

## Providing a Child-Safe Environment

### Education and Care Services National Law:

- 165- Offence to inadequately supervise children
- 166- Offence to use inappropriate discipline
- 167- Offence relating to the protection of children from harm and hazards
- 169- Offence relating to staffing arrangements

### Education and Care Services National Regulations:

- 82- Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environments
- 83- Staff members not to be affected by alcohol or drugs
- 103- Premises, furniture, and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
- 115- Premises designed to facilitate supervision
- 122- Educators must be working directly with children to be included in ratios
- 123- Educator to child ratios

### National Quality Framework:

- 2.2.1 – Supervision
- 3.2 – Use of the physical environment
- 4.1 – Staffing arrangements
- 5.1 – Relationships between Educators and children
- 7.1 – Governance

## Definitions

Term	Meaning	Source
ACECQA- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority	The independent national authority works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources, and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.	<a href="http://acecqa.gov.au">acecqa.gov.au</a>
Hazard	Situations or things that have the potential to harm a person.	<a href="http://acecqa.gov.au">acecqa.gov.au</a> Risk Assessments
Ratio's	The National Regulations prescribe the minimum number of Educators required to educate and care for children and prescribe the required qualifications for Educators, including how many Educators are to be early childhood teachers.	<a href="http://acecqa.gov.au">acecqa.gov.au</a> Ratio's
Risk Assessments	A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.	<a href="http://acecqa.gov.au">acecqa.gov.au</a> Risk Assessments
Mandatory Reporting	The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the government authorities	<a href="#">Guide to the National Quality Framework</a> Quality Area 2

### Links to other Policies and Manuals

- Administration of Medication
- Complaints and Grievances
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Emergency and Evacuation
- Excursions
- First Aid
- Food and Nutrition
- Incident, Illness, Trauma and Injury
- Interactions with Children
- Medical Conditions
- Records and Record Keeping
- Regular Transport
- Sleep and Rest
- Sun Protection
- Volunteers and Students
- Water Safety
- Child Protection and Safety
- Documenting the Educational Program
- Health and Safety
- Internet and Social Networking Usage
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Code of Conduct



- Commitment Statement to Children and Young People
- Company Profile
- Educator Handbook
- Parent Handbook

### Induction and ongoing training

Educators with the service will be trained on this policy during;

- Orientation and Induction procedures, thus allowing Educators to ask questions and discuss.
- Induction may be staggered to allow the Educator enough time to absorb the information provided.
- Training will occur in various formats, including face-to-face training, discussions at staff meetings, video demonstrations, vignettes, guest speakers, and open-ended policy questionnaires.
- Inductions and training records will be completed and kept in each team member's file.
- Educators will be provided with ongoing support as required, based on the extent to which they have demonstrated competence in carrying out their responsibilities to policy and procedures.

### Policy Statement

Childcare professionals and families share a common goal of providing positive and safe early childhood environments. Partnerships with children, families, Educators, and management must determine safety priorities in the service environment. Genuine consultation can generate many ideas and implement solutions.

### Goals / What are we going to do?

- Actively supervise while working directly with children.
- Ensure that children's health, safety, and well-being are protected as reasonably and foreseeably as possible.
- Create a culture of advocacy for children's right to feel safe and respected.
- Encourage active parent participation and foster a partnership approach for children's health, safety and well-being.
- Complete risk assessment to identify potential emergencies.
- Complete appropriate supervision plans.
- Complete child protection training as required by section 162A of the National Law

### Procedures / How will we do this?

#### Rosters

Careful roster planning is vital in ensuring that Educators can always respond to children. The service will always do its very best to accommodate roster changes to meet

the needs of Educators; however, ratios and children's safety will be the priority.

### Ratios

Infants	birth to 24 months 1:4
Toddlers	24-36 months 1:5
Kindergarten	36 months – Prep 1:11
Prep	Prep + 1:15

Ratios can be calculated across the service (not by individual rooms). This concept gives providers the flexibility to respond to the needs of children. So, if you had a mixed age group of children, maintaining the ratio for each age range does not mean the Educator-to-child ratio for the youngest age range must be applied to all children in an older age range. An Educator caring for one age range of children can also be counted against another age range of children (but be in a different room) as long as the ratio for each age range is maintained and adequate supervision is maintained at all times.

### Age Groupings

Educators need to be conscious of the age groups being supervised. Observing children's play and anticipating what may happen next will assist children when difficult situations arise and intervene where there is a potential danger to children.

- Children with early signs of illness or atypical behaviours should be monitored closely. This is extremely important when supervising children with known medical conditions.
- Keep children's developmental records up to date so that, as Educators, you are aware of a child's capabilities and the appropriate level of challenge that can be made to the playground to enhance their development.

### Educators under the age of 18 years.

Educators under 18 will not work alone at the service. An Educator who is under the age of 18 years will be adequately supervised during their day. The service considers supervising an Educator under 18 as having a mentor who offers support, advice, information, and emotional support. The service employee handbook outlines numerous ways to mentor and support new Employees.

