

## Coronavirus Policy

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### 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 most likely suffering a cold or other respiratory illness however due to these symptoms being similar to Coronavirus (COVID-19) exclusion periods apply. 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
- [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au) letter templates for families in case of closure, confirmed case, general service information
- [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. [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#)
  2. [COVID-19-Frequently Asked Questions](#)
  3. ['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 another state which is in lockdown (Victoria from 8/7/20) 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. Any child displaying symptoms at the service will be sent home immediately or denied entry and asked to seek medical attention and provide written clearance from a medical practitioner before returning to the service. Call ahead before visiting the doctor/hospital to advise them of your symptoms, and wear a surgical mask when visiting the medical facility. Employees/families must advise the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor immediately if they are being tested for coronavirus. They and their close contacts including enrolled children must not come to the service until they are cleared by medical authorities and return a negative coronavirus test and results have been sent through to the centre.
- **Any staff member displaying** symptoms of coronavirus including fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath will be ask to get tested for COVID-19 and will not be allowed back until we see confirmation of a negative result.
- **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
- **All staff and children entering the service will have their temperature tested and recorded** daily on arrival before entry to the service. Those with a temperature of above 38°celsius will be disallowed entry

- **Parents/Visitors/Non essential persons cannot enter the building** – all deliveries will be left at the front door for staff to bring inside, maintenance and show throughs all to be conducted after hours.
- **Any new enrolments** – need to complete a COVID 19 checklist that includes a 14 day exclusion period if they have attended another service and families temperatures will be taken and recorded before entering and mask must be worn.
- **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. Certificates of completion will be kept in staff file and a sign advising families that all staff have undertaken the training will be displayed. 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 carried out more frequently than usual throughout the day. This includes regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces like door knobs, bathrooms (eg taps, toilets), tables and chairs, phones, tablets, keyboards numerous times a day. 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. Contact cleaning services will be carried out on weekends.

### **Personal Hygiene For Staff**

- staff required to travel directly to and from work on public transport will have to carry their work uniform in a bag/backpack and change into when at work. This will help prevent possible cross contamination of work uniform.
- All work uniforms will be washed daily before commencement of next shift

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 they wash their hands with soap and water or sanitizer in between touching a child's bag or bottle to prevent cross contamination.

### **Face Masks**

From 23 July 2020 it's compulsory for adults and children aged 12 and over living in metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire to wear a face covering if they leave the house. Note it is not safe to use a mask on children under two years due to the risk they may choke. It is not compulsory for teachers and educators to wear face masks while teaching or caring for children as this can interfere with the ability to clearly communicate. (Teachers and educators may choose to wear masks while teaching.)

However, the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- teachers and educators wear masks when they're not teaching or providing care eg in the staff room (where not consuming food and drink) or during times when communicating directly with families (Face to Face contact)
- non-teaching staff, including office staff, wear face masks while working unless they work alone in an enclosed space (eg office). In this case they must wear a mask if someone enters the space and when they leave it
- parents and carers wear face masks whenever they're in or near the service, including when they deliver and collect their children from the service. No child will be allowed entry or collection at the end of the day if the parent/guardian does not comply with wearing a face mask.
- they and all staff implement the following hygiene measures when putting on or removing a face mask:
  - wash hands first for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol
  - don't touch the front of the mask or the face while it's on or when removing it

### **Putting on a mask**

- carefully grasp the ear loops or ties. For masks with a pair of ties, fasten the top one first, then the bottom one

### **Removing a mask**

- carefully remove the mask by grasping the ear loops or untying the ties. For masks with a pair of ties, unfasten the bottom one first, then the top one

- if the mask has filters, remove and discard them. Fold the mask and put it directly into the laundry or a disposable/washable bag for laundering. Dispose of single use surgical masks responsibly.

