

D-12 PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

POLICY STATEMENT:

This policy is designed to support practices which underline children's safety and wellbeing, which are paramount at our service and will be fostered through our child safe culture, responsive relationships, engaging experiences and a safe and healthy environment. The Education and Care Services National Regulations require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for providing a child safe environment to minimise risk of harm and hazard to children attending education and care services.

PROCEDURES:

a) Establishment of a child safe culture

- This policy is to be read in conjunction with D-13 Child Protection Policy.
- All children attending the service will be provided with a safe environment, both physically, emotionally and also online, through the establishment of a child safe culture and adherence to safe online practices as per D-18 Digital Device, Media, Social Media and Technology policy.
- Children will be actively involved in appropriate decision-making and feedback to provide an environment that supports their agency and encourages them to reach their potential.
- Procedures to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are in place and regularly rehearsed.
- At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

b) Management of the facility

i. Security:

- Only approved educators, management members and other authorised personnel such as people carrying out building works, cleaning staff and authorised room users.
- A key register will be maintained that indicates the person's receipt of the key, date received, and date returned on completion of employment or tenure with service.
- All monies and confidential records will be kept in a lockable place and access will only be permitted by approved staff and management members as well and relevant authorities when required.

- Educators will ensure that the building is left in a secure manner before leaving, having completed the closing checklist, which requires the locking of all windows, cupboards, storeroom, office, chill room and other relevant areas. The alarm is to be activated on closure at the end of the after school session as well as the front and side gates locked.
- Educators will inform the police and the management as soon as possible if there has been a break-in to the service of any kind.
- Educators will remain at the service until the police arrive or inform them of what to do.

ii. Buildings, Equipment and Maintenance:

- Equipment will be chosen to meet the children's developmental needs and interests.
- There will be sufficient access to furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment suitable for the education and care for each child.
- Service premises and all equipment and furniture will be maintained in a safe, clean condition and in good repair at all times.
- Children will be provided with adequate, developmentally and age-appropriate toilet, washing and drying facilities. These will enable safe use and convenient access by children.
- There must be no damaged plugs, sockets, power cords or extension cords.
- All plug sockets shall be maintained as child safe.
- Electrical appliances shall be in good working order.
- Electrical circuit breakers will be installed and maintained.
- Provision will be made in the budget for regular maintenance and repair work and for deferred costs of major capital repairs.
- The following safety checks will be undertaken on a regular basis as required by a licensed provider:
 - Tagging of electrical appliances (frequency depends on the item)
 - Pest control inspection and treatment (annually at a minimum)
 - Thermostatic testing for hot water temperature control (annually)
 - Fire equipment safety checks (twice per year)
- A list of fully licensed and insured trades persons will be developed and maintained which is available and readily accessible to the Nominated Supervisor and/or Responsible Persons.
- All contractors should have their own public liability insurance.
- The service and equipment will be regularly checked to ensure that they are in a good and safe condition, comply with relevant Australian Standards and have appropriate soft-fall surfacing maintained.
- Equipment will be regularly washed and cleaned.
- Recycled craft materials should be checked for potential hazards.
- Educators should ensure safe handling of all tools if used as part of any activity.
- Families will be encouraged to notify educators of any safety issues they observe.

- Anything that requires maintenance is to be reported to the Nominated Supervisor as soon as possible and recorded on the Maintenance Record.
- Faulty equipment should be removed or protection placed around any dangerous building sites.
- A maintenance list will be kept that records any maintenance that needs to be addressed.
- The maintenance list will record:
 - Description of issue
 - Date that it was observed
 - Name of person or reported the issue
 - Action taken to rectify the problem
 - Date repaired
 - Tradesperson employed to repair the problem
- For urgent repairs the Nominated Supervisor will organise a contractor to attend to the problem.
- Non-urgent repairs and matters requiring more long term consideration, the Nominated Supervisor will note this in their report and bring it to the attention of SNCC management.
- For major repairs a minimum of three quotes will be sought and reviewed by management who will make a decision on a further course of action. The Nominated Supervisor or someone with management control may obtain the quotes.
- Maintenance reviews should be done as part of the Nominated Supervisor's report to management.
- It is the responsibility of management, once a problem has been raised, to ensure that it is rectified in the most efficient manner and that the service is safe for educators and clientele.
- Should the service be considered unsafe or as being a health risk, then the service will be closed, after notice has been given to all relevant parties, until the problem has been rectified.
- The service will have an appropriate number of first aid kits that are suitable to the ages and needs of the children attending. The first aid kits will be well stocked and be easily recognised and accessible at all times.

iii. Storage:

- Equipment, materials and resources should be stored in a manner that ensures easy, safe access.
- Storage areas will be cleaned and tidied at least twice a year or when seen as necessary.
- Play equipment and toys should be easily accessible to all children during the operating hours of the centre.
- Children will be encouraged to show respect for the equipment and assist in packing away equipment that they have used to avoid trip hazards.
- All equipment is to be neatly packed away at the end of each session.

