



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Management Policy

Date Reviewed:

April 28, 2022

Regulation:

77, 85 – 88, 90, 93, 162

Standards:

2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2

COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. The World Health Organisation (WHO) first learned of this new virus in December 2019.

COVID-19 is transmitted from someone who is infected with the virus to others in close contact through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing or by contact with contaminated hands or surfaces.

Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID-19 may experience (not limited too):

- fever
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue
- shortness of breath

Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some people with COVID-19

- loss of taste or smell
- nasal congestion
- headache
- nausea/vomiting
- diarrhea
- chills/dizziness

The Australian Government is constantly updating the status of COVID-19 including health recommendations, travel restrictions, and have a vast collection of resources and information to help people make informed decisions.

Our Service has a range of comprehensive policies in place to guide best practice in relation to health and safety, dealing with infectious diseases and maintaining a child safe environment. Our duty of care and responsibilities to children, parents, families and all staff to provide a safe environment is of utmost importance.

National Quality Standards;	
Q.A. 2: Children's Health and Safety	
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures
2.2	Safety

Education and Care Services National Regulations	77, 85 – 88, 90, 93, 162
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Service Policies and Procedures
Control of Infectious Diseases Policy
Handwashing Guidelines Policy
Children's Health and Safety Policy
Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy
Management of ongoing medical condition Policy
Work Health and Safety Policy

PURPOSE

Our Service will minimise children's exposure to COVID-19 by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the Australian Government-Department of Health and local Public Health Units to slow the spread of the spread of the virus. We will implement practices that help to reduce the transmission of the virus including the exclusion of any person (child, educator, staff, parent, visitor or volunteer) that has tested positive to having COVID-19. Our Service will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures.

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government, Department of Health and state

Ministers for Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Health Department will be strictly adhered to.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus by implementing recommendations provided by the Australian Government-Department of Health.

Our Service implements procedures as stated in the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (Fifth Edition)* developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council as part of our day-to-day operation of the Service.

National Coronavirus Health Information Line
1800 020 080
Translating and interpreting services 131 450
Health Direct 1800 022 222

MINIMISING THE TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19

Effective 15 March 2020, the *Australian Health Protection Principal Committee* has made recommendations to the general public to help manage the spread of COVID-19. These measures include implementing good hygiene, self-isolation and social distancing.

Our Service will ensure hand hygiene posters and procedures (including alcohol-based hand sanitiser) and information about COVID-19 is clearly displayed at the front entry and communicated to families through email, newsletters and social media.

Information provided to families may include:

- symptoms of COVID-19
- transmission of the virus
- self-isolation and exclusion
- prevention strategies-including hygiene and self-isolation
- contact details for health assistance
- payment of fees

Our Service will supply tissues and have bins available with plastic liners available in several locations for disposing used items.

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, families and visitors will comply with the following:

EXCLUSION/ SELF-ISOLATION/ SELF-QUARANTINE

- household members of a person who has a confirmed case (including children) of COVID-19 must also be isolated from the childcare Service for 7 days
- families/staff must immediately advise the Service if they, or anyone in their household develops any symptoms of the virus or receives a positive result of the virus
- any person (employee, enrolled child, parent, caregiver, visitor or contractor) who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 must be tested for COVID-19 and not enter our Service under any circumstance, until negative test is obtained
- any person who tested positive for COVID-19 must not enter the Service until formally released by the regulatory authorities
- the child or a staff member returning from overseas should be tested 24-48h before returning to our Centre. Home conducted RAT tests will be accepted as sufficient evidence.

IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE HYGIENE MEASURES

Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds whenever you cough, sneeze, blow your nose, prepare food, eat, touch your face or use the toilet is recommended.

Our Service will adhere to National Regulation requirements, and Government guidelines to ensure all educators, children, families and visitors to the Service implement best practice.

