

Coronavirus Policy

NQS

QA2	2.1.2	Health practices and procedures Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
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National Law

Section	167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
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National Regulations

Reg	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
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Aim

To ensure all employees and families implement appropriate risk management procedures to prevent the spread of coronavirus or reduce the potential for the illness to spread.

Related Policies

- Excursion Policy
- Fees Policy
- Food, Nutrition and Beverage Policy
- Health Hygiene and Safe Food Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Infectious Diseases Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Relationships with Children Policy
- Sleep, Rest, Relaxation and Clothing Policy
- Transport Policy
- Work, Health and Safety Policy

Implementation

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause illnesses similar to the common cold, but it can also cause more serious respiratory diseases. Most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath, runny nose, loss of smell/taste, muscle/joint pains, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not coronavirus. People at higher risk of catching the virus include older people, those with underlying medical problems and Indigenous Australians. The threats posed by the virus mean serious steps must be taken to stop the spread of the disease.

As outlined in our Infectious Disease and Health, Hygiene and Safe Food Policies, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators and staff implement strict hygiene and infection control procedures at all times to prevent or minimise the spread of contagious illnesses. Hygiene measures and exclusion principles outlined in these policies continue to apply, and will be informed by current guidance on coronavirus issued by relevant Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments including:

- [COVID-19 Guidelines for ECEC Services](#)
- [Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment Information](#) including [email updates](#)
- [Federal Department of Health](#) coronavirus Information Sheets which include:
 1. [Use of masks by the public in the community](#)
 2. [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#)
 3. [COVID-19-Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 4. [‘Information for employers’](#) which covers when staff cannot go to work, what to tell staff, cleaning precautions and how to help prevent spread of Coronavirus.

If in doubt about current coronavirus guidance, the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will contact the **Victorian coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398**.

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will also implement a COVID Safe Plan to ensure the service can provide an environment that’s as safe as possible for children, staff and visitors.

What must employees and families do?

Comply with government guidance

The Approved Provider, employees and volunteers and families must:

- **comply with guidance issued by Government agencies, including in relation to attendance, quarantine and self-isolation.** This includes isolating when a person develops symptoms, and isolating in the absence of symptoms when a person:
 - has been diagnosed with COVID-19
 - has been tested for COVID-19 and hasn’t received their results
 - is a household member of, or has been in close physical proximity to a close contact who has yet to receive their initial negative test result
- **seek medical attention** if they develop symptoms of coronavirus including fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath. Call ahead before visiting the doctor/hospital to advise them of your symptoms, and wear a surgical mask when visiting the medical facility. Employees/families must advise the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor immediately if they are being tested for coronavirus. They and their close contacts including enrolled children must not come to the service until they return a negative coronavirus test and meet the Government’s quarantine and self-isolation requirements or advice as outlined in the point above
- **comply with all service policies including Infectious Diseases Policy** which requires ill children and adults to remain at home and comply with relevant Exclusion periods. Note employees, volunteers and families must comply with any isolation/exclusion periods in relation to coronavirus implemented by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor including periods which exceed government requirements

- **advise the service** if they develop symptoms of the virus or are confirmed to have the virus. This is particularly important if they have been at the service before a positive test
- **provide evidence of a negative covid test** if requested, including after a period of isolation or quarantine
- **complete a Health Declaration** if requested by staff declaring they are healthy and do not have any symptoms of coronavirus before entering the service
- **comply with guidance issued by the Government in relation to the wearing of face masks at the Service.** Where the wearing of masks is not mandatory, it is recommended that parents, visitors and staff not educating and caring for children wear masks at the service in situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Note it is not safe to use a mask on children under two years due to the risk they may choke.

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure staff, parents and visitors are familiar with best practice infection control measures for wearing masks including:

- washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol before touching mask
- not touching the front of the mask or the face while it's on or when removing it – grasping the ear loops or ties instead
- disposing of single use surgical masks responsibly and putting reusable masks directly into the laundry or a disposable/washable bag for laundering.
- **comply with Government requirements for vaccination against COVID-19.** This includes vaccination requirements for ECEC staff, volunteers and contractors who attend the Service as outlined on State Government websites and contained in Public Health Directions. The Nominated Supervisor will sight evidence of these person's vaccination status and keep a written record of this

For Services in metropolitan Melbourne and restricted areas (other than OSHC), parents/guardians of children previously ineligible to attend due to COVID restrictions, but who are eligible to attend from 22 October 2021, must show evidence they're fully vaccinated or have a medical exemption before their child can attend. Where two parents/guardians share responsibility for the child (whether they live together or not), both must show this evidence

- **comply with Government check-in protocols** ie sign in using QR code. (QR Code check-ins are not required for service staff or children.) If a person does not have a smart phone, we will record their check in and out details using the [Victorian Government's Workplace Attendance Register](#) and store confidentially and securely for at least 28 days.

