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| Children's Education and Care Assurance Alert |
| *The Children’s Education and Care Assurance Update links professionals, providers and educators with news, resources and information that supports quality outcomes for children in ACT education and care services*8 April 2020**Delivering education and care services during COVID-19** ACT Health advice remains that it is safe for children to be in education and care services in the ACT, including out of school hours and vacation care programs. The ACT Government is recommending, based on current health advice, that education and care services remain open for the foreseeable future. Providers are encouraged to communicate with families any changes to their existing education and care programs. With many changes occurring over the past couple of weeks, the CECA team have been working hard to support education and care services. CECA are contacting education and care services to check-in and to answer any questions, expect to hear from an Authorised Officer soon. CECA has updated the [ACT Education Directorate](https://www.education.act.gov.au/early-childhood/information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-for-early-childhood) website to include more Frequently Asked Questions, information about government support for providers, and links to resources from credible and consistent sources to help education and care providers and services leaders make decisions in response to COVID-19. New information includes an ‘[Infection control during the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0007/1535713/Infection-control-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic-model-policy.docx)’ model policy which education and care services may choose to adapt to suit the context of their setting. An [Education and care service closure flow chart](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0006/1535712/Education-and-care-service-closure-flow-chart-in-response-to-COVID-19.docx) is now available to support education and care providers and services in an event of a service closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**CECA’s role during COVID-19** To support the education and care services CECA will be adapting its approach as the Regulatory Authority in response to COVID-19. The purpose of this change is to ‘reduce the regulatory burden’ during COVID-19 while ensuring that education and care services continue to provide safe, quality education and care for children. All education and care services are required to continue meeting obligations set out in the [National Quality Framework](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations) (NQF). Education and care services who are experiencing operational difficulties should contact CECA on (02) 6207 1114 or email ceca@act.gov.au for support.**CECA has redirected its regulatory support into three key functions:** **Support**Regular Assessment and Rating and Audit programs have been temporarily suspended. *Urgent risk audits will be continuing.*A support team of Authorised Officers has been established to:* conduct outreach with education and care services;
* respond to queries from education and care services and families;
* consider waiver applications, service approval amendments, suspensions or closure notifications;
* work with individual education and care services to advise measures that will support their situation and continue to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children; and
* provide support in event of service closure.

CECA have also expanded and increased communications with education and care providers and services.**Capacity**The CECA is preparing for the possibility of prolonged isolation. This planning includes the continuation of service for children of essential workers and children experiencing vulnerability. **Child Safety**CECA is aware that during times of crisis people who should not have access to children may try to take advantage of the situation. In addition, health emergencies can result in individuals displaying different responses. All individuals working with children need to be mindful of their approach to ensure typical interactions with children are not compromised. CECA is continuing to investigate incidents and allegations relating to risk of harm to children. CECA continue to work with key child protection agencies to ensure the safety of children through this period.CECA’s support team is here for advice, please phone (02) 6207 1114 or email CECA@act.gov.au if you have questions about operating during COVID-19. For enquires in relation to this notification please call CECA on (02) 6207 1114 or email CECA@act.gov.auThis email has been authorised by the ACT Regulatory Authority (CECA). CECA are responsible for administering the National Quality Framework within the ACT |

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