# **PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

## POLICY STATEMENT:

Our Service provides an environment that ensures the safety, health, and wellbeing of children always. The welfare and protection of all children are of paramount importance. Educators will maintain the premises and equipment and adhere to procedures regarding safe practices. They will operate in line with legislative requirements relating to child protective practices and the Education and Care Services National Regulations and Law. Educators and management are aware of their legal responsibility as Mandatory Reporters to act to protect and support children they suspect may be at significant risk of harm. Educators will ensure that children are adequately supervised, and that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury or trauma (National Quality Standards Area 2).

## PROCEDURES:

**(a) Managing the Facility - Security:**

* Only approved Educators and management members will be given a key to access the building and equipment areas.
* 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 completion of the term as a member of management. If the Service is situated on a school site, the Service will adhere to key registry requirements of the school.
* Extra keys will only be cut after agreement by the management and a record made of where they are.
* All monies and important documents will be kept in a lockable place, and access will only be permitted by approved Staff and management members.
* Educators will ensure that their area in the building is left in a secure manner before leaving, and all windows, cupboards, safe, and other relevant areas are locked, all heating and lighting used is off, and all doors properly secured.
* Educators will inform the police, the school, and the committee 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.

**(b) 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 of each child.
* Service premises and all equipment and furniture will be maintained in a safe, clean condition, and in good repair.
* 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.
* Electrical appliances shall be in good working order.
* Electrical circuit breakers will be installed and maintained by the school.
* Provision will be made in the budget for regular maintenance and repair work and for deferred costs of major capital repairs.
* Management will develop a list of fully licensed and insured tradesmen, which is made available to Educators. This list will be reviewed annually.
* 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.
* Faulty equipment should be removed, or protection placed around any dangerous building sites.
* A maintenance record will be kept for any maintenance that needs to be addressed.

**(c) Storage:**

* A storage system should be devised that ensures easy access and un-cluttered storage of all equipment.
* 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 Service.
* Children will show respect for the equipment and be expected to pack equipment away 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 a separate area; 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.
* Where room permits, a separate storage area will be available for sporting and large outdoor 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 area which is inaccessible to the children. Educators are responsible for ensuring that these areas remain secure and that they do not inadvertently provide access to these items.
* Kitchen and other refuse areas will be provided with lidded facilities that are 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 daily operations.

**(d) Ventilation, Temperature, and Natural Light:**

* All heating and cooling systems will be of good quality and checked regularly to ensure safety and reliability.
* All heating and cooling systems and power cords will be kept in a safe area and away from children.
* 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, then this matter will be drawn to the attention of management and steps will be made to address the problem.
* Adequate ventilation will be provided always. Windows will be properly maintained to ensure easy opening and protection from bugs and insects.
* Where activities involve toxic materials such as paints and glues, Staff will ensure there is adequate ventilation before undertaking the activity. The Service strives to provide the least hazardous craft materials.
* Windows will be opened during the operation of the Service unless closed to protect from extreme weather conditions.
* Natural light is 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.
* Outdoor lighting will be suitable so that parents, Staff, and children can enter and exit the building without any unsafe dark areas.

**(e) 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 will be taken to rid the Service 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 will 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 may obtain a contractor from the management list 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.
* Action will be taken to remove the children, Educators, families, and visitors from the environment for as long as is safe and viable.

**(f) Managing the Indoor and Outdoor Environment:**

**Indoor Environment:**

* + The Service's indoor environment will be smoke-free.
	+ The Nominated Supervisor will only enroll the number of children in the Service, who can comfortably fit into the building space 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, such as hallways, alternative rooms, and verandahs, to disperse the group.
	+ Separate areas in the indoor environment will be provided for various purposes.
	+ The indoor area will be set up to allow children to participate in a variety of activities with easy access to equipment.
	+ 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 those bags and other items are not thrown into walkways or play areas.
	+ All items obstructing transit areas will be removed and placed in the correct storage areas.
	+ Areas will be set up to ensure that proper supervision can be maintained always.
	+ Access to the outdoor environment will be clear and easily accessible by the children and Staff.

**Outdoor Environment:**

* + The outdoor environment will provide each child with at least 7 square meters of unencumbered outdoor space in compliance with National Regulation 108.
	+ The outdoor environment will be smoke-free.
	+ The outdoor space will be inspected daily for any obstacles or dangerous items, and the hazard check will be 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 will be properly maintained. Children are only to play in areas that are clearly visible to Educators, and where child/Educator ratios are maintained.
	+ Clear boundaries will be set and enforced.
	+ When it is necessary to go outside the boundaries or line of supervision, an Educator will accompany children.

**(g) Child Protective Practices:**

**Mandatory Reporting:**

* + A Mandatory Reporter is anybody who delivers services to children as part of their paid or professional work.
	+ In OSHC services, mandatory reporters are Educators who deliver services to children and management, either paid or voluntary, whose duties include direct responsibility or direct supervision for the provision of these services.
	+ Educators are mandated to report to Child Protection if they have current concerns about the safety or welfare of a child based on reasonable grounds.
	+ Educators will undergo training in relation to child protection and reporting.
	+ Reports will be treated with strict confidentiality in adherence to the Service's Confidentiality Policy and Procedures.
	+ Any Educator who forms a belief based on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of harm should discuss their concerns with the Nominated Supervisor and/or the Responsible Person.
	+ When reporting to the Child Protection Helpline, it is important to have as much information as possible available regarding the child/children involved and any specific incident details.
	+ Once a report is made to the Child Protection Helpline, no further report needs to be made unless new information comes to hand.
	+ Keeping Children and Young People Safe guide has been developed to help mandatory reporters determine whether the risk to a child or young person meets the threshold of 'risk of significant harm'.

 **Reportable Conduct Scheme (ACT):**

* + As of the 1st of July 2017, the ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme came into place to address employment-related child protection.
	+ Our service is covered by the scheme and will report to the ACT Ombudsman regarding allegations or convictions of child abuse or misconduct towards children.
	+ This will not interfere with reporting obligations to other ACT relevant professional bodies.
	+ Reportable Conduct can be allegations or convictions concerning child-related misconduct by an employee, including various forms of ill-treatment and misconduct.
	+ Employers will ensure that all staff and committee members are aware of their obligations to report under the scheme.

For further information on specific reporting obligations, please refer to the relevant resources provided by Child Protection Services and the ACT Ombudsman's office.

**Citations:**

* Education and Care Services National Law (ECSNL)
* Education and Care Services National Regulations (ECSNR)
* Keeping Children and Young People Safe
* Service policies

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