

Early Years Services – QA3.1 Providing a Child Safe Environment

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| TRIM Reference: | D15/35312 | Due for Review: | 1 March 2027 |
| Responsible Officer: | Coordinator Early Years | | |

Purpose

Surf Coast Shire Early Years is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and will be fostered through our child safe culture, responsive relationships, engaging experiences and safe and healthy environments.

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to ensure that the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services:

- take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children attending the services.
- promotes a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the service
- provide a child safe environment that promotes child engagement, positive experiences and responsive relationships at all times, which extends to online environments.
- supports and implements the requirements under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and embeds the Child Safe Standards across services and programs that interacts with families and children.
- has a timely and effective identification of, and response to, children who may be at risk of or who are experiencing abuse or neglect.
- provide contact information on Surf Coast Shire Website on how to make a report for the community.

Surf Coast Shire Council child safe commitment statement

Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance racism, child abuse and inequality. The focus of our work is on children under the age of 18. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

We have a commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children, and to the safety of children with a disability. We aim to create enriching experiences for young learners and want children to feel safe, happy and empowered.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place to support employees, volunteers and contractors to achieve these commitments. We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

All Surf Coast Shire employees, volunteers and contractors have a legal obligation to report suspected cases of child sexual abuse to the police.

Policy Principles

National Quality Standards: 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 4.1.1, 5.1.2, 7.1.1, 7.1.2, 7.1.3, 7.2.1, 7.2.3

Education and Care Services National Regulations: 82, 83, r 84, 85, 86, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 115, 122, 123, 145, 165, 166, 167, 168(2)(h), 170, 171, 172, 175 (d) (e)

Education and Care Services National Law: Sections 162A, 165, 166, 167

Risk minimisation strategies, supported by clear policies and procedures for specific areas of child safety will help ensure the environment and practices at the service are child safe. Risks in the child's physical environment can be minimised by ensuring 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.

All children attending our early years services are provided with a safe environment both physically and online, through the creation and maintenance of a child safe culture, and this extends to the safe use of digital technologies and online environments.

Children's wellbeing is paramount and children will be actively involved in decision-making to provide an environment that encourages them to reach their potential.

Management, educators, and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

Child protection training has been completed by the relevant persons as required by the services jurisdiction, as required by section 162A of the National Law.

Nominated supervisors, educators and staff members, volunteers and students, at the services who work with children are advised of the existence and application of the current child protection law (or child safe standards, where applicable) and any obligations that they may have under that law, as required by regulation 84 at all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

Procedures to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are in place and regularly rehearsed.

Where the program involves simultaneous use of indoor and outdoor environments, educators will effectively supervise children in both environments.

Scope

This policy applies to all Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services environments, staff and educators.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following the child safe environment related policies and procedures.

Policy

Providing a Child Safe Environment at the Service

Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff, educators, contractors, volunteers and students understand and enact all Council policies required under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Child Safe Standards (refer to *Child Safe Organisation, Code of Conduct, Rights of the Child*).
- Ensuring that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Notifying the Regulatory Authority of any allegations or incidents of physical or sexual abuse within 24 hours.
- Promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing that underpins all aspects of the service's operations, to reduce risk to children (including the risk of abuse).
- Ensure that the *Providing a child safe environment policy* and procedures are implemented, the appropriate risk assessments and action plans are completed, and all identified actions are taken to minimise risks to children's health and safety (also known as a risk minimisation plan).
- Taking reasonable steps to ensure that all staff, volunteers, contractors, families and children follow The safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy.

- Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Ensuring all staff understand the Reportable Conduct Scheme and their responsibilities.
- Ensuring all children attending our service are provided with a safe environment, both physically and online, through the creation of a child safe culture.
- Ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Provide an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, vaping, illicit drugs and alcohol and ensure no educators or staff are affected by alcohol or drugs (including prescription medication) so as to impair their capacity to supervise or provide education and care to children in the service.
- Ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to *Safe Transportation of Children and Road Safety Policy*).
- Ensuring that 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 physical punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Implementing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement a child safe environment.
- Protecting the rights of children and families.
- Ensuring all educators and staff have undertaken current child protection legislation training, including mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their state/territory.
- Regularly monitor child protection training schedules and ensure all educators and staff are up to date with their training.
- Ensuring the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy and related policies.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all educators and staff who work with children are aware of the relevant policies, where to find them and are supported to implement them in the service.
- Protecting the rights of children and families and encouraging their participation in decision-making at the service.
- Supporting educators and staff to uphold the service's culture of child safety and wellbeing
- Ensuring learning environments are established that 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.
- Organising/facilitating regular safety audits.
- Ensuring that all cupboards/rooms are labelled accordingly, including those that contain chemicals and first aid kits, and that child-proof locks are installed on doors and cupboards where contents may be harmful.
- Ensuring Educators have up to date Material Safety Data Sheets for any cleaning chemicals stored at the service.
- Ensuring that all contractors/visitors adhere to Council's Child Safe Organisation Policy
- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children attending the service by keeping a visitors' record, including signatures and arrival/departure times and asking them to show their Working with Children Card.
- Implementing the *Providing a child safe environment policy* and procedures and ensure that any plans developed from risk assessments are in place for individual children and are carried out.
- Ensuring all children attending our service are provided with a safe environment, both physically and online, through the creation of a child safe culture.
- Meeting staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision.

- Ensure all educators and staff know where to access the *Providing a child safe environment policy* and procedures.
- Ensuring the physical environment, including equipment and materials used at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to *Safe Transportation of Children and Road Safety Policy*).
- Ensuring that all educators and staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of physical punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Participating in the implementation and reviewing of this policy.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement a child safe environment.
- Maintaining current accredited child protection training.
- When required, work collaboratively with appropriate services and/ or professionals to support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
- Completing SCS child safe training via SCS internal training platform.
- Reading and signing Early Years – Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and Child Safe Standards are embedded in the values and practice across Council Early Years services and programs.
- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy and related policies.

A responsible person in day-to-day charge must:

- Have adequate knowledge and understanding of the provision of education and care to children
- Have an ability to effectively supervise and manage an education and care service.
- Understanding of compliance with the National Law and other relevant laws •
- Sign a document agreeing to be a responsible person
- Ensure safety and well-being, implement educational programs, supervise staff and operations, communicate with families, manage risks and emergencies, oversee excursions, manage sleep and rest needs

Educators, Early Years staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Implementing the providing a child safe environment policy and procedures.
- Implementing the service's culture of child safety and wellbeing
- Being aware of current child protection legislation, including the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations.
- Maintaining current accredited child protection training, first aid and approved CPR, asthma and anaphylaxis training.
- Completing SCS child safe training via SCS internal training platform.
- Reading and signing Early Years – Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Maintaining learning environments that provide sufficient space and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment to ensure a safe environment.
- Ensuring children's wellbeing is paramount and children will be actively involved in decision-making to provide an environment that is safe and that encourages them to reach their potential.
- Monitor and maintain staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision of children.
- Providing up to date Material Safety Data Sheets for any cleaning chemicals stored at the service.
- Actively seek to prevent harm of any kind impacting children and young people and have zero tolerance for racism, child abuse and inequality.
- Promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing that underpins all aspects of the service's operations and is embedded into the program.
- Accept and Sign requirements outlined in the electronic device agreement annually.
- Only use service-issued electronic devices when taking images or videos of children while providing education and care.

