



# Safe Transportation of Children

## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

To inform all within the education and care service of their responsibilities to ensure children's safety during periods of transportation, including the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, families and other stakeholders.

The Safe Transportation of Children policy should be read in conjunction with related policies including Excursions, Supervision, Delivery and Collection of Children, Incident Injury Trauma and Illness, Administration of First Aid, Emergency and Evacuation, Child Protection, Child Safe Environment, Behaviour Guidance, Risk Assessment and Management. This policy should also be read in conjunction with Regular Transport Risk Assessment.

## **Rationale**

As part of providing an education and care service the safety of children when being transported is paramount. The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law) and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (National Regulations) require services to take reasonable care to protect children from any harm or hazard likely to cause injury. Services are required to have policies and procedures for safe transportation in place, obtain written authorisations and undertake risk assessment and management processes to ensure children's safety.

Transport related injuries remain a leading cause of death in children under 14 years of age in NSW. Ensuring children are restrained according to the law, in the safest possible way for their age and size, is crucial to preventing child passenger injuries. As pedestrians, children require adult support to keep them safe. This includes holding their hands when walking, crossing roads and in driveways until they are cognitively able to assess and manage road and vehicle related risks independently. Young children are also particularly vulnerable to low speed vehicle run-overs in driveways and car parks.

Services transporting children must be aware of possible dangers and have prevention strategies in place to protect against them. This includes the risk of leaving children in vehicles. Sadly, incidents of children left unsupervised in vehicles for extended periods of time do occur and, in some cases, have resulted in serious injury or death.

Transporting children provides opportunities for strengthening connections between educators, families and the wider community. Children's learning and enjoyment can be enhanced by travel routines that allow for quality interactions between children and educators.



These journeys also provide opportunities to build on children's understandings of how to keep safe in and around vehicles.

## Policy Statement

The service regularly transports children as part of providing the education and care service. This includes transporting children to and from the bus stops where they arrive from and leave for school and to and from excursion venues.

Children have the right to be protected from harm and hazards when being transported and the service has a legal responsibility to ensure this protection. The service considers that periods of transport carry additional risks and have greater potential for harm than providing education and care within the service environment. The service is committed to ensuring children's health, safety and wellbeing and protecting them from harm and hazards.

The service will conduct risk assessments specific to transporting children and implement appropriate risk management and minimisation strategies. Educators will closely supervise children at all stages of the transportation process. No child will be transported without written authorisation from a parent/carer. The National Law and Regulations, NSW Road Rules 2014, NSW Road Transport Act 2013, other relevant legislation and best practice guidelines for transporting children safely will be adhered to at all times.

The service recognises that transporting children provides opportunities for strengthening connections between children, educators, families and the community and for extending children's learning.

## Procedures

Approved providers, nominated supervisors, educators and other staff have a duty of care to protect children from harm and hazards and to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing while being transported by the service. These procedures will be followed by everyone involved in transporting children.

### 1. WHEN PLANNING TRANSPORTATION

- 1.1 All educators and staff responsible for transporting children will be inducted and trained in their responsibilities to implement the Safe Transportation of Children Policy and Procedures.
- 1.2 While children are being transported they will always be in the care of a responsible educator. The Nominated supervisor will appoint a person in charge when transportation of children is undertaken.
- 1.3 A risk assessment will be carried out before authorisation of any transportation is requested. The risk assessment will identify and assess risks that transportation may pose to the safety,



health and wellbeing of children and outline steps to manage and minimise them. Consideration will be given to elements such as:

- the route and duration of transportation
- collection and delivery locations
- means of transport
- requirements for seatbelts and safety restraints
- water hazards
- number of children and adults involved in the transportation
- number of adults appropriate to provide supervision including whether any adult requires specialised skills or training
- items required to be available while transporting e.g. mobile phone, emergency contact list, first aid kit
- process for entering and exiting the service, embarking and disembarking the school buses, excursion venue or other collection or delivery location.
- procedures for accounting for children when embarking and disembarking the vehicle.

For regular transportation a risk assessment will be conducted every 12 months or when circumstances relating to transportation significantly change e.g. when collection or delivery location for a child changes. When transport is not regular a risk assessment will be undertaken each time transportation is proposed.

1.4 Risk management and minimisation strategies will be implemented to ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to ensure children's health, safety and wellbeing during transportation.

1.5 The number of educators needed while transporting children will be determined as part of the risk assessment and management process. Consideration will include, but not be limited to:

- the number, age and ability of children
- the number and physical positioning of educators
- each child's activity
- visibility and accessibility in the vehicle
- risks related to the mode of transportation and when travelling on foot
- risks in the environment, location or while travelling any previous risk assessment
- the experience, knowledge and skill of each educator



- compliance with National Law and National Regulations.
- 1.6 Where required additional responsible adults, such as parent/carer volunteers, will accompany children to provide extra supervision. However, the service's duty of care cannot be delegated to volunteers. It is recognised that increasing the adult to child ratio improves supervision, minimises risk and allows for better quality interactions between adults and children during transportation.
- 1.7 The approved provider will ensure the number of children being educated and cared for by the service does not exceed the maximum number of children specified in the service approval no matter where the children are located, including while they are being transported by the service.
- 1.8 Written authorisation for transportation will be obtained from each child's parent or authorised nominee and will include:
- child's name
  - reason for transportation
  - for regular transport, a description of when child is to be transported
  - for transport that is not regular, the date of transportation
  - description of collection/delivery locations
  - means of transport
  - timing and duration of transportation
  - number of children being transported
  - number of supervising adults
  - requirements for seatbelts or safety restraints
  - notification that the prepared risk assessment and the Safe Transportation of Children Policy and Procedures are available to view at the service.