How to use face masks moved to mask point above

Unvaccinated Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

Where staff have submitted an approved medical contraindication exemption signed by a medical practitioner, the Nominated Supervisor will review the medical contraindication form to check the health condition meets the contraindication criteria, and if not follow up with the medical practitioner with the staff member's consent.

The Nominated Supervisor will also develop and implement a risk assessment to manage the health and safety of the staff member, other staff, children and families. Issues covered in the risk assessment for unvaccinated staff who have a medical contraindication may include:

- exclusion where there is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID for a period recommended by VIC Health
- ensuring they stay home if they are feeling unwell or are sent home if they become ill at work, and get tested for COVID-19. They must not return before receiving a negative result
- ensuring they stay at home if they're a close contact, secondary contact or casual contact and self-isolate for the period advised by VIC Health
- additional mask wearing requirements eg requiring masks to be worn outdoors even where this is not required by law
- prohibiting interactions with children or adults who may be particularly vulnerable to catching COVID-19 or suffer severe side effects from the virus
- additional hand hygiene
- ensuring they do not travel to and from work with other staff members
- ensuring they do not participate in excursions into the community
- ensuring they do not move between services where relevant
- adjusting rosters to manage staff member's location and interactions with children and adults.

The Nominated Supervisor will not allow unvaccinated volunteers or contractors to attend the Service.

Implement effective hygiene process

The coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through droplets of saliva produced when a person coughs or sneezes. Droplets cannot go through skin and people can only be infected if they touch their mouth, nose or eyes once their skin (ie hands) is contaminated. Droplets usually travel no farther than 1 metre through the air. This means the transmission of droplets can occur when people:

- have direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
- have close contact with an infected person who coughs or sneezes
- touch objects or surfaces like door handles or tables contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touch their mouth or face.

Employees and volunteers will ensure they continue to implement hygiene processes outlined in the Health, Hygiene and Safe Food Policy to ensure high standards of hygiene and infection control at all times. This includes ensuring they and where relevant children:

- wash hands frequently with soap and water including before and after eating or handling food, going to the toilet, changing a nappy, handling play dough, using gloves, after wiping or touching nose and cleaning up spills of body fluids, and where they board transport, including buses operated by the Service
- wash hands in ways that meet the principles recommended by the World Health Organisation in the following videos [wash hands with soap and water](#) and [wash hands with alcohol based sanitiser](#)
- use hand sanitiser provided at Service eg when arriving

- cough and sneeze into their inner elbow, or use a tissue to cover their mouth and nose and placing tissues in the bin immediately after use

To promote high standards of hygiene and infection control the Approved Provider and Nominated

- limiting staff to use of equipment and resources within their own room/group

Supervisor will ensure:

- all staff complete the online [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) made available by the Federal Department of Health and display certificates of completion
- educators engage in regular handwashing with children
- cleaning requirements are documented and completed more frequently than before the pandemic (at least twice daily, whole Service cleaned thoroughly at least once a day), including regular cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces like door knobs, bathrooms (eg taps, toilets), tables and chairs, phones, tablets, keyboards and playground equipment
- transport operated by the service is cleaned after a transport run eg after collecting or dropping off children
- cleaning undertaken using detergent and then an anti-viral disinfectant (made up to strength recommended by manufacturer) in line with Service Procedures, the [Department of Health's Environmental Cleaning and Disinfecting Principles](#) and VIC Health's 'Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID transmission' and 'How to clean and disinfect after a COVID-19 case' including:
 - wearing gloves and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after wearing gloves
 - wearing surgical masks and eye protection if person with the virus or in isolation has been in the area being cleaned or there are spills of body fluids which could be infected with the virus
- hand hygiene posters are displayed in the kitchen, learning spaces, hand wash and toilet areas, staff room and foyer
- signs and posters about physical distancing displayed around the Service like those from [Safework Australia](#)
- hand sanitiser (containing at least 60% alcohol) at multiple locations including front entrance and in each room
- high touch communal items replaced with alternatives where possible, for example:
 - swapping shared coffee and condiments for single service sachets in staff room
 - providing staff with own personal equipment labelled with their name where possible
 - limiting staff to use of equipment and resources within their own room/group
 - grouping resources in storeroom into separate groups for each room/group
- detergent/disinfectant surface wipes provided to clean equipment such as monitor, phone, keyboard and mouse
- all bathrooms well stocked with hand soap and towels
- sufficient quantities of essential items eg gloves, masks, wipes, sanitiser, disinfectant, soap, detergent and hand towels
- hands free sealed bins in bathrooms and rooms which are emptied daily and when full
- fresh air is circulated as much as possible by opening windows and adjusting air-conditioning from recycle to fresh air.

