

Effective from 22 May 2023

Introduction

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that was originally identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that COVID-19 outbreak as a 'pandemic' - a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (effective 11 March 2020). This is mainly due to the speed and scale of transmission of the virus in countries around the world, including Australia.

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. According to Department of Health, the time of exposure to the virus and when symptoms first occur is anywhere from 2-14 days.

Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID-19 may experience:

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

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

As this information is changing rapidly, our Service is monitoring health alerts and implementing measures suggested by key health experts to minimise the transmission of COVID-19.

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.

The evolving nature of COVID-19 and the unprecedented steps required to protect our community as recommended by the Australian Government, has resulted in the development of a specific policy to assist our Service manage this pandemic.

This policy will change as required to ensure the protective measures against COVID-19, as advised by our state or territory government, are implemented by our Service.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
93	Administration of medication
110	Ventilation and natural light
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record

168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
173 (2)(g)	Prescribed information to be displayed- centre based service and family day care service, a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises or venue

PURPOSE

Our Service will minimise our staff and 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 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 is suspected or has tested positive to having COVID-19. Our Service will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures and increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high touch areas as per SafeWork Australia recommendations.

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 Ministry of Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Federal Government Department of Health will be strictly adhered to at all times.

As recommended, our Service has a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place and a copy is available on our premises at all times. We are a COVID Safe business and are registered with our [The Tasmanian Government](#)

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](#) and Safe Work Australia.

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.

We are guided by explicit decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of any infectious disease by the *Australian Government- Department of Health* and local Public Health Units in our jurisdiction under the Public Health Act. COVID-19 is a notifiable condition in all states and territories of Australia.

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line
1800 020 080
Call 131 450 for translating and interpreting service
Health Direct 1800 022 222
1 Tasmanian Department of Health
Contact for the Tasmanian Government's Department of Health. General enquiries 1300 135 513 Public Health Hotline (coronavirus) 1800 671 738 Department of Health Tasmania

Minimising the transmission of COVID-19

Risk Management

Our Service has effective and systematic risk management processes in place to identify any possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices related to COVID-19. Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised these risks as is reasonably practicable. Control measures are reviewed in consultation with staff members. Due to the constant changes in managing our Service during the pandemic, our approach to risk management is ongoing and fluid.

A statement from [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee](#) [15 November, 2021], details evidence that indicates that the Delta variant is more infectious and easily spread than other variants. The AHPPC acknowledges the many control measures implemented in schools and early childcare settings to help reduce transmission of COVID-19. The best method to protect all children from the disease is to ensure vaccination of those around them who are able to be vaccinated. The AHPPC recommends that anyone, with new respiratory symptoms, including children, parents and staff, should *stay at home* and arrange to be tested for COVID-10 as soon as possible. Actions in early childhood settings to help prevent transmission of the virus include well establish COVIDSafe practices of hand and respiratory hygiene, good ventilation, regular environmental cleaning and mask wearing by all adults.

Actions in early childhood settings to help prevent transmission of the virus include well establish COVIDSafe practices including:

- exclusion of unwell staff, children and visitors
- reducing mixing of children by separating cohorts – **except outdoor spaces.**
- ensuring staff maintain physical distancing from each other, especially in staff room
- enhanced personal hand and respiratory hygiene for children, staff and parents
- improving ventilation in indoor spaces and adhering to any 'ventilation plans' implemented in schools or buildings
- where possible, moving lessons and activities to outdoors to reduce transmission between groups and limit the number of person who may need to be quarantined if a case emerges
- full adherence to the NHMRC childcare cleaning guidelines and cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces at least twice daily, washing and laundering play items and toys
- providing staff and families with information and posters about [COVID-19 vaccination roll out](#)
- recommending influenza vaccination for children, staff and parents

Parents of children with a current Asthma Action Plan are advised to update this if needed in consultation with their child's health care professional. Updated plans should be provided to management for distribution to relevant staff members. (Asthma Australia).

Infection Control Training

Our staff are committed to assist in infection prevention controls and have completed [COVID-19 infection control training](#).

Hygiene practices

Our Service will ensure [signs and posters](#) remind employees and visitors of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread including hand washing and hand rub procedures and information about COVID-19. <https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare>

These will also be communicated to families through email, newsletters and social media. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser will be kept out of reach of young children and only available for adults to use. If parents decide to apply this to their child, they must supervise the child to avoid rubbing it into their eyes or a child swallowing the gel/liquid. Our Service will supply disposable tissues and have bins available with plastic liners available in several locations for disposing used items.

