

Effective from 6 January 2022

## 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.

Please note: Restrictions in various jurisdictions can be found as they become available- [COVID-19 information for the early childhood education and care sector](#)

## 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
<b>110</b>	<b>Ventilation and natural light</b>
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	
<b>1800 020 080</b>	
Call 131 450 for translating and interpreting service	
Health Direct	
<b>1800 022 222</b>	
<b>1 Tasmanian Department of Health</b>	
Contact for the Tasmanian Government's Department of Health. General enquiries <a href="tel:1300135513">1300 135 513</a> Public Health Hotline (coronavirus) <a href="tel:1800671738">1800 671 738</a> <a href="http://www.health.tas.gov.au">Department of Health Tasmania</a>	

The Public Health Unit may contact the Approved Provider in the event of any child, educator, staff member or visitor who has attended our Service, and has tested positive to COVID-19. Contact tracing will be conducted by the PHU and further advice provided [to assist in managing a COVID-19 positive case in our Service and service community](#)

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Service policies:

- Sick Children Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Handwashing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Interactions with Children, Families and staff Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy

## 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:

- adhering to mandated COVID-19 vaccinations dates for ECEC staff
- exclusion of unwell staff, children and visitors
- mask wearing by all adults
- 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](#).

## Vaccination

The Tasmanian Government issued a mandate for all educators to have one dose of an approved vaccine by January 8<sup>th</sup> 2022

Second dose of approved vaccination by January 8<sup>th</sup> 2022

## 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:

- symptoms of COVID-19
- transmission of the virus
- messaging to reinforce- *'stay at home when unwell'*
- 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)
- Wearing of face masks in outdoor and indoor settings
- 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 person arriving at our Service- including families 'dropping off' children, must respond and adhere to the Parent/Visitor Health Declaration sign in the entry gate
- any person who has been in close contact with someone who has a positive diagnosis must and follow the instructions of the Tasmanian Government Health department. (see: [Quarantine for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#))
- household members of a person who has a confirmed case (including children) of COVID-19 must remain in isolation unless they have a NEGATIVE RAT test EVERY DAY & remain symptom free
- Must wear a MASK at all times
- Children under 12 – 3 years of age must have an approved for age RAT test & or negative PCR EVERY DAY & remain symptom free.

- Children under 3 Must remain in isolation with their families & return a NEGATIVE APPROVED AGE RAT TEST or PCR prior to returning to the service & remain symptom free

- 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.**
- If a person is in isolation awaiting a covid test they are not able to drop off or collect a child at our service until negative result is authorised by public health.
- parents to agree to have their child's temperature taken by a staff member prior to entry to the Service if the service deems appropriate.
- parents agree to have their child excluded if their child's temperature is equal to or above 37.5°C

Temperature reading	Required action
Less than 37.5°	Child able to attend service.
Equal to or greater than 37.5° on first reading	The child should be asked to wait in a separate room and have their temperature re-checked in 15 minutes.  If the child is wearing outerwear, the educator should suggest the child remove this once they are indoors.
Equal to or greater than 37.5° on second reading	The child should return home with their parent/carer.  If their parent/carer is not present, the child will need to be isolated and the parent/carer contacted to collect them from the service as soon as possible.  Families should be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps and coronavirus (COVID-19) testing.

Source: Victoria State Government Education and Training

- the Public Health Unit will provide further information on a case-by-case basis as to the length and place of isolation (see: [COVID-19 self-isolation](#))
- 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 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 and departure.
- a workplace attendance register is maintained for all staff, parents, visitors at all times (including contact phone numbers) as per National Regulations
- hands must be thoroughly dried after washing.

- disposable tissues must be used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use- Tissues do not go in fogo bin during a pandemic. Outside bin will be lined.
- hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- cough and sneeze etiquette must be used- cover your cough and sneeze with your hand or elbow
- educators and staff must adhere to our *Handwashing Policy* at all times
- children are supervised when washing hands
- educators will wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitiser, before wearing gloves and wash their hands after wearing gloves
- educators and staff must adhere to our *Health and Safety 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
- staff will maintain a cleaning register of all surfaces and equipment conducted – *covid 19 cleaning checklist*
- equipment, resources and surfaces including high-touch surfaces- taps, door handles, light switches, nappy change areas, toys, keyboards and laptops/iPads will be cleaned more frequently as required using detergent and water followed by disinfectant
- During an outbreak the cleaning schedule 7 will over ride the above.
- cleaning contractors hygienically clean the Service to ensure risk of contamination is removed as per [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#)
- all persons over the age of 12 will follow any face covering if mandates issued by the Public Health Unit

### Social/Physical distancing in childcare

Social or physical 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)

Social or physical distancing in early childhood education and care is not feasible for educators to perform their job, however we will implement measures to minimise the risk of exposure as *reasonably practicable*.