Social distancing

We're also implementing the following social distancing strategies where possible to limit the potential spread of the infection:

- complying with current public gathering limits and numbers of people allowed in indoor or outdoor spaces (see VIC Health and Education eg [COVID Safe ECEC](#), [COVID Education](#)) including during excursions
- displaying conditions of entry for all families and visitors on social media and entry points eg physical distancing requirements
- ensuring adults, including families, maintain at least 1.5 metres between each other as far as practical, including at the start and end of the program. This particularly applies to adults who are exempt from wearing masks
- avoiding non-essential activities that involve close personal contact
- complying with VIC Government advice in relation to excursions, visits from non-essential visitors, and higher risk activities eg singing
- restricting number of parents in service dropping off or picking up children eg by asking parents to remain in car and wait for advice to enter service or using mobile/contactless sign in /out
- putting marks 1.5 metres apart on the floor in areas where adults may congregate eg entry, staffroom, workstations, printers to encourage physical distancing, and staggering adult seating (eg in staff room) so adults not facing each other
- reviewing location of furniture and equipment in children's rooms to promote physical distancing where possible
- keep educators and children in same rooms where possible to prevent mixing of children and staff
- avoiding situations where children are required to queue, assemble in large groups or hold hands
- staggering lunch /snack times to reduce number of children inside at one time and number of staff in staff room
- staggering children's attendance where possible
- review and adjust work rosters where possible to reduce numbers of staff starting and finishing together or taking simultaneous breaks (while meeting ratio and supervision requirements)
- arranging for deliveries to be dropped away from main entrance or collected from vehicles by one or two staff using contactless acceptance measures, displaying signage for delivery drivers and identifying designated drop off areas away from main entrance
- requiring visitors to sign a COVID-19 declaration that they are healthy and do not have any symptoms of the virus
- increasing the use of technology like Skype and Zoom to communicate with families, including during orientation processes, and ensure children can continue to communicate with community members in a protected environment
- maintaining 1.5 metres between cots, stretchers, floor cushions etc and between furniture and seating arrangements in staff common rooms
- providing children with resources rather than letting children select from communal resources
- serving food to children rather than providing sharing plates
- increasing supervision in bathrooms and only allowing 1 child at tap at a time to wash hands
- conducting more learning and activities outside
- requiring staff to travel directly to and from work, and avoid public transport where possible
- ensuring physical distancing is maintained **where possible** on buses operated by the service
- ensuring where staff need to travel together in same vehicle:
 - passengers and drivers spread out using front and back seats
 - staff only handle their own bags

- driver cleans vehicle hand touch areas at the end of each journey with detergent/disinfectant
- air-conditioning set to external airflow rather than recirculation.

Information and notification requirements

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will:

Follow [Government guidance](#) in relation to managing and reporting confirmed (and suspected) COVID cases, including immediately reporting confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 to VIC Health. Advise areas of Service person has been, who they've been in close contact with and for how long. Follow all guidance. Note the Regulatory Authority must be notified **within 24 hours** if directed to close or closing voluntarily because of coronavirus, but preferably as soon as possible. (If closing voluntarily, children cannot be reported as absent and CCS will not be paid unless the closure is determined as a local emergency by VIC Education).

