

Interacting with Children Policy and Procedure

Quality Area 5



Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear set of guidelines to ensure the development of responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children through interactions that promote their wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging at the service, and that each child is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, volunteers and visitors at the service.

Background

Considered and mindful interactions form the basis of equitable, respectful and reciprocal relationships between educators and children. Educators who are actively engaged in children's learning, co-designing and sharing in decision-making with them, using everyday interactions during play, routines and transitions to stimulate children's thinking and to enrich their learning.

These relationships provide a solid foundation from which to guide and support children as they develop the self-confidence and skills to manage their own behaviour, make decisions and relate positively and effectively to others.

Principles

The Service is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity, agency and rights of all children at the service
- promoting fairness, respect and equality during interactions and involve children as co-designers of the program encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions,
- considering the health, safety and wellbeing of each child, and providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which children can develop and learn at their own pace.
- maintaining a duty of care towards all children at the service
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, and be inclusive of family and cultural values, and all children and their capabilities regardless of age, gender, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.
- building collaborative relationships with families and the wider community to improve learning and development outcomes for children
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children, families and educators/staff at the service.

Roles and responsibilities

The Approved Provider and/or Nominated Supervisor at the Service will:

- create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions with all educators
- meet all educator to child and qualification requirements
- ensure all staff have undertaken current child protection legislation training including mandatory reporting requirements and obligations

- ensure that no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline including time out or isolation and that all staff are aware that this constitutes an offence under the National Law
- treat all families and community members equitably without bias or judgement,
- provide families with information and resources in their first language
- engage with families to identify a preferred method of regular communication
- greet families and children in a respectful manner on arrival
- establish two-way communication through leading by example
- avoid jargon when talking to parents/guardians about their child's development
- respect privacy and confidentiality at all times
- remain sensitive to cultural differences between families and encourage families to share cultural aspects with the children and educators at the service
- gather information from professional experts, with parental permission, to assist educators in developing and implementing strategies to support the inclusion of children
- seek and provide additional resources and professional support for families if required
- ensure verbal communication is always calm in tone, open, respectful and honest
- provide families with up-to-date service information and notices through daily verbal communication and through reports, newsletters, communal notice boards, emails and sign-in sheets.
- reflect on input from parents/guardians on the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the children and the operation of the service.
- promote connections between families and the wider community by inviting them to participate in routines and events at the service
- make families and children aware of the service's complaints handling processes
- provide new educators with relevant information about the service and program through a staff handbook, induction program, team meetings, mentoring, regular individual meetings and regular communication.
- treat educators with respect, value their contribution, ideas and role, and be sensitive to their feelings and needs
- provide opportunities for all educators to have input into the program development and evaluation
- hold regular educator meetings to support critical reflection and professional growth consistency of practice and continuous improvement.
- use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems and follow policies and procedures.
- ensure the size and composition of groups is considered to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and adults at the service
- notify the Regulatory Authority as soon as is practicable within 24 hours of a serious incident or a notifiable complaint regarding the safety, health and/or welfare of a child at the service
- ensure that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises

Educators will:

- role-model appropriate language, body language and behaviour
- support and encourage children to be aware of their own feelings and the feelings of others
- encourage children to treat all other children with dignity, kindness and respect
- provide children with the opportunity to explore their dispositions for learning with patience and in their own way ensure children are aware of how to raise concerns or provide feedback
- respond or report to children about how their feedback has been acted upon
- assist children to build resilience and self-assurance through positive interactions
- guide children's behaviour positively.
- respect the rights, dignity and agency of children
- provide appropriate supervision so children feel safe in their interactions with other children
- speak to children in a positive manner at all times, promoting respect, tolerance and empathy, including the use of non-verbal cues and communication
- engage in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning of children
- respect each child's uniqueness and respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and use the child's own words, communication styles and culture to enhance interactions
- listen to children and take them seriously; support and encourage children to use appropriate language in their interactions with adults and peers
- extend upon children's interests and ideas through questions and discussions
- understand their reporting requirements and respond to any incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse or harm

- show empathy to children
- consider and respect the values, beliefs and cultural practices of each child and their families
- ensure that no child is ever isolated from their peers for any reason other than illness, accident or pre-arranged appointment with parental consent
- regularly reflect on appropriate methodologies and practices that enhance the quality of engagement with children and how these can be improved
- facilitate children's individual development extending upon their strengths, interests and abilities
- engage in professional communication in order to create an effective work environment and to build positive relationships with colleagues, children and families
- champion a child safe culture through their attitudes, behaviours and actions
- collaborate as a team, sharing roles and responsibilities, through the use of a roster where necessary
- use staff meetings to communicate professional reflections and ideas for continuous improvement
- keep up-to-date with current child protection legislation including mandatory reporting requirements
- refer to the service's complaints policy if they feel a situation with another educator is not being handled appropriately
- recognise and respect each other's strengths and value the contribution each person makes to different work roles
- work collaboratively to reach decisions which will enhance the quality of education and care offered at the service
- develop and share networks and links with other agencies
- resolve differences promptly and positively and use experiences to develop more effective methods of working together
- maintain privacy and confidentiality at all times

