's leave left. Casual employees are entitled to 2 days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. Employees must provide evidence supporting an application to take carer's leave if requested. Permanent employees who want to stay at home as a precaution against exposure to coronavirus must apply for paid or unpaid leave.

Staff Entitlements - Employees required to self-isolate or wish to stay home as precaution

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will discuss available employment options with permanent employees who can't return from overseas or are required to enter quarantine or isolation but aren't sick. Options include taking annual leave or other leave eg long service leave, and taking unpaid leave.

Staff Entitlements - Employees directed not to work

Permanent employees will be paid if they are directed not to work to prevent the spread of the illness, cannot work because numbers of children have declined or the centre is voluntarily closed by the Approved Provider.

In cases where service viability is threatened, for example because enrolments have significantly reduced, the Approved Provider will discuss the situation with all permanent and seek their views on possible changes to staffing arrangements eg reductions in hours. Employees' written consent to any new arrangements will be obtained.

Staff Entitlements - Stand downs

Under the Fair Work Act, an employee can only be stood down without pay if:

- there's a stoppage of work
- the employees can't be usefully employed (not limited to an employee's usual work)
- the cause of the stoppage is one the employer cannot reasonably be held responsible for (eg service is directed to close by Government).

Note employees may use paid leave entitlements if the Approved Provider agrees. During stand down periods there is no interruption to continuity of service and leave accruals continue. The Approved Provider may seek legal advice to confirm payment of salaries is not required under the 'stand down' provision of the Fair Work Act if directed to close by the Government.

During this time employees may engage in activities which don't involve children, for example, training, deep cleaning or administration.

JobKeeper Payments

Eligible employees receiving Jobkeeper payments, including those stood down or on unpaid leave, have an obligation to work their usual contracted hours of employment if requested by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor unless there is a reasonable reason why this cannot occur. Jobkeeper does not replace an employee's normal rights and responsibilities in relation to sick leave, unpaid leave, employment contracts etc. The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor can however implement Jobkeeper Enabling Directions for these employees which provide businesses with the flexibility they may need to meet the adverse effect of the current Pandemic. The Directions can cover reductions in hours, duties to be performed and work locations. The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor must give employees at least 3 days written notice of their intention to give a Jobkeeper Enabling Direction (can be shorter if employee genuinely agrees) and consult with an employee before giving the Direction. JobKeeper Agreements can cover employees taking annual leave on half pay and days or times of work.

Source

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

Fair Work Act 2009

Fair Work Ombudsman 'Coronavirus and Australian Workplace laws'

Federal Department of Health coronavirus information sheets

Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment coronavirus information sheets

National Quality Standard

Work, Health and Safety Laws and Regulations

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Approved Provider, Supervisors, Employees, Families and any committee members.

Last reviewed: 8/05/2020

Date for next review: 8/07/2020