### **Social distancing**

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

- communicate with families about restrictions on the number of parents in service dropping off or picking up area. Families to remain in car and wait until space becomes available in the dropping off and picking up area.
- All children will be signed in and out by educators
- putting marks on the ground in the drop off and picking up area so families and visitors stand at least 1.5 metres away from the door and each other
- deferring activities that lead to mixing of children and staff from different rooms/groups eg: reducing the time the children are grouped together in the mornings and afternoons.
- 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
- cancelling all excursions and unnecessary visitors
- arranging for deliveries to be dropped at the main entrance using contactless acceptance measures where possible
- requiring essential visitors to sign a COVID-19 declaration that they are healthy and do not have any symptoms of the virus
- maintaining 1.5 metres distance when children are seated where possible eg by removing every second chair from tables and using tape to mark sitting spots
- ceasing activities which may have a higher risk of infection including cooking and serving of lunches and morning teas where shared plates are being used.
- Playdough will be made daily and discarded at the end of the day if implemented in the daily curriculum.
- 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 where possible
- conducting more learning and activities outside where possible
- Little Grasshoppers Management will not attend more than one service throughout a fortnightly period. All casuals are designated to a service to eliminate possible cross contamination and the service will only utilise the casual staff and permanent staff allocated to cover shifts.

### **Management of an unwell child or staff member**

It is important that any staff member or child who becomes unwell while at an early childhood service returns home.

While it is unlikely that a staff member or child who is unwell with flu-like symptoms will have coronavirus (COVID-19), there are some sensible steps services can take while a child awaits collection by a parent or carer as a precaution.

- Staff or children experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, cough or sore throat, should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible.

- Where staff or children are experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), important actions to take include hand hygiene, physical distance and where possible putting on a face mask.
- Face masks should not be used in situations where an individual is unable to safely or practically tolerate a mask (e.g. a child with complex medical needs, including existing respiratory needs, and younger children).
- Urgent medical attention should be sought where indicated.
- Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- If a staff member is unsure whether a child is unwell, it is advisable in the first instance to contact the parent/carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the child and, taking a precautionary approach, request the parent/carer to collect their child if concerns remain. A trained staff member could take the temperature of the child, where appropriate, to support decision making. Gloves should be worn for the purpose of taking a temperature.
- Staff or children experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19) should be encouraged to seek the advice of a healthcare professional who can advise on next steps. A medical certificate is not required to return to an early childhood setting after a period of illness, however staff and children should not return until symptoms resolve.
- Follow cleaning guidance according to the situation of the case. If a child spreads droplets (for example by sneezing, coughing or vomiting), clean surfaces immediately with disinfectant wipes while wearing gloves.

### **Information and notification requirements**

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will:

- report instances of (suspected) coronavirus to the local state/territory health department immediately and follow all guidance
- 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
  - notifying the Regulatory Authority as soon as possible if they're a Kindergarten receiving funding under the Kindergarten Funding Scheme, an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) is on unexpected leave and they've been unable to immediately replace the ECT (QLD only)
  - reporting a break in program delivery to the Regulatory Authority as soon as possible if they're a long day care service receiving funding under the Kindergarten Funding Scheme, and an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) is on unexpected leave (for more than 10 days without a replacement)
- 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. If their child has an Asthma Plan, families must consult their doctor and provide the Nominated Supervisor with an updated Plan or written confirmation from the doctor that the current Plan can continue. The Nominated Supervisor will distribute any updated Plans to relevant educators.

## **Fees**

The Federal Government's ECEC Relief Package ('free child care') ends on 12 July 2020. From 13 July 2020 families at services approved for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) are again required to pay fees and CCS and ACCS will recommence. These services are eligible to receive 'Transition Payments' until 28 September 2020. If receiving these payments services must comply with various Grant conditions which include that fees may not be increased during this period, or new fees introduced.

## **Response to COVID-19 in Victoria**

From 13 July until 31 December 2020, services open and located in an area of Stage 3 or higher – 'stay at home' restrictions in Victoria are permitted to waive families' out of pocket fees where a child is not attending due to COVID-19, and an absence is recorded. Areas subject to Stage 3 or higher – 'stay at home' restrictions are listed at [vic.gov.au](http://vic.gov.au)

## **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 please contact Centrelink for Coronavirus Sick Leave Payment.

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. If you need further time off to care for yourself or someone in your household with Coronavirus you can access t Centrelink Coronavirus Sick Leave Payment.

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**

JobKeeper payments will cease from 20 July 2020 for employees of a CCS approved provider and for sole traders operating a child care service. The Transition Payments mentioned under the heading 'Fees' will be paid instead of JobKeeper except for the week starting 13 July 2020 when both will be paid.

## **Source**

[Face Coverings – 11.59pm Wednesday 22 July](#) Health and Human Service VIC

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: <14/08/2020>

Date for next review: <July 2021>