Families will:

- read and comply with the Interactions with Children Policy
- engage in open communication with educators about their child
- inform educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)
- inform educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour
- work collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

Induction and ongoing training

This policy will be accessible by service staff via the intranet and by families via the website. Hard copy of the policy will be available through the Service. Nominated supervisors are responsible for ensuring staff access the policy and any supporting documents and undertake induction training prior to the policy being implemented. All service staff are responsible for understanding and complying with this policy and ongoing training will be provided using a range of learning platforms.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

Monitoring of compliance with this policy and the related procedure will be overseen by the policy owner. The review process for this policy will begin eight (8) weeks prior to the scheduled review date and include a consultation period with families, educators, compliance team and any other relevant stakeholders and will be facilitated by the Policy Officer.

Communication about any changes in or review of the policy, procedure or related supporting documents will be provided to all service staff. Where required, training will be provided to ensure understanding of the changes. Families will be notified of any changes 14 days prior to the implementation. Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in line with the MACSEYE Code of Conduct.

Related policies

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Code of Conduct Policy
 Dealing with Complaints Policy
 Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
 Enrolment and Orientation Policy
 Governance and Management Policy
 Privacy Policy
 Staffing Arrangement Policy
 Supervision Policy

Legislative requirements

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS (NQS)

Quality Area 5	Relationship with children
Quality Area 6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW ACT

Section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Section 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
Section 168	Offence related to required programs
Section 169	Offence relating to staffing arrangements

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW REGULATIONS

Regulation 73	Educational program
Regulation 84	Awareness of child protection law
Regulation 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
Regulation 117A	Placing a person in day-to-day charge
Regulation 118	Educational leader
Regulation 123	Educator to child ratios-centre-based services
Regulation 126	Centre-based services- general educator qualifications
Regulation 145	Staff record
Regulation 155	Interactions with children
Regulation 156	Relationships in groups
Regulation 157	Access for parents
Regulation 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
Regulation 170	Policies and procedures to be followed

RELATED LEGISLATIONS

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Adequate supervision	Means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation knowing where children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently.
Approved provider	A person who holds a provider approval (National Law). A provider approval authorises a person to apply for one or more service approvals and is valid in all jurisdictions.
Dignity and rights of the child	Element 5.1.2 of the National Quality Standard ('Dignity and rights of the child') aims to achieve the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability. Article 19 of the Convention states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically, or mentally.
Education and care service premises	In relation to a centre-based service, means each place at which an education and care service operates or is to operate.
Educational program	A program that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is based on an approved learning framework; and is delivered in a manner that accords with the approved learning framework; and is based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child; and is designed to take into account the individual differences of each child (National Law).
MACSEYE	Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Early Years Education Ltd, a subsidiary of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd established to conduct early childhood education and care services.
National Law	Unless otherwise specified, the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 or, in Western Australia, the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012. This applied law system sets a national standard for children's education and care across Australia. See the ACECQA website for the Application Act or legislation that applies in each jurisdiction.
National Regulations	The Education and Care National Regulations. The National Regulations support the National Law by providing detail on a range of operational requirements for an education and care service.
Nominated supervisor	In relation to an education and care service, means a person who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is nominated by the approved provider of the service under Part 3 to be a nominated supervisor of that service; and unless the individual is the approved provider, has provided written consent to that nomination (National Law).
Person in day-to-day charge	A person is in day-to-day charge of an education and care service if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the person is placed in day-to-day charge by the approved provider or a nominated supervisor of the service; and the person consents to the placement in writing (National Regulations). There are minimum requirements for the person in day-to-day charge.
Person with management or control	In relation to an education and care service, means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> if the provider or intended provider of the service is a body corporate, an officer of the body corporate within the meaning of the Corporations Act 2001 of the Commonwealth who is responsible for managing the delivery of the education and care service; or if the provider of the service is an eligible association, each member of the executive committee of the association who has the responsibility, alone or with others, for managing the delivery of the education and care service; or if the provider of the service is a partnership, each partner who has the responsibility, alone or with others, for managing the delivery of the education and care service; or in any other case, a person who has the responsibility, alone or with others, for managing the delivery of the education and care service (National Law).

Policy information

Policy information			
Policy title:	Interacting with Children Policy	Version:	1.0
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Version control		
Version	Date	Changes
1.0	6/9/2024	Policy developed