For regular transportation, authorisation will be obtained annually or when the risk assessment is amended. For transport that is not regular, authorisation will be obtained each time transport is to be used.

## 2. WHEN PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION

The service will only provide transportation in a private vehicle in an emergency or as a last resort when the family has no way of safely conveying a child to or from the service. This may be as a result of a child going home from school by mistake to an empty house, or taking the wrong



bus when expected at after school care. In all circumstances, it is always preferable for the family to arrange their own means of conveying the child to or from the service, such as via a family friend, authorized nominee, taxi service etc. But if the parents are unable to do this and the child is considered to be unsupervised or in some other way at risk, an educator may drive the child in their own vehicle. All requirements for risk assessments, authorisations must be met, as per the Safe Transportation of Children policy.

2.1 Vehicles used to transport children as part of the service (including private vehicles) will be:

- registered
- CTP insured
- comprehensively insured
- in a good state of maintenance including, but not limited to, the safe condition and operation of: tyres, brakes, indicators, lights, windscreen wipers, air conditioning, doors and windows (including childproof door and window locks where fitted).

Child car seats, booster seats and seat belts will be checked prior to the transport run. Fuel levels will be checked prior to the transport run to ensure adequate fuel for the duration of the run.

2.3 Educators conducting the transport run will ensure all children under the age of seven years are restrained correctly in Australian Standards (AS/NZS 1754) approved child car seats or booster seats suitable for each child's age and size. Educators will ensure children seven years and older are restrained in the safest way possible for their size either in a booster seat with a lap sash seatbelt or with a lap sash seatbelt only. The Five Step Test will be used to determine the appropriate restraint type.

2.4 Educators using their own vehicle to take/locate/collect a child will take:

- a fully stocked first aid kit including emergency asthma and anaphylaxis medications
- a charged mobile phone and/or satellite phone
- medication, health plans and risk assessments for individual children
- emergency contact details for children being transported
- contact details of the service including an emergency contact number

2.5 When transporting a child in their own vehicle, the educator must complete a transport authorization form which will include the following:

- the names of children being transported on each occasion
- the date and time of each child's entry to and exit from the vehicle and their arrival at or departure from the service or other venue/location



- the signature of the parent/guardian who has authorized the transport run (this may be verbal in the first instance and completed later by the parent/guardian on arrival at the service)
  - the full name of educators or other staff conducting the transport run
  - verification that the vehicle has been checked and cleared of children at the conclusion of the transport run.
- 2.6 Any educator, staff member or volunteer involved in transporting children will have a current Working with Children Check and will be inducted into the requirements in the Safe Transportation of Children Policy and any other relevant documents.
- 2.7 Children being transported will be accompanied by at least one staff member with approved and current:
- first aid qualifications, and
  - anaphylaxis management training, and
  - emergency asthma management training
- 2.8 Any driver transporting children will have, at minimum, a current and valid C class driver licence and be in a fit and proper state to drive. Provisional licence holders will not drive any vehicle used to transport children as part of the service. If the risk assessment allows for one educator to transport children, risk mitigation strategies will be determined to ensure adequate supervision and safety.
- 2.9 For vehicles seating 12 people or fewer, the number of supervising adults required will be determined by the transport risk assessment. If the risk assessment allows for one educator to transport children, risk mitigation strategies will be determined to ensure adequate supervision and safety
- 2.10 In the case of an emergency such as vehicle breakdown, crash or other traffic incident, or illness, injury or trauma on board, educators transporting children will follow the service's policies and procedures and refer to the emergency response information in the vehicle. Educators will:
- check on the welfare of children and other staff and provide first aid, comfort and support
  - call emergency services if required
  - implement all other actions in accordance with the service's Emergency and Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness policies and procedures
  - report the incident to the nominated supervisor/approved provider who will arrange for alternative transport if required and notify families of the incident





- complete an incident record on return to the service which the nominated supervisor/approved provider will use to notify the NSW Regulatory Authority within 24 hours if required.

### **3. WHEN USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

- 3.1 When using public buses, trams, trains or ferries, journeys will be carefully planned to ensure children's safety. The risk assessment will consider the additional child protection risks posed by sharing transport with members of the public. Journeys using public transport should be planned outside of peak travel hours to minimise crowding and maximise children's comfort and safety.
- 3.2 Where appropriate, the service will contact the transport provider to inform them of the route and times that children, educators and volunteers may be using the transport so that vehicle operators can be informed and prepared for the group of passengers.
- 3.3 Supervision of children on public transport will be in accordance with the service's Excursion and Supervision policies and procedures and as determined by the transport risk assessment.
- 3.4 When using public transport an educator will cross check and mark the transport attendance record and conduct head counts to ensure all children are present. These attendance checks and headcounts will be conducted at times including, but not limited to:
  - prior to embarking
  - when embarking
  - when on board
  - when disembarking
  - after disembarking.

