

Early Years Services – QA 1.3 Sleep Rest and Relaxation

TRIM Reference: D14/70690 Due for Review: 2 May 2025
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to provide clear guidelines for the implementation of safe sleep, rest and relaxation practices that meet the individual needs of children attending Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services.

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services are committed to:

- Providing a positive and nurturing environment for all children attending the service.
- Recognising that children have different requirements for sleep, rest and relaxation and being responsive to those needs to ensure that children feel safe and secure at the service.
- Consulting with parents/guardians about their child's individual sleep, rest and relaxation requirements/practices, and ensuring practices at the service are responsive to the values and cultural beliefs of each family.
- Its duty of care (refer to Definitions) to all children at Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services, and ensuring that adequate supervision (refer to Definitions) is maintained while children are sleeping, resting or relaxing.
- Complying with all legislative requirements, standards and current best practice, including recommendations by Red Nose and Kid safe (refer to References).

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Regulation: 81, 84A,168, 170

Scope

This policy applies to all Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services staff, students, volunteers, children and their families attending the services.

Policy

Effective rest, sleep and relaxation strategies are important to ensure that children feel secure and safe. Education and care settings have a duty of care to ensure that all children are provided with a high level of safety and comfort when resting, sleeping or relaxing and to maintain adequate supervision at all times.

Surf Coast Shire Council will undertake the following practices in relation to the sleep, rest and relaxation needs of children attending the services (as applicable to the service).

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services will:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure the sleep/rest/relaxation needs of children at the service are met, with regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs (r 81(1)) by:
 - ensuring the educational programs provides opportunity for each child to sleep, rest or engage in appropriate quiet play activities, as required
 - responding to the individual needs of each child at the service
 - considering parenting beliefs, values, practices and requirements
 - considering the length of time each child spends at the service
 - considering circumstance or events occurring at a child's home
 - ensuring consistency of practice between home and the service
 - monitoring the physical environment, including room temperature, lighting, airflow and noise levels.

- Ensure parents/guardians are provided with information about the service's sleep, rest and relaxation practices and are consulted about their child's patterns.
- Ensure that resting and sleeping practices are not used as a behaviour guidance strategy (*refer to Interactions with Children & Behaviour Guidance Policy*).
- Document and communicate children's rest and sleep times to co-workers during shift changes (as applicable).

Sleep and Rest Safety

Surf Coast Council Early Years Services will:

- Ensure adequate supervision of children at the service at all times, including **adequate checks** on a child during sleep and rest.
- Ensure a risk assessment is prepared in relation to sleep and rest at least once every 12 months. Risk assessments must identify and assess risks in relation to sleep and rest, and specify how the identified risks will be managed and minimised (refer to risk assessment inclusions below).
- Communicate daily with parents about their child's sleep and rest routines at the service.
- Ensure **safe resting practices** for children are followed at all times.
- Ensure close supervision of children displaying symptoms of illness; especially when resting or sleeping (*refer to Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*).
- Ensure compliance with the recommendations of Red Nose and Kid safe in relation to safe sleeping practices for children.
- Consult with staff/educators in relation to OH&S issues when purchasing new equipment for the service; ensuring compliance with WorkSafe Victoria's *Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit* (refer to References).
- Conduct regular safety checks of equipment used for sleeping/resting,
- Ensure there are no hazards in the child's resting or sleeping environment e.g. hanging cords, mobiles, curtains and blinds that are accessible to children who are sleeping or resting.
- Ensure that artificial heating, such as heat bags, electric blankets and hot-water bottles, are not used to provide warmth.
- Ensure that rooms used for sleep and rest are well ventilated.
- Ensure that each child has their own bed linen, and that the appropriate hygiene practices are implemented for the cleaning and storage of, mattresses and linen.
- Ensure that prams and strollers are **not used** to settle children to sleep in all Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services education and care settings (exclusion to this rule only applies if children fall asleep incidentally (such as an outing). In such case, the child will not be covered in any way and will be closely supervised. Where available the child will be transferred to a mattress.