Our Service will encourage educators to apply physical distancing measures where possible and not gather in groups or encourage groups of parents to congregate. (SafeWork NSW, AHPPC)

### 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
- 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
- clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly (door handles, car seats, mobile phone, toys, dummies)
- 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:

- undertake a risk assessment to identify potential risks and mitigate with consideration risks to children and staff
- revisit the risk assessment whenever new risks or potential risks are identified and adjust our management plan
- restrict the number of visitors to our Service (including students, delivery of goods)
- restrict the number of family members visiting inside our Service
  - display QR code posters
    - parents not coming into the Service at all
    - install signage and markings on the floor near the front entry indicating a 1.5 metre mark for parents/families to use
    - provide a separate area for families who need to complete additional paperwork such as medication forms. We are using our outdoor furniture for this purpose.
- restrict the number of educators using the staff room at any one time

- Due to the design of our service building and co sharing facilities it is not practical to separate children room by room, Strategies need to be used to reduce the mixing of children by separating cohorts as best as possible.
- where possible, 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
- increase ventilation within the Service and use of air purification units
- setting air conditioning units to use external air rather than recycling where possible
- ensure cots, mats, cushions, highchairs etc are positioned at least 1.5 metres apart
- seat children at opposite ends of a table when playing and eating
- avoid any situation when children are required to queue- waiting their turn to use bathroom for handwashing or toileting, waiting their turn to use a piece of equipment etc.
- 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
- conduct COVID-safe risk assessments for any group outings to public places (excursions to local shops, schools, libraries)
- conduct COVID-safe risk assessments for any large group celebrations and abide by restrictions for groups size, square metre allowance and other measures
- communicate with parents and families the risk mitigation strategies to be adhered to during any group celebrations

**When in stage 2 Outbreak management procedures will be as follows:**

- ensure face masks are worn by all adults at arrival and collection times on our veranda.
- ensure face masks are worn by staff when engaging with other adults, such as during pick up and drop offs
- require all staff to wear face coverings when not working directly with children in areas of the service
- With the exception of educators & regulator bodies and emergency services. Adults will only be admitted in the service by permission of management.
- discourage use of public transport by staff if possible and recommend that staff:
  - travel directly from home to work (avoid stopping at shops or petrol station)
  - wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or sanitise hands with alcohol-based sanitiser before and after travelling to work
  - if using public transport, maintain physical distancing measures during any trip
  - request staff to wear face coverings whilst travelling on public transport (amend as required for your service)

**Our Risk Assessment:**

1. Please use the hand sanitiser located on our gate provided BEFORE opening our gate.
2. Only (1) One Adult per family is to come in to the entry way on our verandah at a time please.
3. Press the door bell and wait for an educator to come out to collect your child.
4. Please disclose to us if you have been instructed to isolate/quarantine, been classed as a close contact to a positive covid case in the last 14 days, for our protection.
5. Do not enter if you are unable to accept our health guidelines as displayed on the door, we will bring your child out to your car if needed.
6. Please adhere to the COVID Safe distancing rule of 1.5m at all times We have placed 3 waiting places on the verandah, please ensure only 3 adults are on our verandah at one time
7. Please use our ENTRY and EXIT gates appropriately
8. Please observe the following limit of additional adults in our rooms as follows:
  - Bluegums MAX 4 Adults
  - Banksia MAX 10 Adults
  - Waratah MAX 16 Adults
  - Enrolment/Orientation visits – will be conducted for short periods outdoors with one adult at times of less flow of children/educators

As we are limited to the number of adults on our verandah, we ask that you ensure drop off and collection times are as short as possible (approx. 5 minutes). We encourage you to phone ahead of time so we can have your children prepared for collection. Please call us at any time for updates or providing information about your child.