Our Service will ensure:

- all employees, parents, children and visitors wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser provided upon arrival to the Service
- disposable tissues are used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use
- hands are washed following the use of paper towel
- hands are washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- cough and sneeze etiquette is adhered to
- educators and staff adhere to our *Handwashing guidelines Policy* at all times
- educators and staff adhere to our *Cleaning and Maintenance Policy* for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and equipment (such as toys, puzzles, outdoor toys, bedding, playdough etc) as per *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services recommendations*
- equipment, resources and surfaces including taps, door handles etc are be cleaned daily using disinfectant wipes and sprays
- cleaning contractors hygienically clean the Service to ensure risk of contamination

SOCIAL DISTANCING IN CHILD CARE

Social distancing is important because COVID-19 is most likely spread from person-to-person through close contact with a person while they are infectious, close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes or from touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection and then touching your nose or mouth. (source: Australian Government Department of Health. Coronavirus disease)

To reduce the spread of germs:

- if your child is unwell, do not send them to our Service
- do not visit our Service if you or another household member is unwell and being tested for COVID-19
- sanitise your hands at regular intervals throughout the day and when entering our Service
- avoid physical contact with other people who may be sick-such as older people and people with existing health conditions
- clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly (door handles, car seats, mobile phone, toys, dummies)
- outdoor play will be promoted within our Service to provide children with additional personal space
- large groups will be monitored to provide flexible learning to ensure groups are smaller in both the indoor and outdoor environment
- ventilation within the Service will be increased
- contact parents of children who have chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression as they maybe at an increased risk of disease and require additional support/care
- our service will continue with all regular incursions as long as providers are well and follow service policies and procedures in regards to COVID-19

POSITIVE / SUSPECTED CASES OF COVID-19 AT OUR SERVICE

As per our *Illness and Exclusion Policy* we reserve the right to refuse a child into care if we/they:

- have reasonable grounds to believe that a child has a contagious or infectious disease (this includes COVID-19)
- are unwell and unable to participate in normal activities or require additional attention
- have had a temperature/fever, or vomiting in the last 24 hours
- have had diarrhoea in the last 24hours
- have been given medication for a temperature prior to arriving at the Service
- have started a course of new anti-biotics in less than 24 hours

If your child becomes ill whilst at the Service, educators/staff will respond to their individual symptoms of illness and provide comfort and care.

Educators will take your child's temperature. If the temperature is above 38°C you will be contacted immediately and required to collect your child within 1 hour. If you are unable to collect your child or we are unable to contact you, an emergency contact person will be contacted, and they must collect your child within 1 hour.

Educators will attempt to lower your child's temperature by:

- removing excessive clothing (shoes, socks, jumpers)
- encourage your child to take small sips of water
- move your child to a quiet area where they can rest whilst being supervised
use a cool face towel to cool the child

Educators will keep accurate records of the child's temperature, time taken, time parent/s were contacted, staff member's name and time of collection. All information will be recorded in our Illness Record. Parents will be required to sign this record upon collection of their child.

Parents are reminded to ensure their contact details are current and emergency contact details are updated if required.

Our Service also reserves the right to prevent employees, parents, family members or visitors to enter our premises if the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor suspects instances of COVID-19.

Person who tested positive for COVID-19 cannot enter the Service until formally released from their isolation.

ACT Health doesn't require the household members to isolate if one family member tests positive for COVID-19, our Service will continue the 7 days of isolation/exclusion from the Service.

NOTIFICATION

As per advice from the Department of Education, the COVID-19 will now be treated as an infectious disease. Service no longer has to report the positive cases nor issue letters to families.

Service will inform families of an infectious disease occurrence via Story Park, foyer poster and HubWorks.

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19

Our Service is committed to maintaining positive interactions and relationships with children and their families. Information provided to children about COVID-19 will be age appropriate and sensitive to their emotional wellbeing. Educators will both acknowledge children's concerns and be open to discussions about COVID-19.

Educators will inform children about the virus and emphasise preventative measures and Education such as handwashing, use of tissues, cough and sneeze techniques and limiting touching other children's faces.