- Craft equipment will be stored in the Craft Storeroom and children should ask permission before removing any craft equipment, such as paints and glues etc. which has not been set up by the staff.
- All craft equipment is to be properly washed and cleaned before storage.
- Sports and large outdoor equipment will be stored in the Sports Storeroom, separate from other resources and equipment, to prevent clutter.
- All items such as cleaning materials, disinfectants, flammable, poisonous and other dangerous substances, tools, toiletries, first aid equipment, and medications should be stored in the designated secured areas which are inaccessible to the children. Educators are responsible to ensure that these areas remain secure and that they do not inadvertently provide access to these items.
- Kitchen and other refuse areas will be cleaned and emptied daily.
- Educators and management will ensure that all family records are kept in a nominated secure place, ensuring that records are kept confidential and not left accessible to others during the course of the daily operations.

iv. Ventilation, temperature and natural light

- All heating and cooling systems will be of good quality and checked regularly to ensure safety and reliability.
- Educators will take individual needs and specific activities into account when ensuring that heating, ventilation levels are comfortable.
- Should educators, children or families complain about the temperature in the service not being at a comfortable level, this matter will be drawn to the attention of management and steps will be made to address the problem.
- Adequate ventilation will be provided at all times. Windows will be properly maintained to ensure easy opening.
- Where activities involve toxic materials such as paints and glues, staff are to ensure there is adequate ventilation before undertaking the activity.
- Windows are to be opened during operation of the service unless closed to protect from extreme weather conditions.
- Natural light is considered to be most desirable. Provision of natural light areas will be enhanced as much as possible.
- In areas made available for children's homework or other fine detail, natural light will be made available where possible and good overhead lighting provided.
- Adequate light will be maintained both indoors and outdoors. A security light will be placed at the entrance to the service that clearly provides unobstructed view of the door and surrounding areas and at other strategic locations.
- Outdoor lighting will be suitable so that parents, staff and children can enter and exit the building without any unsafe dark areas.

v. Pest Control

- Equipment and especially food items will be properly stored so as not to attract pests and vermin.
- Refuse bins and disposal areas will be emptied and cleaned daily.
- Kitchen, food preparation areas and storage will be cleaned and maintained daily.
- All areas will be checked daily for any signs of pests or vermin.
- Should any pests or vermin be identified then action should be taken to rid the centre of the problem by:
 - Initially using non-chemical methods such as physical removal, maintaining a clean environment, and use of any non-chemical products.
 - Low irritant, environmentally friendly sprays to be used minimally and only with adequate ventilation and preferably not in the presence of the children.
 - Other methods such as the employment of a pest control company if deemed necessary by management where the above methods have failed.
- If urgent, the Nominated Supervisor will retain a contractor to address the problem.
- If non urgent, the Nominated Supervisor will bring the problem to the attention of management in their report and management will decide on the appropriate course of action.
- All parents will be notified of any use of chemicals.
- Any use of chemical products should only be conducted outside the hours of the children and educators' presence in the building.
- All action will be taken to remove the children, educators, families and visitors from the environment for as long as is safe and viable.

c) Management of the indoor and outdoor environment

vi. Indoor Environment:

- The services indoor environment will be smoke free, and no smoking notices will be prominently displayed.
- The Nominated Supervisor will only enrol the number of children in the service, which can comfortably fit into the building space and in accordance with the National Regulations.
- Where children are indoors for long periods due to weather conditions, special activities will be planned and other areas sought to disperse the group such as various rooms and verandas.
- Separate areas in the indoor environment will be provided for:
 - Signing children in/out of the centre
 - Performing administrative tasks, answering phones, and maintaining daily records
 - Educators and parents to talk in confidence
 - Children to store their bags and belongings

- Storage of equipment, food, dangerous materials, and family records
 - Preparation of food and drinks
 - Cleaning of equipment
 - Bathroom, hand basins and hand drying facilities
 - Creative and other activities
 - Large and small group activities
 - Display of children's activities and work
 - Quiet space for children to retreat to, do homework or rest and relax
- The indoor area is to be set up to allow children to participate in a variety of activities with easy access to equipment. Drawing paper and other materials will be made available to the children.
 - Easy access to areas should be maintained by making clear easily definable passageways and walkways through the building.
 - Staff will ensure that children properly store their bags and that bags and other items are not thrown into walkways or play areas.
 - All items obstructing areas are to be removed and placed in the correct storage areas.
 - Areas must be set up to maximise supervision.
 - Access to the outdoor environment should be clear and easily accessible by the children and staff.
- vii. Outdoor Environment
- The outdoor environment provides each child with at least 7 square metres of unencumbered outdoor space in compliance with National Regulation 108 or a waiver is in place from the Regulatory Authority if this cannot be met.
 - The outdoor environment will be smoke free and where possible, no smoking notices will be prominently displayed.
 - The outdoor space will be inspected daily for any obstacles or dangerous items and the opening checklist will be completed with any hazards properly recorded.
 - Any hazardous items will be disposed of in a safe and careful manner prior to the children playing in the area.
 - The outdoor space will be set up in a variety of ways to encourage participation.
 - Areas will be made available where children can play in large or small groups or by themselves.
 - Supervision should be properly maintained. Educators will supervise the outdoor area when children are playing there and will maintain child/educator ratios.
 - Clear boundaries shall be set and enforced.
 - Adequate shade via trees and coverings will be maintained.
 - As far as possible, activities will be set up in shaded areas.