As we are limited to the number of adults on our premises, we ask that you ensure these visits are as short as possible (approx. 5 minutes). We encourage you to phone ahead of time so we can have your children prepared for collection

### **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
- have been in close contact 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 take the child's temperature. If the temperature is above 37.5°C parents will be contacted and required to collect their child within 30 minutes. If they are unable to collect their child, an emergency contact person/authorised nominee will be contacted, and they must collect your child within 30 minutes.

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

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

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.

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 *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.

Staff will be supported in professional learning to help children deal with trauma related to COVID-19 through resources, webinars and online modules. (Emerging Minds, beYou)

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.

### Waiving of gap fees

The gap fee is the difference between the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) the Government pays to a service and the remaining fee paid by the family. Services can waive the gap fee and receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) if a child is unable to attend care because:

- they, or a member of their immediate household, must isolate due to COVID-19. This applies from 9 November 2021
- the service, or a room at the service, is closed on advice from the state or territory government due to COVID-19. This includes where:
  - a Family Day Care or In-Home Care educator isn't able to provide their usual service because they, or a member of their immediate household is quarantining or isolating
- the state or territory has restricted access to childcare in a region due to COVID-19.

Gap fees may be waived until 30 June 2022. Services must keep a record of the advice by a state or territory authority advising that they close and accurately reflect waived gap fees in the fee statements provided to parents.

Check the [Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment website](#) for further information regarding gap fee waiving general information.

*[Services are **not** obligated to waiver gap fees. This is a business decision for each service to consider. Enter your Service's information below. Note- any cessation of enrolment will still incur gap fee payment as per usual.]*

### Child Care Safety Net – Additional Child Care Subsidy (Temporary Financial Hardship)

The Child Care Safety Net gives families and services extra support if they are vulnerable or disadvantaged or located in a regional or remote community. Families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) (ACCS) due to temporary financial hardship, such as loss of income and be entitled to access up to 100 hours of subsidised childcare per

fortnight for up to 12 weeks. Families will need to apply for ACCS (Temporary Financial hardship) and update their activity levels through [myGov](#).

### Children considered at risk

Where a child is enrolled and is considered 'at risk' of serious abuse or neglect, our Service will refer the child or family to the appropriate support agency in order to comply with the legislative requirements.

### Allowable Absences from childcare

Allowable absences have been reset for the 2021/22 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). This is in addition to the 10 extra allowable absences provided for families in NSW, Victoria and the ACT during extended lockdowns in 2021. 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.

If a state or territory restricts access to childcare in a region for more than 7 days, more absences will be provided.

[see: [Absences](#) updated 12 November 2021]

### **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 \(PEP\)](#).

Tasmania: [ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au)

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.

### **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 to work until they have completed a period of self-isolation. 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.

Full and part-time employees who cannot attend work due to illness can take paid sick leave. Employees who have no leave entitlements remaining may be eligible to apply for Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.

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.

#### **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. Casual employees are eligible to have 2 days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. See [Fair Work Act](#) for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees. Reasonable evidence is required to justify the absence.

#### **Self-Isolation Unpaid Pandemic Leave**

Effective 8 April 2020, employees who are required to self-isolate by government or medical authorities or acting on advice of a medical practitioner may access unpaid [pandemic leave](#). (Extended until 31 December 2021). The agreement has to be in writing and the employer needs to keep it as a record.

This leave provides employees with:

- 2 weeks of unpaid pandemic leave
- the ability to take twice as much annual leave at half their normal pay if their employer agrees.

#### **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, annual leave or long service leave with Management.

## 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. (Payment for waivers must be paid, however will be reimbursed by the regulatory authority) see: [NGA ITS Portal Emergency Management Help Guide](#)

## Communicating with families

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

Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the necessity of self-isolation for some staff members, our Service will endeavour to inform parents and families of any staff changes on a daily basis.

Staff who have approved leave will be replaced with casual staff and families will be informed as per our usual practices to ensure continuity of care where possible.

As restrictions continue to be lifted across all states and territories, our risk mitigation measures may also be eased. Any changes to our current organisational plans will be communicated clearly with families.

