

Early Years Services – QA3.5 Water Safety

TRIM Reference: D15/38683 Due for Review: 7 September 2024
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to keep children safe in and around water and support children's learning in a safe environment. Children's safety and wellbeing will be protected in and around water through supervision and education.

According to Kidsafe (the recognised authority on the prevention of injuries in children), drowning continues to be one of the main causes of fatalities of Australian children. Every year a number of children are killed and hundreds more are rescued from near drowning situations. Non-fatal drowning incidents are also of great concern as they can have potential long-term effects, including brain damage and permanent disability.

The most common factor in childhood drowning is lack of supervision. A child can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water. Items such as nappy buckets, sinks, pet drinking bowls, ponds, pools, water features and water tanks are potential drowning hazards.

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards: 2.1.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 7.3.5,
Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Regulations: 168 (2) (a) (iii), 26 (1), 116
Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020

Scope

All Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services staff/Family Day Care Educators and children accessing the Early Years Services.

Policy

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services are committed to ensuring the protection and safety of children at all times when around water or engaged in water play activities.

Risk Assessment

General Risk Assessment is conducted to ensure every reasonable precaution is taken.

Excursion Risk Assessment

Every reasonable effort is taken to minimise risks in relation to water hazards and risks related to water based activities (where applicable) on excursions. Risk management must occur before the activity takes place. It is also important to recognise potential water hazards and to take action to eliminate or control the hazards. A visit in advance to the proposed excursion destination is required in conducting and recording the risk assessment. Information to be gathered regarding the suitability of the excursion site in relation to water hazards/water based activities is to include: age appropriateness and safety of the location, supervision requirements/possible issues and planning for this, other people attending venue, planning for any required emergency responses.

Supervision

No child is to be left unsupervised at any time whilst around water hazards, involved in water based activities, or water play activities.

Water Play

- Water play activities may be included in education and care programs provided by Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services. When water play activities are planned, teachers, educators and staff will consider the developmental levels and individual needs/provisions of the children in the program and as a result of these considerations will ensure constant supervision is in place to ensure the safety of all children.
- Water play troughs, buckets and other water containers will be emptied after every use, and stored to prevent the collection of water when not in use.
- Any ponds or areas of open water in children's play areas must be fitted with a childproof cover.

Water Hazards

- Given the increased risk of injury posed by water hazards, children are to be visually supervised at all times by staff/educators.
- To reduce the incidents of falls from water/other fluid spills, all spills are mopped up as they occur.

Safety with Hot Tap Water

All Early Years services will have an annual check of all water temperature, taps and valves as part of the Surf Coast Shire Council Work Place Health and Safety Audit and will comply with the required Standards.

Family Day Care

Family Day Care Home Safety Checklist process: All Family Day Care residences/in-venues undergo a Home Safety inspection process (as per the *Family Day Care Assessment, approval and reassessment of approved Family Day Care residences and Family Day Care Venues Policy*), which includes the assessment and resolution of any water hazards.

FDC Educators will:

- Comply with practices that reduce the risk of child accidents and illnesses relating to swimming and wading pools and other water hazards and will comply with the Regulations.
- Complete a risk assessment prior to any activity or excursion near water.

Direct adult supervision provided at all times near water, including excursions. Direct supervision applies even when a water hazard is fenced in accordance with the *Australian Standard AS 1926*.

Adult/child ratios apply for all excursions where water hazards are present.

- The Coordination Unit is informed of the intention to participate in an excursion 48 hours prior to the excursion date where a water hazard is present.
- A risk assessment management plan needs to be completed by the FDC educator and approved by the Coordination Unit before excursion can go ahead.
- Once approved, participation is dependent upon parents signing a Regular or Non-Regular excursion authority form.
- **One adult for every four children** - this ratio may vary depending on the increased risks of water hazards and ages and development of children attending.

Wading pools, plastic pools, water play troughs etc. are emptied after every use, and stored to prevent the collection of water. The practice is supported by evidence demonstrating that bacteria and algae that may be detrimental to children can grow quickly in un-chlorinated water and be of considerable health risk to children.

- Wading pools can only be filled to a maximum depth of 15cm, otherwise pool fencing is required.
- Children with diarrhea, upset stomach, open sores, or nasal infections cannot use a pool or wading pool.