- Ensuring all children attending our service are provided with a safe environment, both physically and online, through the creation of a child safe culture.
- Ensuring children and young people participate in decision making in matters affecting them, including in relation to safety issues and risk identification
- Recognise and respond effectively to children and young people, taking into account diverse needs.
- Ensuring the appropriate risk assessments and action plans are known, completed, and all identified actions are taken to minimise the risks to children's health and safety (also known as a risk minimisation plan).
- Ensuring the physical environment, including equipment and materials at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Conducting and documenting daily checklists of the indoor and outdoor yard, as well as bush/beach kinder site when applicable.
- Following current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to *Safe Transportation of Children and Road Safety Policy*).
- Participating in the implementation and reviewing of this policy.
- Protecting the rights of children and families and encourage their participation in decision-making.
- Keeping a visitors' record, including signatures and arrival and departure times
- Keeping up to date and complying with any changes in legislation and practices in relation this policy and related policies.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and complying with the relevant policies.
- Reporting any concerns to the Nominated Supervisor.
- Updating children's plans.

Definitions

ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources, and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.

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| Mandatory Reporting | The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. |
| Reportable conduct | Certain organisations or entities have legal obligations under Reportable Conduct Schemes. Under these Schemes, certain organisations or entities are required to notify and investigate certain allegations (reportable allegations) of abuse involving a child, when the allegation is against someone they employ, engage or contract in circumstances outlined by the legislation. |
| Reasonably believes | Believes on grounds that are reasonable in the circumstances. |
| Reasonable grounds | Suspect that a child may be at risk of significant harm based on your observations of the child or what has been reported to you about a child. |
| Reasonably suspects | Suspects on grounds that that are reasonable in the circumstances. |
| Responsible person | In relation to an education and care service, means a person referred to in section 162(1)(a) to (c) of the <i>Education and Care Services National Law</i> . |

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| Rights of the Child | Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. |
| Wellbeing | Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs – the need for tenderness and affection, security and clarity, social recognition, to feel competent, physical needs and for meaning in life. It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity, and resilience. |

Working directly with children

A person is working directly with children at a given time if at that time the person:

- Is physically present with the children, and
- Is directly engaged in providing education and care to the children.

Working with children/ Working with vulnerable people check (WWCC/WWVP)

A notice, certificate or other document granted to, or with respect to, a person under a working with children law to the effect that:

- The person has been assessed as suitable to work with children, or
- There has been no information that if the person worked with children the person would pose a risk to the children, or
- The person is not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment.

Related Procedures

Nil

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

| | |
|-----------|---|
| MPP-052 | Child Safe Organisation |
| MPP-8 | Workplace Health & Safety Policy |
| SCS-021 | Risk Management |
| WHS 6.0 | Workplace Facilities and Inspection |
| WHS 2.0 | Hazard Inspection, Risk Analysis and Control |
| WHS 8.0 | First Aid |
| WHS 9.0 | Injury/Incident Reporting |
| SCS020 | Community Bus Policy |
| WHS | Working in Seasonal Heat |
| HR21 | Grievance Policy and Procedure |
| HR24 | Code of Conduct |
| HR02 | Working with Children & Criminal History Checks |
| HR40 | Digital & Social Media Policy |
| MPP-040 | Public Interest Disclosure Procedure |
| MPP-005 | Privacy & Data Protection |
| MPP-021 | Fire Danger Preparedness Policy |
| D14/94986 | Early Years Administration of First Aid Policy |
| D15/32925 | Early Years Medical Conditions and Medications Policy |
| D15/42585 | Early Years Staff Code of Conduct Policy |