In relation to reporting Service will also:

- comply with notification requirements for serious incidents
- record suspected or confirmed **staff** case of COVID-19 (ie Incident Report) and immediately report *confirmed* case to WorkSafe on 13 23 60, following up in writing as required within 48 hours
- notify VIC Health if required, Regulatory Authority and WorkSafe (if closed because staff member had COVID) when Service reopens
- notifying Regulatory Authority within 7 days about any changes to service days or operating hours
- notify any third party software provider or update Operational Details in the PEP
- notify the Regulatory Authority as soon as possible if they're receiving Kindergarten funding and an ECT is absent and another ECT is not available to deliver the Program

In relation to management Service will also:

- determine if Service should be closed (where not specified by VIC Health or WorkSafe)
- immediately close off affected areas to all children and staff (where possible)
- ask families to collect their child ASAP
- open outside doors and windows if possible to increase airflow

Interactions with Children

Where appropriate, educators will speak with children about the coronavirus in ways that do not alarm them or cause unnecessary fear or distress. Educators may, for example, discuss with children their feelings in relation to the virus, remind children that the risk of catching the illness is very low, review hygiene measures they can take to reduce the risk of infection, discuss some of the good things happening in the world, or implement other strategies outlined in our Relationships with Children Policy. Educators will be careful not to speak to others in an alarmist way about the coronavirus if children are present or within hearing.

What else should families do?

Asthma Australia has advised doctors to ensure all patients with asthma have a current Asthma Action plan and to update it if needed via a phone consultation, with any new plan delivered

electronically. If their child has an Asthma Plan, families must consult their doctor and provide the Nominated Supervisor with an updated Plan or written confirmation from the doctor that the current Plan can continue. The Nominated Supervisor will distribute any updated Plans to relevant educators.

Fees

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will advise families of any relevant fee support which may be provided by the Government to assist families impacted by COVID-19. Without any Government fee support families must pay fees as outlined in our Fees Policy. Please note families approved for Child Care Subsidy may be eligible for Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship) where their income has dropped because of COVID-19. Kindergarten programs for four year olds and eligible three-year-olds in Victorian Government funded services will be free in 2021 . Families with children enrolled in kindergarten programs at unfunded sessional kindergartens and long day care centres will also benefit from a reduction in fees.

Staff Entitlements - Employees are ill or need to care for family member

Permanent employees are entitled to paid sick leave if they're ill with coronavirus. Employees must provide a medical certificate confirming they have the virus. Permanent employees who need to look after a family member or someone in their household who's sick with the virus are also entitled to paid carer's leave, or unpaid carer's leave if they have no paid sick or carer's leave left. Casual employees are entitled to 2 days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. Employees must provide evidence supporting an application to take carer's leave if requested. Permanent employees who want to stay at home as a precaution against exposure to coronavirus must apply for paid or unpaid leave.

Staff Entitlements - Employees required to self-isolate or wish to stay home as precaution

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will discuss available employment options with permanent employees who can't return from overseas or are required to enter quarantine or isolation but aren't sick. Options include taking annual leave or other leave eg long service leave, and taking unpaid leave.

Staff Entitlements - Employees directed not to work

Permanent employees will be paid if they are directed not to work to prevent the spread of the illness, cannot work because numbers of children have declined or the centre is voluntarily closed by the Approved Provider.

In cases where service viability is threatened, for example because enrolments have significantly reduced, the Approved Provider will discuss the situation with all permanent and seek their views on possible changes to staffing arrangements eg reductions in hours. Employees' written consent to any new arrangements will be obtained.

Staff Entitlements - Stand downs

Under the Fair Work Act, an employee can only be stood down without pay if:

- there's a stoppage of work
- the employees can't be usefully employed (not limited to an employee's usual work)
- the cause of the stoppage is one the employer cannot reasonably be held responsible for (eg service is directed to close by Government).

Note employees may use paid leave entitlements if the Approved Provider agrees. During stand down periods there is no interruption to continuity of service and leave accruals continue. The Approved Provider may seek legal advice to confirm payment of salaries is not required under the 'stand down' provision of the Fair Work Act if directed to close by the Government.

During this time employees may engage in activities which don't involve children, for example, training, deep cleaning or administration.

COVID Entitlements

Employees may be eligible for Government assistance and should check Government websites for current eligibility which may include:

- [\\$1500 COVID Worker Support Payment](#) available to staff who have to isolate because of coronavirus (including awaiting test results) and do not have any sick leave left or other income support payments
- [\\$450 COVID Test Isolation Payment](#)

Source

[Free Kinder in 2021](#) Department of Education and Training

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

Fair Work Act 2009

Fair Work Ombudsman 'Coronavirus and Australian Workplace laws'

Federal Department of Health coronavirus information sheets

Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment coronavirus information sheets

National Quality Standard

Occupational, Health and Safety Laws and Regulations

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Approved Provider, Supervisors, Employees, Families and any committee members.

Last reviewed: 1st May 2022 Date for next review: as needed