

COVID-19 POLICY

Aims

- In recognition of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing release of information from authorities, our service will seek to respond swiftly and correctly to advice from authorities and Public Health Orders

Explanation

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. A novel coronavirus, is a new strain that has not previously been detected in humans. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (World Health Organisation).
- Currently, it appears that unlike with colds and flu, small children do not seem to be as severely affected by COVID-19. They also don't appear to contribute significantly to disease spread.
- Early Childhood Education Care services should feel confident that increasing hygiene practices and social distancing at their service will help prevent the spread. This policy puts procedures in place to prepare for, prevent and manage the potential outbreak of COVID-19, while also implementing any new regulations and recommendations from governing authorities for the wellbeing and safety of our preschool community.
- Typical symptoms of COVID-19 infection can include:
 - Fever (above 37.5 degrees Celsius)
 - Sore or scratchy throat
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Runny nose
 - Loss of taste or smell
- Other reported symptoms of COVID-19 include: fatigue, congestion, muscle pain, joint pain, headache, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, unexplained chest pain, or conjunctivitis.

Implementation

- We will continue to apply measures that prioritise health and safety measures, including:
 - Registering as a COVID-Safe Business.
 - Implementing vigilant hygiene practices that prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19:
 - Regularly and thoroughly cleaning hands with soap and water
 - Encouraging children to avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth as much as

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- possible
- Following good respiratory hygiene when coughing or sneezing
 - Cover mouth and nose with bent elbow or tissue
 - Dispose of used tissue immediately
 - Wash hands with soap and water
 - **Anyone (staff, families and children) who is sick with any symptoms, even with mild symptoms, should not attend early childhood education and care facilities, get tested immediately and self-isolate until a negative result is received.**
 - **The preschool will require evidence of the negative result before a child may resume their attendance. Families will be encouraged to keep their child home until they are well.**
 - It is recognised that children can often experience prolonged coughs and nasal discharge during or after a cold or illness. Children will be taught and encouraged to use effective hygiene practices of wiping and blowing their nose with tissues, washing their hands and coughing or sneezing into their elbows. For the health and wellbeing of other children and staff members, as well as the child's own comfort, if a child is unable to manage this effectively their parent/caregiver will be contacted to pick the child up.
 - **Children with allergies**
 - For children or staff with seasonal allergic rhinitis or other conditions that have similar symptoms to COVID-19, but where symptoms are ongoing due to diagnosed allergies, an initial negative COVID-19 test is required before returning to ECE.
 - Following this, only if the person's symptoms change from their usual symptoms, then repeat COVID-19 testing should be performed.
 - If a child or staff member becomes ill while they are at the service, they should be sent home as soon as possible. While awaiting collection by their carer, ideally, the symptomatic child should be cared for in an area that is separated from other children at the service (this location will be our downstairs meeting room, and supervised by an educator). This is to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses.
 - Best practice guideline *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* will be referred to.
 - The location of current COVID-19 cases will be monitored continually. Anyone who has been to the location of a confirmed case must follow the recommended actions by governing authorities (close contact, get tested, self-isolate, monitor for symptoms)
 - Excursions and incursions will be restricted during heightened risk periods and risk assessments will be conducted prior to their implementation in consideration of:
 - The latest advice from the Australian Health Protection Principle Committee (AHPPC)
 - Those at high risk, such as those with medical conditions
 - Visitors to the preschool will be limited, and reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Detailed records of all visitors will be kept, including contact numbers for tracing purposes.
 - Reviewing any large or 'non-essential' gatherings or events (including visitors day, orientation days, party days)

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- All events to be held will have a thorough risk assessment conducted and measures put in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in attendance.
- Cleaning and hygiene
 - Our service maintains a clean and hygienic environment. During any infectious disease outbreak, routine environmental cleaning is increased in frequency, particularly on high-touch surfaces such as door handles, tables, light switches, gates, sign in pens, and bathroom areas, and any toys/surfaces which may have been mouthed or in contact with bodily fluids.
 - Surfaces are cleaned to reduce any dirt/grime and then disinfected to remove germs.
 - The preschool will follow Department of Health guidelines for cleaning in the event of a positive COVID case
- Physical distancing
 - It is not required for children to physically distance from each other, nor for educators to physically distance from children.
 - Families will be encouraged to maintain physical distance during drop off and pick up times.
 - While masks are not mandatory, families will be encouraged to make the decision that is best for themselves
 - We will take into consideration the environment and experiences we plan to minimise close contact including:
 - The set up of the room and placement of experiences, limiting the number of whole group experiences.
 - Limiting the mixing of educators and children between rooms where possible.
 - The set up of more individual and small group experiences throughout the room. A greater range of experiences can encourage children to spread out more broadly.
 - Increased rotation of resources and increasing the frequency of cleaning resources.
 - The outdoor environment will be utilised to its full potential as it naturally provides more space for children and the set up of more experiences for children to engage in.
 - Where possible educators and staff will spread out within the environment throughout the day and during programming and planning meetings.
- Encouraging good health and sanitation
 - Service of food and water
 - Families are to provide morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea (suspending shared fruit platters to reduce the risk of cross-infection).
 - Parent volunteers for kitchen duties will be suspended during heightened outbreaks and reviewed periodically. Any volunteers must be in good health.
 - Families may provide cakes/treats for children's birthday celebrations provided they are in good health.

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- Monitoring sources of public health information
 - Trusted sources of information include:
 - Australian Government Department of Health: www.health.gov.au
 - Coronavirus information for schools and early childhood centres, students and parents: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/coronavirus/advice-for-services-and-providers>
 - Corona Health Information Line: 1800 020 080
 - Public Health Unit: 1300 066 055
 - The Regulatory Authority relevant to our service
- Implementing all measures recommended by authorities
 - In recognition of the rapid and consistent release of information related to COVID-19 our service will refer to the reliable authorities daily.
 - Any updates in advice, directions and guidance will be communicated to staff and families immediately, and followed accordingly.
- Educating and informing our community with current and trusted information.
- Should there be any concerns regarding the health of a child at the service, families will be asked to seek medical attention. Further guidance may be sought from Health direct on 1800 022 222
- Notification of the Regulatory Authority
 - If the Approved Provider (preschool) is required to close or reduce the number of children at our service for a period of time, this will be notified to the NSW Regulatory Authority within 24hrs
 - If a child or staff member at the service is diagnosed with COVID-19 this will be reported to the regulatory authority and local public health unit
 - A confirmed case of COVID-19 is a serious incident and as such will be notified as soon as practical within 24 hours
 - Our service will remain diligent in reporting responsibilities and any directions provided to the service by the Ministry of Health

Key Sources:

Early Childhood Australia, (2020). ECA Response: COVID-19, Accessed March 20th from <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/media/eca-covid-19-response/>

World Health Organisation, (2020). Coronavirus Disease, COVID-19: Advice for public. Accessed March 19 from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), (2012). Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th Ed.)

NSW Government, Department of Education, (2021). Covid-19 guidelines for ECEC Services, accessed January 26 from <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/coronavirus/advice-for-services-and-providers>

NSW Government, Department of Health, (2020). Novel Coronaviruses Health Alert, accessed March 19 from <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-schools-and-early-childhood-centres>

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<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-childcare.aspx>

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/covid-19-child-family.aspx>

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/covid-19-child-staff.aspx>

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