

Providing a Child Safe Environment Procedure

Knox Early Years Services

Purpose

The procedure guides Knox City Council (KCC) Early Years Services approach to creating a child safe organisation where children are safe and feel safe; and provides the framework for the KCC Early Years Services approach to the Child Safe Standards.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the *Child Protection Procedure*. It provides direction and guidance to (KCC) Early Years Services to enable:

- (KCC) Early Years Services to comply with the Education and Care Services National Regulations and Educational and Care Services National Law Act.
- All children attending (KCC) Early Years Services to be provided with a safe environment.
- Educators and staff to take reasonable steps to enable the health, safety and wellbeing of each child/ren accessing the service.

KCC Early Years Services are committed to:

- Protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service at all times whilst promoting their learning and development.
- Fulfilling its duty of care obligations under the law by protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm.
- Supporting educators who are caring for children at the service to act in the best interests of the child, and take all reasonable steps to provide the child's safety and wellbeing at all times.
- Supporting the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times.
- Developing and maintaining a culture in which children feel valued, respected and cared for in an inclusive and empowering social environment.
- Respectfully foster and support relationships between educators, children and families.
- Encouraging active participation from families at the service, and providing that best practice is based on a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development.
- Promoting educators/staff and families as role models for positive, respectful and responsible behaviour.

Background

“Every child has the right to live a full and productive life. It is up to all of us to ensure our children grow up in environments that build confidence and friendships, security and happiness, irrespective of a person's family circumstances and background” (Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people). The protection of children, one of the most vulnerable groups in society, is a shared community responsibility and involves providing that all children are safe and their needs are met.

Legislation requires early childhood teachers to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). Early Childhood Teachers are obligated to undertake mandatory reporting of any concerns of child abuse. Please refer to the Child Protection Procedure for guidelines in relation to mandatory reporting of child related concerns or child abuse. The Education and Care Services National Law Act and the Education and Care Services National Regulations require that approved services protect children from any harm and hazards, and adequately supervise children at all times. Adult supervision together with risk minimisation strategies can prevent or reduce the risk of injury to children (*refer to Supervision of Children Procedure*).

KCC Early Years Services sees the health safety and wellbeing of children as paramount. KCC Early Years Services values and embraces the opinions and views of children and families and supports children to build skills that will assist them to participate in society in the future. KCC Early Years Services are about building environments that are child-safe and child-friendly, where children are listened to and feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Risk minimisation strategies, supported by clear procedures for specific areas of child safety will help support the environment and practices at the service to be child safe. Procedures must be developed in relation to all matters specified in Regulation 168(2), including incident, injury, trauma and illness. Risks in the child's physical environment can be minimised by providing the safety of buildings, grounds, equipment, materials, and furniture used at the service, and the safe storage and use of dangerous substances such as cleaning products and chemicals.

Whole Service Engagement

It is recognised that every member of the service has an impact on children's health and wellbeing and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes safety. All members of our service including educators, staff, children, families and volunteers will be supported in implementing this procedure.

Procedure

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Children's adequate supervision and that educator to child ratios are maintained at all times. (*refer to Supervision of Children Procedure and Relationships with Children Policy and Procedure*)
- Advising the Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Persons and educators/staff at the service who work with children of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84).
- Providing a physical environment at the service that is safe, secure and free from hazards for children.
- Notify the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) if the services premises is in a state of disrepair or are damaged due to a natural disaster (such as fire or flood) and are a risk to children.
- Providing appropriate procedures for the safe delivery and collection of children (*refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure*).
- Working with other agencies to minimise safety hazards around the service if required.
- Making sure the Nominated Supervisor, educators and all staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Notifying Department of Education (DET) in writing, within 24 hours of becoming aware of a serious incident occurring at the service.
- Notifying DET in writing, within 24 hours of becoming aware of a complaint alleging a serious incident has occurred or is occurring at the service while a child is being, educated and cared for by the early years service, or complaints alleging the National Law has been contravened.
- Notifying DET in writing, within 7 days of any circumstances arising at the service that pose a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child.
- Notifying DET in writing, within 7 days where the provider reasonably believes that physical abuse or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child or children are being educated and cared for by the early years service.
- Notifying DET in writing, within 7 days of allegations of physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child or children are being educated and cared for by the early years service.

- Providing all early years educators who work with children a copy of this procedure, and support to implement it in all KCC Early Years Services.
- Implementing and reviewing this procedure in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators/staff, and parents.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators/staff to implement this procedure.
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision making of the service.
- Informing the Nominated supervisor, educators/staff of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this procedure.

Nominated Supervisors, Child Care Team Leaders, Group Leaders and Educators in KCC Early Years Services are responsible for:

- The Parents completing the enrolment form including details of authorised nominees, and permission forms for excursions and administration of medication. (*refer to Refusal and Acceptance of Authorisation Procedure, Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure, Excursion, Routine Outing and Incursions Procedure, Administration of Medication Procedure and Medical Conditions Procedure*)
- Providing all children with adequate supervision at all times. (*refer to Supervision of Children Procedure and Relationships and Interactions with Children Policy and Procedure*).
- Undertaking appropriate training and education on child protection, be aware of current child protection legislation, its application and any obligations that they have under the law. (*refer to Child Protection Procedure*)
- Providing welcoming and inclusive learning environments that are established and provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well maintained resources and equipment that will help enhance the quality of children’s learning and experiences and enable access and participation of every child.
- Providing a safe, inclusive and empowering social environment, through:
 - A culture of respect, fairness and equality
 - A sense of belonging and connectedness being created through inclusive and participatory practices.
 - Children, families, educators and staff contributing to a positive service environment.
 - Respectful and supportive relationships being fostered between children, educators and staff and families.
 - Use strategies which promote positive and responsible behaviour, and preventing and responding to bullying, discrimination and harassment.
- Providing social and emotional learning that is embedded in the service program and practice through:
 - Spontaneous and planned learning opportunities supporting the development of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management and relationship skills.
 - Learning activities which actively engage, challenge and support children to recognise and appropriately respond to hazardous situations.
 - Active play activities designed to ensure the safe participation of all children.
- Organising/facilitating regular safety audits of the following:
 - Emergency equipment
 - Playgrounds and fixed equipment in outdoor environments
 - Cleaning services

- Horticultural maintenance
- Pest control
- Labelling all cupboards/rooms accordingly, that contain chemicals and first aid kits. Childproof locks are installed on doors and cupboards where contents may be harmful.
- Making sure that all contractors and visitors sign into the visitor's book.
- Maintaining the physical environment at the service to be safe, secure and free from hazards for children.
- Implementing and practising emergency and evacuation procedures (*refer to Emergency and Evacuation procedure*).
- Conducting risk assessments for excursions, considering children's safety when leaving the service premises. (*refer to Excursion and Incursion Procedure*)
- Undertaking walking excursions, where possible, within the local community, as part of the educational program to promote safe active travel and development of road safety skills. (*refer to Excursion and Incursion Procedure*)
- Maintaining all physical equipment at the service remains safe, secure and free from hazards for children.
- Making sure all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards.
- Follow procedures for the safe delivery and collection of children. (*refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure*)
- Linking with local health professionals, services and other agencies including emergency services and child safe agencies to support safety initiatives.
- Maintaining a regular cleaning schedule for all equipment to avoid cross infection.
- Maintaining a clean environment daily, removing tripping, slipping hazards as soon as these become apparent. (*refer to Occupational Health and Safety Procedure*)
- Conducting a daily check of the building, ensuring all children are signed out of the service, doors and windows are closed and locked, and appliances are switched off. Maintaining a process to record the daily check, signed by an educator and filed for future reference.
- Making information available about child safety, safe active travel, emergency services, along with ideas and strategies to promote and support safety at the centre and at home.
- Providing families and children from culturally diverse backgrounds with encouragement and support to ensure cultural values and expectations about children's safety are respected.

Parents will:

- Read and comply with this procedure.
- Follow procedures for the safe delivery and collection of children. (*refer to the Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure*)
- Report any concerns regarding the child's safety, health or wellbeing to the Nominated Supervisor.
- Abide by the services Code of Conduct.

Definitions

Approved Provider:	Someone with management or control that will operate the education and care service; this can be an individual, an organisation or a company.
Code of Conduct:	A set of rules or practices that establish a standard of behavior to be followed by individuals and organisations. A code of conduct defines how individuals should behave towards each other, and towards other organisations and individuals in the community. (refer to the Code of Conduct Procedure).
Duty of Care:	A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury. In the context of the procedure, duty of care refers to the responsibility of early years services to provide children with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury.
Early Years Service:	Refers to Long Day Care, Occasional Care and Preschools unless otherwise specified.
Educator:	These are staff employed to care and educate children enrolled in the Early Years' Service. This may include but is not limited to an Approved Provider, Responsible Person, Nominated Supervisor and or Educational Leader.
Harm:	Is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.
Responsible Persons:	Must be present at all times at a centre-based service who is educating and caring for children. A responsible person can be one of the following (section 162): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The approved provider or a person with management or control • The nominated supervisor of the service • A person who has been placed in day-to-day charge of the service.
Nominated Supervisor:	This is a person designated by the service as that Nominated Supervisor.
Person in Day-to Day Charge of the Service:	In relation to an education and care service, means a person who is placed in day-to-day charge of the service in accordance with the national regulations.
Parent:	The term 'parent' includes a child's legal guardian. It does not include a parent who is prohibited by a court order from having contact with the child.

Legislation and Standards

Belonging, Being and Becoming. The Early Years Framework for Australia. Commonwealth of Australia, 2009

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (Part 2: Principles for Children)

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

National Quality Standards, 2011

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to Eight Years. Victorian Government, 2016

References and Sources

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) retrieved from: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
Owns, Angela (2012) *Health Safety and Wellbeing*. Early Childhood Australia, National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program, e-Newsletter no. 29, 2012.
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from: www.unicef.org/crc

Related Policy and Procedures

Administration of First Aid Procedure
Administration of Medication Procedure
Anaphylaxis Procedure
Asthma Procedure
Child Protection Procedure
Code of Conduct Procedure
Dealing with Complaints Procedure
Dealing with Infectious Diseases Procedure
Dealing with Medical Conditions Procedure
Diabetes Management Procedure
Emergency and Evacuation Policy and Procedure
Enrolment and Orientation Procedure
Excursions and Incursions Procedure
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Procedure
Governance and Management of the Service Including Confidentiality of Records Procedure
Hygiene Procedure
Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Procedure
Nutrition, Oral Health, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Procedure
Occupational Health and Safety Policy
Participation of Volunteers and Students Procedure
Refusal and Acceptance of Authorisations Procedure
Staffing Arrangements Policy
Sun Protection Procedure
Supervision of Children Procedure
Water Safety Procedure