### Video Surveillance

The purpose of CCTV system is to increase the security of the premises, assist with detection, prevention and investigation of criminal activity, trespass and vandalism and to maximise the safety of children, Educators and visitors to the centre.

- All parents will be notified of the use of the CCTV by appropriate signage throughout the centre and in the parent handbook.
- The images recorded will be held on the server and accessed only by those authorised to do so.
- This surveillance will never be provided to any third party without being subpoenaed by a court.



This protects the privacy and confidentiality of all children in the footage.

- The service will not live stream or videoconference at any time unless for educational purposes and only then with every parent's consent.
- Images may be shared with relevant government authorities if deemed necessary by the Approved Provider.
- Footage will not be sent electronically, it can only be accessed on the service premises.
- Images will be digitally recorded on a rolling system, and unless retained for specific purposes, they will automatically overwrite the oldest images.
- Any retention of images will be kept on the server and, when no longer required, overwritten in the normal way.

### Visitors

The service will take all reasonable steps to ensure children are not left alone with visitors. A staff member will supervise extracurricular shows or activities, and where possible, the Educator will participate. A visitor log will record all visitors who have attended the service.

### Risk Assessments

All members of our educational team will contribute to our supervision risk assessments and make professional judgements to determine the approach to supervision. These risk assessments will determine the level of supervision required in certain situations. For example, an Educator may recognise that a particular activity that involves some risk, such as carpentry, water play, or cooking, requires close supervision.

Alternatively, if the children participate in low-risk activities, the Educator can retain greater conversations with individual children or have no conversations and stay out of play unless required. This supervision method requires scanning, listening, being present, and knowing what is happening.

### Car Seating

Appropriate car seating must be used at all times when transporting children. Car seating will not be purchased second-hand. Child restraints that comply with this new Standard (AS/NZS1754:2010) will include shoulder height markers to ensure the appropriate use of the seat. The new standard for child restraints will no longer rely on the child's weight, making it easier to ensure that the appropriate restraint is being used. Once the child's shoulders reach the seat height limit of the restraint, the child should move up to the following type of restraint where their shoulders are in line with or above the lowest marker.

### Play Equipment

Resources in all areas should be plentiful and stored well for easy access. They should be attractive and in good repair. New items will be purchased periodically. The

program should look at familiar activities in new ways, e.g., vary the time, presentation, location, or everyday equipment. A stimulating program requires the creativity of ideas from Educators and children.

Watch the following video from Early Childhood Australia about [Environments set up for play](#).

### Animals and Domestic Pets

Within the service, there may be animals that are permanently on-site or occasions when pets are invited or perhaps attend your service uninvited. It is essential to quickly consider the risks to yourself and the children during these times and take appropriate action.

*Permanent Pets:* If permanent animals are on site, a separate risk assessment will be kept specifically for these animals. The following practices will be followed:

- Animals will always be fenced in appropriate housing.
- Animals will be fed appropriate feed and water to ensure their health.
- Animals will be checked during the morning and the afternoon, opening /closing procedures.
- Children will follow hand-washing procedures after tending to the animals.
- Parents are to be informed of animals upon enrolment.
- Children will be educated on the care and well-being of the animals.
- Should any animal look unwell, the vet will be called.
- Animals will be wormed and vaccinated as per the vet's instructions.
- Animal pens are kept clean.

*Invited Pets:* Such as family pets, cats, dogs, birds, and guinea pigs all provide a wealth of opportunities for learning with the service; however, consideration still needs to be given to how long the animal will stay, where it will reside at the service, who will be responsible for its primary care and the clean-up of faeces.

*Uninvited Pets:* Spiders, snakes, injured animals or bats may generate lots of discussion and learning; however, greater caution is required. Opening and closing checks are vital to identifying animals that may need to be removed before the children begin their day. At all times, the children's safety is paramount.

### Poisonous Plants

A wide range of garden plants is considered harmful when consumed. Small children are often at greater risk from coloured berries, petals and leaves that look succulent. Children are naturally inquisitive about such things, and while we encourage children to explore their environment, we ensure their safety. It must never be assumed that because a plant or seed is being eaten by wildlife, it is non-poisonous. Children should be discouraged from putting leaves, stems, seeds, nuts or berries into their mouths.



### Essential Oils or melts

The use of essential oils or melts in childcare settings requires careful consideration to ensure the safety and well-being of all children. While essential oils may offer benefits such as promoting relaxation or creating a pleasant environment, they can also pose risks, particularly to young children with allergies, asthma, or sensitive skin. To ensure their safe use, the service will:

- Consulting families about potential sensitivities.
- Ensure oils are appropriately diluted and avoid direct application on children's skin.
- Only use high-quality, child-safe oils and limit their use in shared spaces to avoid overwhelming or adverse reactions.

