



Infection control during the COVID-19 pandemic

Date Reviewed:

April 28, 2022

Regulation:

84 & 168 (2)(h)

Standards:

2.1

Aim:

The intent of this policy is to ensure best practice is implemented to protect the centre/service community during a pandemic. The policy is based on current ACT Health advice.

Objective:

The following policy aims to ensure the safety and protection of all stakeholders accessing or using an early childhood education and care facility or a school age care service during the COVID - 19 pandemic.

The policy will address who maintains the lead in the critical situation, the key protection strategies that must be in place, communication that must be maintained, and actions required should a case of COVID-19 infection occur.

Government planning to meet the changing circumstances posed by the COVID-19 pandemic can happen rapidly. In order to remain aware of changes and to adapt procedures to meet changes all services should check ACT Health Directorate daily. Useful links include:

- ACT Health Directorate
 - Australia Health Protection Principal Committee
 - Safe Work Australia
 - Australian Government Department of Health
 - ACT Education Directorate
 - Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment
 - ACECQA
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Policy:

Protecting students, children, educators, auxiliary staff, families and community members.

This set of suggestions should be used as a guide in the development of procedures that will be unique to each context, covering the requirements outlined below.

Ventilation: adequate airflow in the service helps to ensure the safety of staff and children. While the best approach to ventilation depends on a service's specific infrastructure and ventilation system, the World Health Organisation provides advice on how to ensure a space is well ventilated. Procedures to contact and discuss the ventilation needs of the service with the owner or manager of the building should be developed. Services should also consider opportunities to utilise outdoor play areas as they are considered one of the best environments for preventing transmission.

Vaccinations for staff: ECEC staff in the ACT must be fully vaccinated by the 29th of November 2021. Records of vaccination are to be provided to Nominated Supervisor and will be stored on individual files of each staff member.

Any new staff member entering premises for work or any of the following reasons:

- cleaning
- contract work (music lessons, PT, shows, events)
- staff relief (casual staff)
- students

Must present record of their vaccination during induction process, before or on the first day of work.

Adequate cleaning: High traffic areas of the service must be comprehensively cleaned regularly. This includes door handles, doorknobs, coded door entry pads, exit buttons and so on. Every toy and every surface will also require regular cleaning. In the case of infant areas mouthed toys should be removed immediately when the child is no longer engaged with the item and cleaned with disinfectant and detergent.

Hygiene: Hand washing is critical and should be conducted on entry to the centre, before and after consuming food and drink, after going to the bathroom, after cleaning children's faces. **Regular hand washing of all children and staff should occur.**

Pre-entry screening questions: Any visitors to the service may be subject to set phone questions determining their suitability to enter the premises. The leadership team will

determine acceptance or refusal of entry based on the answers provided. (please refer to 'Phone screening flow chart')

Mask wearing: Masks wearing is now optional. We allow both families and staff to choose if they wish to wear masks on the premises.

If the person is unwell or may have been exposed to COVID-19, they must continue wearing the mask. Centre will no longer supply the masks in the foyer.

Social distancing: General Health advice is to maintain a physical distance of 1.5 meters from others. However, this will not always be practical in an education and care setting and regulatory space requirements have not changed.

Social distancing with and between children is not practicable but the following additional strategies will decrease the risk of transmission.

- Consider small group play, staggered mealtimes and indoor / outdoor play opportunities whenever possible.
- Windows should be opened during the day to promote air flow where possible.
- Consider operating an indoor/outdoor program for the full day/session. This provides more space for the children and the setup of more activities for children to engage in.
- If you are not able to run an indoor/outdoor program, consider spending more time outdoors and the placement of activities across the outdoor space. A greater range of activities will encourage children to spread out.
- Consider the setup of the room and the placement of the activities and limit the number of whole group activities.
- Set up more individual activities throughout the room. Rather than having all books and blocks on one shelf, set them up in separate areas throughout the room if possible.

It remains critically important that adults – both staff and parents - maintain physical distancing between themselves at early childhood services. Parents and guardian's arrival and departure routines should be modified to maintain social distancing.

Communication

Emergency contact: It is critical that after-hours emergency contact details in the NQAITS are up to date and are specific to each service.

Contact details: Contact details of each child's parent/guardian/authorised emergency person, must be recorded for **each** day a child is in attendance, to ensure that a **person will**

be available to collect the child at any time across the period of care being provided. Contact details for ACT Health, the Regulatory Authority and emergency services must be kept on hand in case of a critical situation.

Updates: Services must ensure that staff and families are immediately informed of any changes that may be notified to them by the Lead authorities.

Action in the event of a positive COVID-19 case

As per advice from the Department of Education, the COVID-19 will now (26.04.2022) be treated as an infectious disease. Service no longer has to report the positive cases nor issue letters to families.

Exclusion: 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.

The children in our care require close contact with educators and other children; they cannot keep a distance from each other nor wear masks. The children in our care are also unvaccinated as the vaccine is not yet approved for them.

Returning from overseas: Australia no longer requires pre-entry COVID-19 tests. Some countries still struggle with high case numbers and community transmission. The child returning from overseas should be tested 24-48h before returning to care. Home conducted RAT tests will be accepted as sufficient evidence. As with any sickness, if the child starts to display symptoms, we will send the child home and ask for the test to be redone.

Related Policies and Procedures:

- Coronavirus Management Policy
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