Private swimming pools/spas – see Home Safety Check for standard, (this also applies to visits to other homes where there is a pool/spa).

- Swimming pool fencing and gates that comply with *Australian Standard AS 1926* must be provided. Check pool fencing and gates regularly to ensure they are working correctly.
- Remove all objects from around pool or other water hazard that a child could use to climb over fencing, such as logs, trees, bikes, chairs, bins.
- Pool filters, chemicals and equipment must be inaccessible to children in care.
- Keep an accessible, current and legible cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) guide near pool.

*** No child is permitted to enter into the area of, or swim, in a spa, or a private or public swimming pool whilst the Family Day Care Service is operating and children are in care.*

Private Dams – must be inaccessible to children.

Grey Water – must be inaccessible to children.

Septic Tanks – must be inaccessible to children.

Rainwater Tanks – children must be supervised during use.

Private ponds - are required to be fitted with a childproof cover to prevent children from falling in.

Water Containers (nappy buckets, etc) must be safely covered or inaccessible to children. Check garden after rain or watering and empty water that has collected in holes or containers.

Bathrooms and Laundries

- Nappy buckets must have a lid and be kept off the floor.
- Never leave a child in a bath alone.
- Keep bathroom and toilet doors closed and always supervise children when using the bathroom.
- Bath plugs must be out of reach of all children.

*** A FDC Educator may not directly supervise their own children for swimming activities whilst still responsible for the supervision of children enrolled with Family Day Care.*

*** FDC Educators are not permitted to take Family Day Care children to swimming lessons. FDC Educators must arrange their own child's swimming lessons outside of Family Day Care hours.*

Bathing in Hot Water

For children less than five years of age the second most common location of drowning is the bath. The other major areas of risk surrounding the bathing process are hot water scalds and falls.

The aim of this section of the policy is to:

- Raise awareness of drowning, hot water scalds and falls and management of the risks through education and policy implementation.
- Minimise the risk of burns and hot water scalds occurring while the child is in care.
- Ensure Contractors respond appropriately by following the procedure outlined below.

Drowning

To prevent drowning in the bathroom:

- Supervision of children when bathing
- Never leave children alone.
- Bath plugs must be out of reach of all children

Safety with Hot Tap Water

- Control the temperature of your bathroom hot tap water to a maximum of 50°C as per the home safety check list.
- Always test the water's temperature before bathing a child. Use the inside of your wrist. Hold it in the water for a slow count of five. It should be comfortably warm, not hot. Note; the maximum recommended temperature for bathing a baby is 38°C.
- Refer to home safety checklist for other preventative measures.

Definitions

Risk assessment

A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

Adequate supervision

- an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation
- knowing where children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently.

Water hazard

Any water body that poses a potential drowning risk to children and could include:

- large bodies of water, such as rivers, creeks, dams, ponds, swimming pools, jetted bathtubs (or jacuzzis), in-ground spas, above ground portable spas (or hot tubs) or any container with poor drainage that allows water to pool
- smaller bodies of water, such as baths, nappy buckets and pet water containers.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

- D15/33004 Early Years Supervision of Children Policy
- D14/70705 Early Years Excursions Policy
- D15/35312 Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy

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

- D14/28577 Family Day Care Supervision of Children Work Instruction
- D17/51029 Family Day Care Home Safety Checklist Template
- D18/29066 Family Day Care Regular Outing Authority
- D14/48378 Family Day Care Non Regular Excursion Authority
- D14/87971 Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan
- D17/23578 Kindergarten Regular Outing Form
- D19/24712 Kindergarten Excursion Authority Form
- D21/221509 Bush Kinder Regular Excursion Authority Form

Other References

- Kidsafe Victoria Water Safety Fact Sheet
- Victorian Pool Fencing Laws
- Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- ACECQA National; Quality Framework Resource Kit

Document History

Approval Date	01/04/2014	General Manager Culture and Community
Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Aged and Family 1 April 2015
2	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Aged and Family 8 June 2017
3	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 6 December 2018
4	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 15 May 2020
5	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 31 August 2021
6	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 7 March 2023