### Links to Theory

In the 2023 ACECQA report, from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022, long day care services had the highest rate of severe incident cases per 100 approved services, followed by family day care services. Preschools/ kindergartens had the lowest rate

Several factors may account for long day care services having a higher rate of serious incident cases than other service types, including:

- Younger age and higher volume and frequency of children attending
- Higher number of hours and weeks per year long day care services operate.

On average, children attend long daycare services for around 31 hours per week and family daycare services for around 24 hours per week. Average attendance for outside school hours care services and preschools/kindergartens is around 12 hours and 15 hours per week, respectively.

### Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

In relation to the children, I will:

"Create and maintain safe, healthy, inclusive environments that support children's agency and enhance their learning."

In relation to my colleagues, I will:

"Implement strategies that support and mentor colleagues to contribute to the profession positively."

### National Quality Framework – Children's health and safety

2.2.1. At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazards.

### National Quality Framework – Physical environment

3.2. The inclusive service environment promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.

### National Quality Framework – Staffing arrangements

4.1. Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development.

### National Quality Framework – Relationships with children

5.1. Respectful and honest relationships are maintained with each child.

### National Quality Framework – Governance and Leadership

7.1. Governance supports the operation of quality service.

### Culturally Valued Perspectives

The service vision is to ensure that our policies and procedures reflect children from all cultures. Children's safety is always at the forefront of everything we do, regardless of a child's heritage.

Despite numerous legal and policy frameworks protecting the cultural rights of Indigenous children, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is almost ten times that of other children and continues to grow.

### Reflective questions about this policy!

What is working well? What could we improve?

How do you ensure that you are aware of where children are always?

How do we complete the daily safety checks to guarantee that equipment and the building are safe and in good repair?

How do you take into consideration the age of the children when supervising?

How can you ensure Educators are allocated to specific areas to supervise effectively?

How can you observe situations and offer assistance or ideas when needed while allowing children opportunities to explore and solve problems by themselves or with others?

### When answering the reflective questions, did you have areas identified for improvement:

If change is required:

- Discuss any proposed changes to our child-safe environments policies. Have any incidents led to obvious changes to be implemented?



- Discuss with Educators and families about changes that may strengthen this policy.

To implement the changes effectively:

- Trial the changes
- Seek feedback and consult.
- Document your thoughts on your Critical Reflection Tracker or in your room diary, and let your manager know at your next Educator meeting. Alternatively, write them down and pass them on to your Educational Leader or director.

A review of change is an important step:

- Evaluate and document in your QIP.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Approved Provider, Area Managers, Director and Nominated Supervisor

- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations are met.
- Ensure that the *Child Safe Environment Policy* is implemented, the appropriate risk assessments and action plans are completed, and all identified actions are taken to minimise the risks to children's health and safety.
- Provide an environment free from tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol and ensure no Educators are affected by drugs and alcohol to impair their capacity to supervise or provide education and care to children in the service.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure Educators, staff, and volunteers follow the policies and procedures.
- Ensure copies of policies and procedures are readily accessible to Educators, staff, and volunteers and are available for inspection.
- Notify families 14 days before changing the policy and procedures if the changes affect-
  - the service education and care of children,
- Complete centre visit reports when attending the service.

### Responsible Person

- Implement the Child Safe Environment policy and ensure that any plans developed from risk assessments are in place for individual children and are carried out.
- Meeting staff-to-child ratios to ensure adequate supervision.
- Ensure all Educators have access to the Child Safe Environments policy.

- When required, work collaboratively with appropriate services and professionals to support children's access, inclusion, and participation in the program.
- Ensure the visitor's record is maintained.
- Prepare meetings that involve identifying risks and planning for child-safe environments.

### Educators

- Implement the Child Safe Environment policy and ensure that any plans developed from risk assessments are in place for individual children and are carried out.
- Know the individual needs and action plans for children.
- Monitor and maintain staff ratios to ensure adequate supervision.
- Provide an environment free from tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol.
- Ensure that any plants brought to the service are not poisonous to children.
- Ask visitors to sign the visitor's record.
- Attend Educator meetings and contribute to risk assessments that affect your working environment.

### Families

- Become familiar with key aspects of the Child Safe Environments outlined in the service parent handbook.
- Complete and sign the service orientation form.
- Ensure that the service Code of Conduct is followed when addressing concerns or contributing to the service policy.
- Do not send your child to the centre with items that may cause a risk to your child or others.

### Sources and Further Reading

Active Supervision [Ensuring Safety and Promoting Learning](#). Feb 2020 *Information Sheet*

Australian Human Rights Commission [Child Safe Principles](#)

Department of Transport and Main Roads – [Child Restraints](#)

Frith, J., Kambouris, N., & O'Grady, O. (2003). *Health & Safety in Children's Services: Model Policies and practices* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). NSW: School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales.

[Kidsafe Queensland](#)

### Policy Review

This policy will be updated in December 2027 or if a policy review has been conducted and significant changes have been made. It will be reprinted and distributed to Educators and families.