

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

TRIM Reference: D15/35312 Due for Review: 13 June 2024
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

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.
- provide a child safe environment that promotes child engagement, positive experiences and responsive relationships at all times.
- 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.
- 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 for child abuse. 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.

Policy Principles

National Quality Standards: 2.2, 5.1.2, 7.1

Education and Care Services National Regulations: r 84, 85, 86, 99, 100, 101, 102, 166, 168(2)(h)

Education and Care Services National Law: Sections 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. Policies and procedures are developed in relation to all matters specified in Regulation 168(2), including child protection, emergency and evacuation, water safety, sun protection, delivery and collection of children, and incident, injury, trauma and illness. 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.

Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020.

Maternal and Child Health Service Program Standards 2019.

Maternal and Child Health Service Program Guidelines 2019.

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

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

- Ensuring staff, educators, contractors, volunteers and students understand and enact all Council policies and procedures required under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Child Safe Standards (refer to *Child Safe Organization, Code of Conduct, Rights of the Child, Working with Children*).
- 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.
- 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.
- Ensuring children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (refer to *Adequate Supervision Policy and Interactions with Children and Behaviour Guidance Policy*).
- Ensuring parents/guardians have completed the enrolment form including details of authorised nominees, and permission forms for excursions and administration of medication (refer to *Delivery & Collection of Children Policy, Excursions Policy, Medical Conditions & Medication Policy*).
- 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).
- Conducting risk assessments for excursions and incursions, considering children's safety when leaving the service premises (refer to *Excursions Policy*).
- 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 *Family Day Care Transport/Vehicle Use Policy, Motor Vehicle Policy and Community Bus Policy*).
- Implementing and practicing emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency Management and Evacuation Policies*).
- Ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children 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 on mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their state/territory. I
- 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/Primary Nominee is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all educators and staff who work with children are aware of the relevant policies, 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.
- Ensuring that all children are adequately supervised at all times (refer to the *Adequate Supervision Policy and Interactions with Children & Behaviour Guidance Policy*).
- 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 Policy and sign in to the visitor's log book/visitors register.
- 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).
- Conducting risk assessments for excursions and considering children's safety when leaving the service premises (refer to *Excursions Policy*).
- 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 *Family Day Care Transport/Vehicle Use Policy, Motor Vehicle Policy and Community Bus Policy*).
- Implementing and practicing emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency Management and Evacuation Policies*).
- Ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children 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.
- 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.

Teachers, educators, Early Years staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Implementing the providing a child safe environment policy and procedures.
- Ensuring children are adequately supervised at all times (refer to the *Adequate Supervision Policy and Interactions with Children & Behaviour Guidance Policy*).
- Being aware of current child protection legislation, including the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations.
- Monitoring and maintaining staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision of children.
- Maintaining learning environments that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment to ensure a safe environment.
- Maintaining a regular cleaning schedule for all equipment to avoid cross-infection. (refer to *Occupational Health & Safety Policies, Early Years Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy and Early Years Safe Food Handling policy*).
- Providing up to date Material Safety Data Sheets for any cleaning chemicals stored at the service.
- Maintaining a clean environment daily and removing tripping/slipping hazards as soon as these become apparent (refer to *Occupational Health & Safety Policies*) and complete the daily safety check list.

- Ensuring children are actively and adequately supervised at all times (refer to *Adequate Supervision Policy and Interactions with Children and Behaviour Guidance Policy*).
- 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).
- Conducting risk assessments for excursions and considering children's safety when leaving the service premises.
- Ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy). Conducting a daily check of the building and record as applicable.
- Following current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to *Family Day Care Transport/Vehicle Use Policy, Motor Vehicle Policy and Community Bus Policy*).
- Implementing and practicing emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency Management and Evacuation Policies*).
- Following appropriate procedures for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*).
- Ensuring that dignity and rights of the child are upheld at all times. (Refer to *Interactions with Children and Behaviour Guidance Policy*, and the *International Rights of the Child*).
- Participating in the implementation and reviewing of this policy.
- Participating in training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy and related policies.
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making.
- 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

Definitions

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.
Rights of the Child	Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

MPP-052 Child Safe Organisation
SCS-014 Occupational Health and Safety Policy
SCS-021 Risk Management
OHS 6.0 Workplace Facilities and Inspection
OHS-WI-009 Hazard Inspection, Risk Analysis and Control
OHS-WI-006 Site Safety
OHS 8.0 Emergency Procedures and First Aid
OHS-WI-001 Emergencies

HR25 Equipment Use Policy	
OHS 9.0 Injury/Incident Reporting	
MPP-030 Motor Vehicles Policy	
SCS020 Community Bus Policy	
HR06 Ultraviolet Radiation	
HR09 Seasonal Heat	
HR16 Immunisation Policy	
HR21 Grievance Policy and Procedure	
HR24 Code of Conduct	
HR02 Police Check and Working with Children Check	
MPP040 Protected Disclosures Policy	
MPP021 Code Red and Extreme Fire Danger Preparedness Policy	
MPP026 Waste Disposal and Resource Recovery Services Policy	
MPP002 Information Privacy	
MPR014 Email / Internet Guidelines	
MPR014 Good Practice Guide to Email Communication	
MPP021 Code Red and Extreme Fire Danger Policy	
D14/94986	Early Years First Aid Policy
D15/32925	Early Years Medical Conditions and Medications Policy
D15/42585	Early Years Staff Code of Conduct Policy
D14/105435	Early Years Infectious Diseases Policy
D15/33006	Early Years Tobacco, Smoke, 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 of Children and their families Policy
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 and Healthy Eating Policy
D15/15724	Early Years Employment of Qualified/Staff and Ratios Policy
D15/35300	Early Years Sun Protection Policy
D15/33004	Early Years Supervision of Children Policy
D14/28577	Family Day Care Supervision of Children Works Instructions
D15/38683	Early Years Water Safety Policy
D14/104807	Early Years Food Safety Policy
D15/32929	Early Years Nappy Changing and Toileting Policy
D15/16337	Early Years Confidentiality, Management and Storage of Records Policy
D16/36657	Early Years Use of Electronic Devices Policy
D16/37049	Early Years Animals and Domestic Pets Policy
D15/32070	Assessment of Family Day Care Educators and other adults residing in the Family Day Care Residences Policy
D15/35375	Early Years Services Assessment, Approval and Reassessment of Approved Family Day Care Residences and Family Day Care Venues Policy
D15/54403	Early years Services Family Day Care Support Visits by Co-ordination Unit Policy
D15/33023	Early years Visitors Register for Family Day Care Residence or Venue Policy

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

D15/63330	Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record Form
D17/51029	Family Day Care Home Safety Checklist Template
D14/48936	Early Years Services Medication Record
D14/87971	Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan
D18/29066	Family Day Care Regular Excursion Authority
D14/48378	Family Day Care Non-Regular Excursion Authority
D17/54211	Child Safe Standards Reporting Form

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 (DET)

Education and Care Services National Law 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020.

Maternal and Child Health Service Program Standards 2019

Maternal and Child Health Service Program Guidelines 2019

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