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment must include assessment of the matters set out below and how risks will be managed and minimised:

- a) the number, ages and developmental stages of children at the education and care service,
- b) the individual sleep and rest needs of children at the service (including specific health care needs, cultural preferences and requests from families);
- c) the staffing arrangements required to adequately supervise and monitor all children during periods of sleep and rest
- d) the level of knowledge and training of the staff supervising children during periods of sleep and rest the location of the sleep and rest areas, and the arrangement of the cots and beds within the areas
- e) the safety of cots, beds and bedding equipment and whether it is appropriate for the ages and developmental stages of the children who will use them
- f) any potential hazards in the sleep and rest areas, cots, beds and bedding equipment any potential hazards on the child, such as clothing or jewellery
- g) physical safety and suitability of sleep and rest environments, including the temperature, lighting and ventilation of the areas

Safe resting practices

1 to 3 years

Educators will:

- Place older babies and toddlers on their back to rest (unless a medical practitioner has authorised an alternative resting practice due to a medical condition)
- allow older babies and toddlers to find their own sleeping position if they move after being placed on their back to rest
- ensure a child's face is never covered with bed linen while they are sleeping
- use light bedding as the preferred option and tuck all bedding in to prevent child from pulling it over their head.
- Sleeping bags with a fitted neck and arm holes (and no hood) may also be used instead of bed linen
- not use quilts, doonas, pillows, lamb's wool or cot bumpers
- not use soft toys for babies under seven months of age because they may cover the nose and mouth and interfere with breathing
- place baby or toddler so their feet are close to the bottom end of the mattress and they cannot wriggle under the bed linen
- place children on mattresses without bottles (for safety and dental hygiene reasons)
- remove bibs before putting child down to rest or sleep
- provide dummies if required without attaching them to chains

Preschool children (3-5yrs)

Educators will:

- allow preschool children to find their own sleeping position if they move while sleeping or after lying on their back initially
- ensure a preschool child's face is never covered with bed linen while they are sleeping
- use light bedding as the preferred option
- settle children in beds without bottles (for safety and dental hygiene reasons)
- play calm, relaxing music

Relaxation

- Holistic approaches recognise the connectedness of mind, body and spirit.
- Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition personal hygiene, physical fitness, relaxation, emotions and social relationships is integral to wellbeing and self-confidence and a core feature of the learning that occurs in setting providing care for school age children.
- Educators provide a range of restful and relaxing environments/experiences throughout the day and support the child to make appropriate decisions regarding their participation in activities and experiences.
- Children have access to comfortable spaces away from the main activity area for relaxation and quiet activity as required.

Parents/Guardians Responsibility:

- Discuss their child's sleep, rest and relaxation requirements and practices prior to commencing at the service, and when these requirements change.
- Provide information on the child's enrolment form if the child requires special items while sleeping, resting or relaxing.
- Provide a written medical report if their baby/child is not to be placed on their back during sleep. Parents/guardians must communicate alternative resting practices to staff.

Definitions

Adequate supervision

Entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of a staff member / educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, and rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service and requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of staff / educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each staff member / educator
- need for staff/educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Adequate check

An adequate check is one:

- That occurs regularly with specific attention to breathing patterns, an adequate check should be conducted every 10 minutes on all babies.
- Where you are not distracted by other activities or responsibilities.
- Where you have the time and space to observe and physically check the rise and fall of a child's chest and the colour of their skin and lips from the side of their cot (or floor mattress for older children).

Duty of care

A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury.

Rest

A period of inactivity, solitude, calmness or tranquility, and can include a child being in a state of sleep.

Relaxation

Relaxation or other activity for bringing about a feeling of calm in your body and mind.

SUDI (Sudden Unexpected Death of an Infant)

A broad term used to describe the sudden and unexpected death of a baby for which the cause is not immediately obvious.

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)

The sudden and unexpected death of an infant under one year of age with an onset of a fatal episode occurring during sleep, that remains unexplained after a thorough investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy and review of the circumstances of death and the clinical history.

Red Nose

Red Nose is dedicated to eliminating SIDS and providing support for bereaved families. A branch of SIDS and Kids is located in each state and territory, and can provide resources and assistance.

Related Procedure

Nil

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

MPP018	Workplace Health and Safety Policy
D14/28377	Educational Programs Policy
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
D15/33004	Early Years Supervision of Children Policy
D14/105413	Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy
D15/42638	Early Years Interactions with Children & Behaviour Guidance Policy

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms
 D23/180142 Early Years – Sleep and Rest – Risk Assessment Template - Kindergarten

Other References

Australian/New Zealand Standards:

- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010), and
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998)
- Services can check current standards on the SAI Global website at www.saiglobal.com
- Childcare and Children’s Health, vol 14, no 2, June 2011, Sleep and Oral Health. Publication of the Centre for Community Child Health:
- www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/CCH_Vol_14_No_2_Sleep_and_Oral_Health.pdf

Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF)

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)

WorkSafe Victoria, Children’s services – occupational health and safety compliance kit

Red Nose: <https://rednose.com.au>

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approved	General Manager Culture and Community – 1 April 2014
2	Amended	Manager Aged and Family – 31 March 2015
3	Amended	Manager Aged and Family – 10 August 2017
4	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 17 April 2019
5	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 13 August 2020
6	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 13 January 2022
7	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 31 August 2023
8	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 2 November 2023