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| Children's Education and Care Assurance Alert |

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| *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*December 2019**Education and Care Services Closures**For the purposes of the [Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/national-regulations) services are required to notify the Regulatory Authority (Children’s Education and Care Assurance) of any operational changes. Any education and care service that will be closed for a period of time between December 2019 and January 2020 will need to submit a notification using the [National Quality Agenda IT System](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system). ***Services are reminded to complete this notification by COB today.*** Services should complete a **SA12 Notification of Change of Information About an Approved Service** form to ensure that Children’s Education and Care Assurance have been notified. Closure dates will need to be included in the **Change Description** section of this form. When completing this form please **do not** alter the **Operational Hours Details** section of this form[**Prepare your service for summer heat, bushfires and thunderstorm asthma season**](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fqualityassessmentandregulationdivision.cmail19.com%2Ft%2Fd-l-xjtddik-jihyldudku-s%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C825cc86a78fe47c4c49608d75fdb21b7%7Cb46c190803344236b978585ee88e4199%7C0%7C0%7C637083267082278425&sdata=nia5eV7S64nzwSt7q3mJa4a0qEMGoSMnOT6TbS9Ezeg%3D&reserved=0)With the commencement of summer, bushfires and thunderstorm asthma, providers, nominated supervisors and their teams should consider reviewing their emergency and evacuation management policies and procedures. An emergency can be an incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person at a service. Examples of emergencies include floods, bushfires, extreme heat or situations which require a service to be locked down. All reasonable precautions must be taken to protect anyone at the service during an emergency.Early childhood education and care services are required to have policies and procedures in relation to emergencies and evacuations. See [Regulation 97](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653/chap4/part4.2/div5) and [Regulations 168 to 172](https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653/chap4/part4.7/div2/reg168).A copy of the service’s emergency and evacuation policy and procedures must be available at the service premises, family day care residence or venue at all times or on request.**Preparing Emergency and Evacuation Procedures**Providers must conduct a risk assessment to identify potential emergencies that may impact on their service. Emergency and evacuation procedures must include:* Instructions for what to do in the event of an emergency
* An emergency and evacuation floor plan
* Emergency evacuation floor plans are required to be prominently displayed near each exit of an early childhood education and care service’s premises, family day care residence and family day care venue.

**When preparing your service’s emergency management policy and procedures, consider:*** Consulting and keep up to date with relevant authorities for guidance and advice. For example, ACT Fire and Rescue and Emergency Services and ACT Health on the management of bushfire risk and emergencies.
* Identifying circumstances when decisions could be made to close the service and how closures will be communicated and managed.
* The approaches of other nearby facilities when developing your procedures for specific emergencies
* Checking that your emergency contact details are up-to-date in your procedures and plans.
* An important step is to ensure that provider and services contact details are kept up to date by using the [National Quality Agenda IT System](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system).

A group of people walking down the street  Description automatically generated**Rehearsal of Emergency and Evacuation Procedures**Services are required to regularly rehearse their emergency and evacuation procedures ([Regulation 97](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653/chap4/part4.2/div5))* **Centre-based services must**:
	+ Conduct a rehearsal every 3 months and document it
	+ Involve everyone who is present at the service at the time of the rehearsal. This includes all staff members, volunteers and children and the responsible person in relation to service who is present at the time of the rehearsal.
* **Family day care services must:**
	+ Conduct a rehearsal every 3 months and document it
	+ Involve each family day care educator and the children being educated by the family day care educator on the day of the rehearsal.

Services must keep a documented record of each rehearsal.**2020 Early Childhood Degree Scholarships**The Early Childhood Policy and Regulation Branch of the ACT Education Directorate is committed to increasing the number and profile of degree-qualified educators in the ACT. This includes a focus on increasing the number of degree qualified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander early childhood educators to ensure children have access to inclusive and culturally appropriate education and care programs that embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.In addition to the 2019 Early Childhood Degree Scholarship Program, the 2020 Early Childhood Degree Scholarship Program has commenced. This program will provide individuals who are working in the ACT Non-Government education and care sector financial assistance to gain an approved early childhood degree qualification. Individuals who are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background are encouraged to apply. All applications will be assessed once the application period closes on **31 January 2020**. For more information visit the [ACT Education Directorate website](https://www.education.act.gov.au/early-childhood/information-for-businesses-and-employees/careers-and-training). **Changes to Early Childhood Teacher Requirements for 2020**From 1 January 2020, all services will need to have a second early childhood teacher (ECT) or a ‘suitably qualified person’ in attendance when 60 or more children preschool age or under are being educated and cared for on a given day.A ‘suitably qualified person’ can be counted towards educator to child ratios when working directly with children, in the same way that an ECT can.**A suitably qualified person can be:*** A person who is ‘actively working towards’ ([Regulation 10](https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653/chap1/reg10)) an approved early childhood teaching qualification; and
* Has completed at least 50 percent of the ECT qualification or holds an approved early childhood education and care diploma.

**OR*** A person who is registered as a primary or secondary school teacher in Australia; **and**
* Holds an ACECQA approved early childhood education and care diploma (or higher approved qualification).

For more information in relation to early childhood teacher requirements for 2020 visit the [ACECQA’s website.](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/qualification-requirements/additional-staffing-requirement-1-january-2020)Please note that services may need to apply for a temporary waiver if they are unsuccessful in recruiting additional staff to meet the 2020 early childhood teacher requirements. More information regarding evidence required to apply for a waiver read [ACECQA's Evidence for waiver applications information sheet.](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-05/Infosheet-evidenceforwaiverapplications.pdf) **Processing Timeframes for Waivers**Waivers play an important role in helping providers maintain their level of service to families while dealing with special circumstances or unexpected events.An approved provider may apply to CECA for a waiver. Applying for a waiver should be a last resort; providers should explore other avenues before making an application. Please note that CECA have up to 60 days to respond to a waiver application, once all required documentation has been submitted. **Have your say on Child Safe Standards**ACT Government is preparing to implement Child Abuse Royal Commission recommendations to regulate Child Safe Standards in the ACT.Child Safe Standards help organisations create a culture of safety which protects and empowers children and young people. If you are an employee, volunteer or provider in an organisation that engages with children and young people, go to and: * **Learn more** – Explore the [tools and resources](https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/learning-hub/about-our-training-resources) available to assist organisations to provide safe environments for children and young people.
* **Complete a short online survey** – Tell us what types of support will help your organisation comply with Child Safe Standards.
* **Make a submission** – The detailed design for the Child Safe Standards scheme will be developed in early 2020.  If you would like to contribute to this process, please make a submission.

Additional information about the community consultation process for the ACT Child Safe Standards can be found in the attachment. The consultation period closes **28 February 2020**.**CECA Operational Hours 25 December 2019 - 1 January 2020 (inclusive)**The CECA office will be closed between 25 December 2019 to 1 January 2020 (inclusive).For urgent matters requiring CECA’s assistance please contact Clare Brookes Senior Director, Early Childhood Early Childhood Policy and Regulation on **0481 003 833**Please note that notifications can continue to be submitted using the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS) and CECA will respond to these from 2 January 2020.The CECA team wish the ACT education and care community a relaxing and safe break and look forward to working with you in 2020. For enquires in relation to this notification please call CECA on (02) 6207 1114 or email CECA@ACT.gov.au. This 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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