Information provided to families may include:

- o symptoms of COVID-19
- o transmission of the virus
- o messaging to reinforce- '*stay at home when unwell*'
- o self-isolation and exclusion

- prevention strategies- including hand hygiene and self-isolation
- contact details for health assistance
- CCS and ACCS information
- Public Health Orders (if required)
- service closure- Primary Close Contacts and quarantine requirements

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

Exclusion/ Self-isolation/ Self-quarantine

Our Service has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of employees, children and visitors in our workplace, so far as reasonably practicable. We may therefore collect information from visitors about their potential exposure to COVID-19 in order to identify, assess and control risks of infection in line with Department of Health guidelines. Information collected will only be viewed by designated management personnel of the service and will be stored securely. To comply with privacy laws, personal information will only be disclosed on a 'need to know' basis to the Public Health Unit to prevent and manage COVID-19 if required. (ACTU Privacy at work)

- any Employee, visitor/contractor entering our Service- including families for a length of time/orientation, must register and adhere to the Visitor Health Declaration form and sign in , at reception
- A person who has a confirmed case (including children) of COVID-19 must not enter the indoors of the service.
- House hold members of a positive case can attend if they have a NEGATIVE RAT (approved for their age) test EVERY DAY & remain symptom free
- Must wear a MASK at all times if you are unwell as deemed necessary
- any person (employee, enrolled child, parent, caregiver, visitor or contractor) who is displaying symptoms such as: **fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath**, should be tested either by visiting a free COVID-19 respiratory clinic to arrange a test for COVID- 19 or an appropriate RAT test (we do sell these tests and they are suitable for persons under 3 years of age) **and not attend our Service under any circumstance until they receive a negative test result.**
- in the event of a staff member, parent, child or visitor being diagnosed with COVID-19 whilst in the service, we will notify families.
- any person (employee, enrolled child, parent, caregiver, visitor or contractor) who is displaying symptoms such as: **fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath**, should be tested either by visiting a free COVID-19 respiratory clinic to arrange a test for COVID- 19 and not attend our Service **under any circumstance until they receive a negative test result.**

Effective hygiene measures

The national campaign *Help Stop The Spread and Stay Healthy*, launched by the Australian Government has emphasised that effective handwashing is a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is recommended, but in the absence of this being accessible an alternative option is use of an alcohol-based hand sanitiser can be used, whenever you cough, sneeze or blow your nose, prepare food or 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 must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser provided upon arrival to the Service
- Educators will assist children entering the service to wash their hands up on arrival.
- a workplace attendance register is maintained for all staff, parents (only visiting for extended times ie orientation), visitors at all times (including contact phone numbers) as per National Regulations.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 parents are reminded of the following:

- if your child is sick, do not send them to our Service
- **do not visit our Service if you or another family member is unwell or positive covid**
- sanitise your hands at regular intervals throughout the day

- avoid physical contact with other people who may be sick- such as older people and people with existing health conditions
- promote strictest hygiene measures when preparing food at home and at the Service

To minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 our Service will:

- where possible, outdoor play will be promoted within our Service to provide children with additional personal space
- increase ventilation within the Service **and use of air purification units**
- setting air conditioning units to use external air rather than recycling where possible
- contact parents of children who have chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression as they may be at an increased risk of disease and require additional support/care
- communicate with parents and families the risk mitigation strategies to be adhered to during any group celebrations

Cases of COVID-19 at our Service

As per our *Sick Child Policy* we reserve the right to refuse a child into care if they:

- have a contagious illness or infectious disease
- live in the same house with someone who has a positive confirmed case of 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 48 hours
- have been given medication for a temperature prior to arriving at the Service
- have started a course of anti-biotics in the last 24 hours

If a child becomes ill whilst at the Service, educators/staff will respond to their individual symptoms of illness and provide comfort and care. The child will be cared for in an area that is separated from other children in the service to await pick up from their parent/carer.

Educators will wear disposable gloves **and a face mask** to avoid possible contamination. All items/resources touched by the child will be cleaned and disinfected to avoid possible cross contamination.

All information will be recorded in our *Incident, Injury, Trauma and 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 due to symptoms being displayed.

Notification

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor is mandated by law to notify the Public Health Unit on **1800 020 080** of any confirmed case of COVID-19. In addition, the Approved Provider must also notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) in their state or territory within 24 hours. At all times, privacy laws must be adhered to and information about individuals must not be shared without permission.

Talking to children about COVID-19

As per our *Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy*, 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 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 emotional well-being will be closely monitored by all educators and staff and any concerns communicated with parents and families. Children's questions will be respected and supported.

In the event of the Service being closed as a precaution to limit the spread of the virus, information will be provided to parents/families to help explain the situation to young children.

Payment of Fees - Child Care Subsidy- (CCS)

As per our *Payment of Fees Policy*, fees are payable **in advance** of your child's attendance.

CCS hourly rate caps will be adjusted from **12 July 2021** [see: [Child Care Subsidy rates](#)]

Children must continue to meet immunisation requirements.

Allowable Absences from childcare

Allowable absences have been reset for the 2022/23 financial year to 42 days. All Australian families can access 10 extra allowable absence days per child in this current financial year (i.e., 52 days). These extra absences are to help services and families affected by COVID-19 but can be used for any reason. They will be applied automatically.