d) Personnel management including staff, board members, volunteers, visitors and tradespeople

- All educators working directly with children will have a current working with children clearance that will be run at least annually to ensure currency.
- All new positions involving direct contact with children will be advertised as requiring a current working with children check.
- The screening process for new employees will include reference checks with previous employers to help determine suitability for the position, and questions/discussions with the applicant which aim to ascertain their understanding of child development and ability to work empathetically with children.
- All members of the SNCC Board will have a current working with children clearance that will be run at least annually to ensure currency.
- Members of the SNCC Board, SNCC manager and anyone in a position of management and control of the service will submit a Declaration of Fitness and Propriety (PA02) via the ACECQA NQITS portal along with the relevant documentation required within 14 days of their appointment.
- Members of the SNCC Board will be added to the organisation's PRODA account within 14 days of their appointment.
- Whilst children are present and being cared for, all visitors to the service will sign in and out via the visitor's log, adding the required information. This does not include authorised collectors delivering or collecting children whose presence is recorded via the signing in/out process.
- Any tradesperson who is required to undertake maintenance or other necessary tasks while the children are present will sign in and out via the visitor's log. No child will be left unattended with a visitor or tradesperson.
- If work undertaken by a tradesperson may present any risk to children, it will be undertaken during hours when the service is not in progress if possible. If this is not possible, children's play will be restricted to areas where they will not be at risk.
- Child protection training will be undertaken by the Nominated Supervisor and all educators who consent to the role of Responsible Person, as required by section 162A of the National Law.
- Management, the Nominated supervisor, educators, and staff members at the service will be aware of their status as mandatory reporters and will receive sufficient instruction to understand how and when to undertake their obligations under that law, as required by regulation 84.
- The Nominated Supervisor and Responsible Persons will undertake child protection training with a provider offering an approved certificate.

e) Supervision and ratios

- There will be a maximum of 15 children to 1 educator at all times.
- At all times the ratio will meet the requisite for adequate supervision. This will take into account such factors as:

- the activities being undertaken
 - the ages and abilities of the children
 - the expertise and experience of the educators
- Ratio of educators to children for excursions will be determined by way of a risk assessment which will consider such factors as:
 - the activities being undertaken
 - the ages and abilities of the children
 - the expertise and experience of the educators
- The service will maintain a minimum of 2 educators on duty at all times in all usual circumstances.
- When educators are sick or unable to attend work, appropriate relief staff will be employed to meet the required minimum ratio.
- For an emergency or if an educator becomes sick whilst at work, a replacement should be obtained and where possible, before the unwell staff member leaves the centre.
- Volunteers and students will not be counted as part of the educator to child ratio at any time.
- Educators will adhere to the principles of active supervision and will position themselves carefully to enable view of the maximum area possible. It is important to regularly move around to ensure the best view of the area including areas that cannot be seen at all times.
- Sometimes educators will need to limit the areas of play in order to adequately supervise.
- Direct and constant monitoring is required for activities that involve some risk such as woodwork, cooking and any play that is near or in water. Direct and constant monitoring is also required when children are outside of the premises such as at bus stops, on excursions.
- When educators are counted as part of the ratio they will avoid carrying out duties that distract them from supervision, such as administrative tasks, speaking for long periods on the phone, answering or making personal phone calls on mobile phones, talking to parents for long periods of time about matters unrelated to the care of the children.
- Educators must not leave an area where they have sole responsibility for supervision until another educator has replaced them.
- Each area must be supervised adequately in accordance with educator/child ratios. Educators may need to call for another educator to assist if large numbers of children suddenly arrive to play in the area they are supervising.
- Sometimes it may be necessary to limit the areas children can access particularly in the outside area when numbers are lower or when higher risk activities are in progress.
- Where the program involves simultaneous use of indoor and outdoor environments, educators will ensure effective supervise of children in both environments.
- For older children, it is important to balance the need for close supervision with respect to their age and developing independence. Educators will be mindful of the need to provide opportunities to encourage children's growing autonomy without neglecting the requirement for adequate supervision.

CONSIDERATIONS:

National Quality Standards

2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service

Education and Care Service National Regulations 2011

S162A	Child Protection training
S165	Offence to inadequately supervise children

S166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
S167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
82	Tobacco, drug, and alcohol-free environment
83	Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs
84	Awareness of child protection law
103	Premises, furniture, and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
165	Record of visitors
166	Children not to be alone with visitors
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
175(d)(e)	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority

Related Policies / Forms

D-13 Child Protection
 D-16 Excursions
 D-3 Safe Transportation of children
 A-5 Safe Arrival and Departure of children
 D-14 Interactions with children
 D-18 Digital device, media, social media and technology
 D-20 Removal and Assumption of a child from the service by community services
 Family Information Booklet
 Child Safe Standards

ENDORSEMENT AND REVIEWS

Date	Action
06.12.2012	Approved by SNCC Board
10.10.2020	Last Review Date
21.03.2024	Policy updated
March 2027	Next Review Date