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| D14/94973 | Early Years Delivery of children to, and collection from, education and care services |
| D14/105435 | Early Years Infectious Diseases Policy |
| D15/33006 | Early Years Smoking, Vaping, Drug and Alcohol-Free Environment Policy |
| D14/105413 | Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy |
| D14/94981 | Early Years Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy |
| D22/217989 | Early Years Enrolment & Orientation Policy |
| D22/209250 | Early Years Family Code of Conduct |
| D14/70705 | Early Years Excursions Policy |
| D18/125865 | Early Years Safe Transportation of Children and Road Safety Policy |
| D15/16286 | Early Years Access and Inclusion Policy |
| D15/42638 | Early Years Interactions with Children and Behaviour Guidance Policy |
| D15/32932 | Early Years Nutrition, Healthy Eating and Oral Health Policy |
| D15/15724 | Early Years Employment of Qualified Staff, Volunteers and Students Policy |
| D15/35300 | Early Years Sun Protection Policy |
| D15/33004 | Early Years Supervision of Children Policy |
| D15/38683 | Early Years Water Safety Policy |
| D14/104807 | Early Years Health, hygiene and safe food practices Policy |
| D15/32929 | Early Years Nappy Changing and Toileting Policy |
| D15/16337 | Early Years Confidentiality, and Storage of Records Policy |
| D16/36657 | Early Years Use of Electronic Devices and Media Policy |
| D16/37049 | Early Years Animals and Domestic Pets Policy |
| D1/70690 | Early Years Sleep, Rest and Relaxation Policy |
| D15/74606 | Early Years Bush/Beach Kindergarten Protective Clothing and Visibility Policy |
| D15/74476 | Early Years Bush/Beach Kindergarten Extreme Weather Policy |
| D15/73628 | Early Years Bush/Beach Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Policy |

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

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| D15/63330 | Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record Form (kinder use Kinderloop) |
| D14/48936 | Early Years Services Medication Record (kinder use Kinderloop) |
| D14/87971 | Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan |
| D17/54211 | Child Safe Standards Reporting Form |
| D23/104577 | Early Years Child Safe Code of Conduct – Child Safe Standards |
| Online Child Safe Reporting Form https://au.openforms.com/Form/7cd6aa02-f3c2-4a53-8da4-61ca2e4d30eb | |
| D22/209250 | Early Years Family Code of Conduct |
| D25/13226 | Code of Conduct for PAG members |
| D24/112060 | Early Years Staff – Incident Report Form |
| D24/136792 | Work Instruction – Campfire – All Surf Coast Shire operated Kindergartens and Pre-schools |
| Kinderloop | Kindergarten Daily Indoor Checklist |
| Kinderloop | Kindergarten Daily Outdoor Checklist |
| Kinderloop | Busk Kinder Checklist |
| D25/65185 | Serious Incident Register |
| D25/140977 | Personal Phone request form |
| D25/141004 | Electronic device agreement |

Other References

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
 Criminal Law Reform and Child Safe Standards 2016
Choose With Care: Building child safe organisations – an information and training program:
 Department of Education and Training (DE)
 Education and Care Services National Law 2010
 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
 Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020
 ACECQA – Risk assessment and management 2025
 National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care 2024
 National Quality Framework Child safe Culture Guide 2025
 National Quality Framework Child Safe Self-Assessment and Risk Assessment Tool 2025

National Principals for Child Safe Organisation – Australian Human Rights Commission 2018
Australian Human Rights Commission – Child Safe Organisations
Cultural safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
Kidsafe Australia
UNICEF – United Nations Convention on the rights of the child
Victorian Commission for Children and Young People – A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation
Victorian Department of Health and Human Services – Creating Child Safe Organisations
ACECQA – Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority – acecqa.gov.au

Document History

| Version | Document History | Approved by – Date |
|---------|------------------|--|
| 1 | Approved | General Manager Culture and Community – 1 April 2014 |
| 2 | Amendment/Review | Manager Aged and Family – 1 June 2016 |
| 3 | Amendment/Review | Manager Aged and Family – 21 September 2018 |
| 4 | Amendment/Review | Manager Community Strengthening – 9 January 2020 |
| 5 | Amendment/Review | Manager Community Strengthening – 16 July 2021 |
| 6 | Amendment/Review | Manager Community Strengthening – 13 December 2022 |
| 7 | Amendment/Review | Manager Community Strengthening – 9 May 2024 |
| 8 | Amendment/Review | Manager Community Strengthening – 1 September 2025 |