An educator will always be the last person to embark and disembark the vehicle to ensure all children are accounted for.

### **4. MOVING CHILDREN TO AND FROM A VEHICLE**

- 4.1 Educators will park the vehicle as close as possible to the collection/delivery location to avoid the need for children to cross roads or walk through traffic areas, including car parks and driveways, where ever possible.
- 4.2 Educators will choose the safest route possible for walking children to and from the vehicle as determined by the risk assessment.





- 4.3 Educators will talk with children about safe practices and actively supervise them when moving to and from the vehicle. Supervision will take into account children's age and development and their capacity to recognise and react to risks. For children not yet able to be independent and safe as pedestrians, educators will hold their hands. The service will follow the Transport for NSW endorsed key pedestrian safety messages (info sheet 2).
- 4.4 When entering a chartered bus for an excursion, the Responsible Person will ensure the roll of children attending the excursion is up to date and accurate prior to leaving on the excursion.
- 4.5 An educator will count the children onto the bus. The bus will not leave the premises or the venue until the Responsible Person has ascertained that all children present are on the bus and accounted for. An educator will be last onto the bus.
- 4.6 When disembarking the bus, an educator will disembark first and guide the children from the bus into the centre/venue. A head count will be performed each occasion as children enter the premises/venue and enter the bus.

## **5. WHEN CHILDREN ARE DELIVERED TO BUS STOPS BY THE SERVICE IN BEFORE SCHOOL CARE**

- 5.1 The Responsible Person will ensure the roll is up to date with all children present at the centre marked on it. An educator will cross check using face to name method to ensure all children to be transported are present.
- 5.2 Educators will not move children from the centre until all children being transported are present and a head count has been performed.
- 5.3 An educator will remain at the front of the group and another at the rear if more than 1 educator is present. When children are assembled, accounted for and orderly, the lead educator will guide the children out of the centre.
- 5.4 Educators will guide children along the predesignated routes, taking into consideration weather and other safety conditions. At all times an educator will remain at the front of the group and children will not be permitted to run ahead. If 2 educators are present an educator will remain at the rear of the group and children will not be permitted to lag behind.
- 5.5 On arrival at the bus stop, a head count will be performed. If 2 educators are present, children may access the park after an educator has assessed the park for hazards. 1 educator will remain at the top of the park, on or near the footpath to ensure children's safety near the road.
- 5.6 When the bus arrives, educators will ensure that children line up for the bus a safe distance from the road. Once the bus has stopped, an educator will guide the children onto the bus, performing a head count as children embark. When the last child has entered the bus, educators will ensure no children remain at the bus stop. An educator will mark the children off on the roll, marking them out of the service's care. The date, time and educator's name will be recorded on the roll.





## **6. WHEN CHILDREN ARE COLLECTED FROM BUS STOPS BY THE SERVICE IN AFTER SCHOOL CARE**

- 6.1 Parents/carers are responsible for contacting the service as soon as possible if the child is not attending the service. When notified of non-attendance by the family the child's name will be removed from the transport attendance record for that run.
- 6.2 Educators will attend the bus stops, arriving at the bus stop at least 5 minutes prior to the published arrival time of the bus.
- 6.3 On collection of children, an educator will cross check and mark the roll to ensure the number and names of children present match the record. The roll will record the date and time of collection of children and the digital signature of the educator marking attendance.
- 6.4 Children will be guided to assemble and wait on the footpath, a safe distance from the road. Educators will not move children from the bus stops in after school care until all children being transported are present and a head count has been performed.
- 6.5 The educator guiding children off the bus will ensure all children trying to exit the bus have done so before moving away from the door.
- 6.6 If a child does not present at the bus stop when the bus arrives, an educator will endeavour to determine if the child is still on the bus. If 2 educators are present, this may involve an educator stepping onto the bus to see while the other educator supervises the children.
- 6.7 The educators will guide the children from the bus stop in an orderly manner, along the predesignated routes, giving consideration to weather conditions and any safety issues.
- 6.8 On arrival at the service, an educator will perform a head count as children enter the gate into the service. An educator will be the last person to enter the premises.
- 6.9 If a child expected at the service is not present, Policy A-5 Delivery and Collection of Children will be followed, section c) Absent and Missing Children.





## Evaluation

The policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, guidelines and frameworks. Management and educators will consult children, families and other relevant stakeholders when reviewing and updating this policy

Sources/references used to inform this policy

NSW Centre for Road Safety

Child Car Seats

Kids and Traffic

Early Childhood Education Directorate

NSW Department of Education Policy Library

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

Community Early Learning Australia

Network of Community Activities

Community OOSH Services

PSC National Alliance

## **ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE**

**Approval date: 12.11.2020**

**Date for Review: 12.11.2021**