Posters to demonstrate correct handwashing methods will be referred to and educators will model techniques.

Children's questions will be respected and supported.

PAYMENT OF FEES

Fees are payable to the Service for all enrolled children including sick days and family holidays. Child Care Subsidy can only be paid where services are open and providing care. The only exclusion is for when a period of local emergency has been declared (e.g.: bushfire).

If a child does not attend the Service as a precautionary measure, payment of fees is still required.

Until end of June 2022, service can waive gap fee for children who are in isolation due to testing positive for COVID-19.

ABSENCES FROM CHILDCARE—CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

Whether a child is ill or not and does not attend care as part of the family's own precautionary measure against potential contact with COVID-19, Child Care Subsidy

(CCS) can be paid for up to 42 absence days per child, per financial year without the need for families to provide documentation.

Once a child's 42 initial absences have been used, CCS can be paid for additional absences for a reason including illness (see: Child Care Package Handbook). Evidence is required for additional absences claim e.g.: doctor's certificate.

If a child is not ill, and does not attend care, due to the family's own precautionary measure against contracting COVID-19, some medical practitioners (GP) may support families by providing a medical certificate if required.

Fees will still be payable if the child does not attend the Service.

If a child is not ill and does not attend care for a longer period, the family may wish to follow the established advice around longer absences (as set out in the Child Care Provider Handbook, noting that an enrolment automatically ceases when a child does not attend care for 14 weeks).

** Until end of June 2022 Australian Government extended allowed absences to 52.

[source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment Version 1 (12/3/2020)]

STAFF ENTITLEMENTS IF SICK OR SUSPECTED TO HAVE COVID-19

Under workplace health and safety laws, our Service must ensure the health and safety of all employees.

Confirmed COVID-19

If an educator or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19, they are unable to attend the workplace and cannot return until they are formally released from isolation.

Full and part-time employees who cannot attend work due to illness can take paid sick leave.

Caring for a family member or emergency

If an employee cannot attend work due to caring for a family member due to COVID-19, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave. See Fair Work Act for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees.

Self-isolation due to travel

Australia no longer required pre-entry tests, nor quarantines for fully vaccinated adults. Service however will request a proof of a negative COVID-19 test 24-48h before returning to work. Home conducted RAT tests will be accepted as a sufficient evidence.

Self-isolation as a precaution

If an employee wants to stay home as a precaution of contracting COVID-19 they may negotiate to take unpaid leave with Management. However, service ensures that we provide safe controlled environment, furthermore the request can be denied.

Employees who are stuck overseas or in quarantine

If an employee cannot return to Australia due to the COVID-19 virus, they must contact the Approved Provider immediately. Management will negotiate payment considering accrued sick leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.

Waivers

In the event of staff members requiring to self-isolate due to possible infection of COVID-19, the Approved Provider will apply to the Regulatory Authority for waivers for qualifications and/or ratios to minimise disruptions to our provision of care.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that the outbreak of COVID-19 and the constant amount of information received through the media may be very stressful to young children and parents. The anxiety about this disease may be overwhelming and cause fear and anxiety to some people, especially children.

Our Service is committed to continue to provide quality education and care to all children and support families responsibly during this unprecedented challenge with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Knowing how to look after yourself, and others is very important during this crisis.

We will promote a safe and supportive environment by:

- reassuring children they are safe
- acknowledging and listening to children's questions
- promoting and implementing hygiene routines for handwashing and cough and sneezing
- keeping regular and familiar routines within our Service
- ensuring children eat well throughout the day
- engaging children in play, games and other physical activities
- being alert to children's level of anxiety and provide quiet and relaxing activities
- ensuring children are provided with rest and sleep when needed
- providing information to families and support services as required

Disclaimer: WVCCC will closely monitor and follow directions or recommendations from ACT Health, what may result in overnight change to this policy. Any changes will be communicated to families via Story Park, email or phone, depending on its severity.

WVCCC reserve it's right to assess access to care or return to care (e.g. after holidays) on case by case grounds.
