

Model Policy

Infection control during the COVID-19 pandemic

Intent

The intent of this policy is to ensure best practice is implemented to protect the education and care services' (services) community during a pandemic. The policy is based on current ACT Health advice.

Objective

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

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

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

- [ACT Health Directorate](#)
- [Australia Health Protection Principal Committee](#)
- [COVID-19 Information for workplaces | Safe Work Australia](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [ACT Education Directorate](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment](#)
- [ACECQA](#)

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

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

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

Vaccinations for staff: The *(Public Health (ACT School or Early Childhood Education and Care Workers COVID-19 Vaccination) Emergency Direction 2021)* ended on 13 May 2022. This means COVID-19 vaccination is no longer mandated for early childhood education and care staff.

Providers are encouraged to consider their own COVID-19 vaccination related policies, procedures, work health and safety obligations and risk management strategies.

Supplies check: Before opening each day, the service must comprehensively check supplies of all essential PPE and general hygiene supplies. This includes but is not limited to – facemasks, gloves, sanitizer, cleaning materials and thermometers, anti-bacterial cleaning products, disinfectant and detergent. **A service with inadequate supplies should not open.**

Adequate cleaning: High traffic areas of the service must be comprehensively cleaned regularly. This includes door handles, doorknobs, coded door entry pads, exit buttons and so on. Every toy and every surface will also require regular cleaning. In the case of infant areas mouthed toys should be removed immediately when the child is no longer engaged with the item and cleaned with disinfectant and detergent. ***Additional staff, or staff deployed from other roles within the service, must be responsible for undertaking the cleaning requirements – not the educators who are working directly with the children¹.***

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

Social distancing: General Health advice is to maintain physical distance from others where possible. However, this will not always be practical in a service, and regulatory space requirements have not changed.

Social distancing with and between children is not practicable but activities involving a higher risk of transmission should be avoided (shared equipment, play dough, food sharing). The following additional strategies will decrease the risk of transmission.

- Consider small group play, staggered mealtimes, and indoor/outdoor play opportunities whenever possible.
- Windows should be opened during the day to promote air flow where possible.
- Consider operating an indoor/outdoor program for the full day/session. This provides more space for children and the setup of more activities for children to engage in.
- If you are not able to run an indoor/outdoor program, consider spending more time outdoors and the placement of activities across the outdoor space. A greater range of activities will encourage children to spread out.
- Consider appropriate spacing between cots for infants and children's sleep mats.
- Mixing of staff and children between rooms should be avoided where possible.

Close interactions between adults within the service, parents and educators, should be minimised where possible.

Communication

Emergency contact: It is critical that after-hours emergency contact details in the NQAITS are up to date and are specific to each service. These numbers will be used to speak to a service representative in the event of a critical situation.

Contact details: Contact details of each child's parent/guardian/authorised emergency person, must be recorded for **each** day a child is in attendance, to ensure that a **person will be available** to collect the child at any time across the period of care being provided.

¹ This is to ensure adequate supervision of children at all times. If educators are also responsible for cleaning tasks at a service, they cannot be included in working directly with children ratios whilst the cleaning duties are undertaken. There is nothing preventing educators returning to their normal duties once the cleaning is complete.

Updates: As with any infectious disease, providers and service leaders must continue to communicate occurrences of positive cases of COVID-19 to their community.

This optional letter template is available on the Education Directorate website for providers and service leaders use at [Optional template letter - confirmed COVID-19 case](#).

Action in the event of a case

If there is an exposure to COVID-19 at a service, the required response will depend on a number of factors. For information about the process for managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 please refer to: [Managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 in education and care services - Education \(act.gov.au\)](#)