What happens if our Service is forced to close?

The decision to close our Service will be made, and advised, by relevant state and territory governments PHU or the Regulatory Authority. This may be due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our Service community. Should this occur, all families will be notified immediately via email and/or phone.

The Approved Provider must notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) within 24 hours of any closure via the [NQA IT System](#) the Regulatory Authority for Work Health and Safety in their state/territory (Safe Work Australia) **and** the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) in their state or territory. In addition, Services that need to temporarily close for COVID-19 related reasons must now also report closures (and re-openings) via your third party software or the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#).

Our Service will ensure all areas are cleaned and disinfected as per Safe Work cleaning guidance. We will continue to keep families informed as to when we are expected to re-open as advised by the Public Health Unit.

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 to the service until they are not displaying any symptoms. Employees must make a declaration that they are *fit for work* and have no symptoms of COVID-19 for the past 72 hours (3 days). A doctor's certificate or clearance is not required. The service does require a NEGATIVE RAT test prior to returning to the service and be symptom free.

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

As per our privacy obligations under the *Privacy Act*, the identity of a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 will only be shared with Public Health and/or on a strictly 'need to know' basis. Access to personal or medical information can only be shared with the consent of the employee.

Communicating with families

Our Service will establish continue regular communication channels with families and share information about COVID-19 as required.

More information and resources

[Child Care Centre Desktop- COVID-19 Support Module and Resources-available on our home page](#)

[Australian Business Lawyers & Advisors](#)

[Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment- absences from child care due to local emergency](#)

[Beyond Blue Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supporting educators, children and young people](#)

[CCS Helpdesk 1300 667 276](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources Australian Government](#)

[COVID-19 Infection control training](#)

[Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit](#)

[Fairwork Australia- Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

State and Territory specific information

[Tasmanian Government Department of Health – Coronavirus](#)

HELP KEEP OUR SERVICE INFECTION FREE



Please keep your child at home

- ✘ **They have had Panadol or Nurofen in the morning**
Both medicines can mask symptoms but do not get rid of infections
- ✘ **Fever of 37.5°C**
- ✘ **Consistent cough**
- ✘ **Continuous runny nose**
- ✘ **Sore throat**
- ✘ **Unusually tired & lethargic**
- ✘ **Positive COVID TEST,**
Return to care with a negative RAT and symptom free

Exclusion Periods:

- ✘ **High temperature 38° or above**
24hr clearance
- ✘ **Diarrhoea**
48hr clearance from last episode
- ✘ **Vomiting**
48hr clearance from last episode
- ✘ **Contagious or infectious disease**
- ✘ **Un-diagnosed rash**
Clearance required
- ✘ **Close contact with COVID ,** must have negative RAT each day before care and no symptoms

Once the above symptoms have been cleared, please bring your child back to play, learn



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Source

Australian Council of trade unions Coronavirus (COVID-19) Privacy at work <https://www.actu.org.au/coronavirus>
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
 Australian Government Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19)
 Australian Government Department of Health [Education and Care Services National Regulations](https://www.health.gov.au/education-and-care-services-national-regulations). (2011). Regulations. (2017).
Public Health Act 2010
Public Health Amendment Act 2017
 Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria
 The Australian Parenting website Raisingchildren <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia>
 Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
 Safe Work Australia (2020)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	NOVEMBER 2021	NEXT REVIEW DATE	As required
May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include negative rat test results to return o work, update infection poster for exclusion times with positive cases in the home 		
September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of Masks, removal of isolation rules. General clean up of procedures, removal of waive gap fees • Removal of covid specific cleaning, general practices will resume 		
NOVEMBER 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on mandatory vaccinations in ECEC staff across Australia (where applicable) • AHPPC update for early education and care services- 15 November 2021 • Waiver of Gap Fee change (CCS) – effective 9 November 2021 • additional absences for 2021-22 financial year (CCS) • mask wearing mandates for some states • managing a positive case of COVID-19 state specific information added (where available) to resource section [NSW/QLD] • removed requirement for 'deep clean' of whole service as changes to managing COVID-19 outbreaks are implemented • ventilation regulation and information added • changes to mandatory quarantine requirements for overseas arrivals as per state/territory requirements 		
UPDATED 28 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes to reflect changes in periods of local emergency and absences • new isolation restrictions for people travelling interstate • small edits to leave entitlements for staff • Fair Work information added- employee entitlements, stand down 		
UPDATED 24 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updated effective 24 March 2020 • changes due to Ministerial update re: increase in absences for children to receive CCS payments and CCS payments if services are forced to close • new information for CCCF funding for COVID-19 • modification to staff requested to be isolated from Service due to flu-like symptoms • modifications of entitlements relating to sick pay if employees are forced to be self-isolated • additional resources for state/territory specific information 		