## 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 virus 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

## Resources to support children through COVID-19 Pandemic

Dr Michelle Dickinson- Video for kids about COVID-19

<https://youtu.be/OPsY-jLqaXM>

Emerging Minds- Talking to Children about Natural Disasters, Traumatic Events or Worries About the Future

<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/supporting-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/>

Play School- Hello Friends! (A COVID-19 Special)

<https://www.abc.net.au/abckids/shows/play-school/covid-19/12114308>

[UNICEF- How to talk to your child about COVID-19](#)

In Home Care Support Agency resources – [Talking to children about COVID-19](#)

Asthma Australia- [What does Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) mean for people with Asthma](#)

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this 'draft' policy is based on current information from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Government- The Treasury, Family Assistance Law and Fairwork Ombudsmen (19 November 2021)

Services are required to make changes to this policy to reflect their decisions related to temperature testing of children/staff, restricting entry to service premise by parents/families, discouraging use of public transport by staff and wearing of face masks within the early education and care service if not mandated by state/territory Department of Health.

## 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](#)

[Healthdirect Coronavirus hub](#)

[Home Isolation Information](#)

[Information for people with a suspected case](#)

[Information for employers](#)

[Information on Social distancing](#)

[Local state and territory health departments](#)

[NSW Department of Education. \(October 2021\). COVID safety in early childhood education and care services: Guidance.](#)

[NSW Department of Education COVID-19 Management of confirmed case in early childhood education and care services NSW Department of Education](#)

[Queensland Department of Education. COVID-19 Confirmed case management process- early childhood education and care services. QLD Department of Education](#)

[Raising Children](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

## Posters and Visuals

[COVID-19 coronavirus in pictures](#)

[Manuela Moina- Children's book- "Hello! I am the Coronavirus"](#)

## Posters for Temperature Screening

[Poster for service entrance \(pdf - 42.94kb\)](#)

[Poster for staff \(pdf - 79.86kb\)](#)

[Poster for families \(pdf - 54.42kb\)](#)

NSW Health. COVID-19 symptoms and testing. (Reference re: fever and temperature)

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/posters-and-print.aspx#symptoms>

## State and Territory specific information

[ACT Health- Latest information about COVID-19](#)

[NSW Health alert COVID 19](#)

[Northern Territory Government Department of Health](#)

[Queensland Health – Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[SA Health – Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

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

[Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Western Australian Government Department of Health – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

## 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 *Health Topics*

Australian Government Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Australian Government Department of Health. Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) statement on COVID-19, schools and early childhood education and care (15 November 2021). <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-statement-on-covid-19-schools-and-early-childhood-education-and-care>

Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman *Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws* (updated 13 March 2020)

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Australian Government Department of Health

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).

Fair Work Ombudsman Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws (2020) <https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020)

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.

NSW Government. Department of Education. (2021). *COVID safety in early childhood education and care services: Guidance*.

*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
NOVEMBER 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update on mandatory vaccinations in ECEC staff across Australia (where applicable)</li> <li>AHPPC update for early education and care services- 15 November 2021</li> <li>Waiver of Gap Fee change (CCS) – effective 9 November 2021</li> <li>additional absences for 2021-22 financial year (CCS)</li> <li>mask wearing mandates for some states</li> <li>managing a positive case of COVID-19 state specific information added (where available) to resource section [NSW/QLD]</li> <li>removed requirement for 'deep clean' of whole service as changes to managing COVID-19 outbreaks are implemented</li> <li>ventilation regulation and information added</li> <li>changes to mandatory quarantine requirements for overseas arrivals as per state/territory requirements</li> </ul>		
UPDATED 28 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changes to reflect changes in periods of local emergency and absences</li> <li>new isolation restrictions for people travelling interstate</li> <li>small edits to leave entitlements for staff</li> <li>Fair Work information added- employee entitlements, stand down</li> </ul>		
UPDATED 24 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>updated effective 24 March 2020</li> <li>changes due to Ministerial update re: increase in absences for children to receive CCS payments and CCS payments if services are forced to close</li> <li>new information for CCCF funding for COVID-19</li> <li>modification to staff requested to be isolated from Service due to flu-like symptoms</li> <li>modifications of entitlements relating to sick pay if employees are forced to be self-isolated</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional resources for state/territory specific information</li> </ul>
16 March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• original policy drafted</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
2 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New rules on isolation and negative rats to return to care</li> </ul>