



HEALTH & SAFETY: Sleep and Rest

PURPOSE

This policy provides clear guidelines for providing safe, comfortable, and appropriate sleep and rest opportunities for all children at Essential Early Learning. We are committed to ensuring children's individual sleep and rest needs are met while maintaining the highest safety standards and supporting healthy development.

Our service will:

- Provide a safe sleep and rest environment that reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related incidents
- Recognize and respond to each child's individual sleep and rest needs
- Maintain adequate supervision during sleep and rest times
- Provide comfortable and hygienic sleep and rest facilities
- Work in partnership with families regarding their child's sleep and rest routines
- Respect children's right to rest or engage in quiet activities as an alternative to sleep

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All children enrolled at the service
- The approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and staff
- Students on placement and volunteers
- All sleep and rest times at the service

Our Service Structure:

Essential Early Learning has two rooms:

- Toddler Room (2-3 years old)
- Preschool Room (4-5 years old)

Sleep and rest procedures are tailored to the developmental needs of each age group.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

This policy is based on the following legislation and standards:

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

- Section 167: Protection from harm and hazards

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

- Regulation 81: Sleep and rest
- Regulation 103: Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
- Regulation 109: Toilet and hygiene facilities

- Regulation 110: Ventilation and natural light
- Regulation 168: Education and care service must have policies and procedures

National Quality Standard

- Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- Element 2.1.1: Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
- Element 2.2.1: At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
- Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

NSW-Specific Legislation:

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)

RATIONALE

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Skin cancer, including melanoma and non-melanoma, is the most common cancer in Australia. Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation in childhood is a major risk factor for the development of skin cancer later in life.

Sun protection times are a forecast for the time-of-day UV levels will reach 3 or above. At these levels, sun protection is recommended for all skin types. In NSW, UV levels are high enough (UV 3 or above) to damage unprotected skin most months of the year. UV levels are particularly high during the summer months and highest in the middle of the day.

By implementing a comprehensive Sun Protection Policy, Essential Early Learning can help protect staff and children from UV radiation and teach children good sun protection habits from an early age to reduce their risk of developing skin cancer.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Sleep: A natural state of rest characterized by reduced consciousness and physical activity.

Rest: A period of relaxation that may not involve sleeping, allowing children to recharge physically and mentally.

Quiet Time: A designated period where children engage in calm, relaxing activities as an alternative to sleep.

Safe Sleep Practices: Evidence-based guidelines to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related incidents, including safe sleep positioning and environment.

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome): The sudden and unexplained death of an apparently healthy infant, usually during sleep. Risk reduction strategies apply to children up to 12 months, with some practices continuing beyond this age.

Active Supervision: Intentional, focused observation where educators position themselves strategically, scan the environment, and remain alert to children's activities, including during sleep and rest times.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Safe Sleep Environment

General Safety Requirements:

All sleep and rest areas will:

- Be well-ventilated with access to natural light
- Be maintained at a comfortable temperature (not too hot or cold)
- Be clean, hygienic, and free from hazards
- Provide adequate space between sleeping areas
- Be quiet and calm with reduced lighting
- Allow educators clear sightlines for effective supervision
- Be free from smoke exposure

Sleep Equipment Safety:

- All sleeping beds meet current Australian Safety Standards
- Sleep equipment will be regularly inspected for damage or wear
- Broken or damaged equipment will be removed immediately and repaired or replaced

Bedding Safety:

- Only fitted sheets will be used on sleeping beds
- Bedding will be clean and well-maintained
- Individual bedding will not be shared between children
- Bedding will be washed weekly and whenever soiled
- Pillows, quilts, doonas, and soft toys are not recommended during sleep for children under 12 months

2. Safe Sleep Practices

Sleep Positioning:

- Children will always be placed on their back to sleep (unless a medical condition requires otherwise, documented by a medical practitioner)
- If a child rolls onto their side or tummy during sleep, they will be gently repositioned onto their back
- Once children can consistently roll from back to tummy and tummy to back, they can be left in their preferred sleeping position

Items Not Permitted in Sleep Area:

To reduce SIDS risk, the following items are not permitted in children's sleep areas:

- Bumpers or cot padding
- Loose blankets or sheets
- Pillows (for children under 12 months)
- Large soft toys
- Lamb's wool or sheepskin underlays
- Doonas or quilts (for children under 12 months)
- Sleep positioners or wedges



Temperature Management:

- Room temperature will be maintained at a comfortable level (approximately 18-22°C)
- Children will not be overdressed for sleep
- Lightweight sleeping bags may be used instead of blankets
- Children will be checked regularly to ensure they are not too hot or cold
- Hats will be removed before sleep

3. Supervision During Sleep and Rest

Constant Active Supervision:

During all sleep and rest times, educators will:

- Position themselves where they can see and hear all sleeping children
- Maintain the required educator-to-child ratios at all times
- Regularly check each sleeping child
- Monitor children's breathing and general wellbeing
- Respond immediately to any signs of distress or discomfort
- Ensure all children remain visible (doors to sleep areas left open or with windows for viewing)

Sleep Check Procedures:

Educators will conduct regular sleep checks every 10-15 minutes, observing:

- Breathing pattern and rate
- Skin colour (checking for paleness or blueness)
- Body temperature (checking if child is too hot or cold)
- Sleep position
- General wellbeing
- Any signs of distress or unusual behavior

Sleep Check Documentation:

- Sleep checks will be documented including date, time, and educator's initials
- Any concerns or unusual observations will be noted and reported
- Documentation will be available for review by families and the nominated supervisor

4. Toddler Room (2-3 Years) Sleep and Rest Procedures

Sleep Schedule:

- A designated rest time will be scheduled daily after lunch
- The typical rest period is approximately 1.5-2 hours
- Children are encouraged but not forced to sleep
- Individual sleep needs are respected - some children may sleep longer or shorter periods

Rest Routine:

- Children will use the toilet and wash hands before rest time
- Nappies will be changed before rest time
- The environment will be prepared (lights dimmed, calming music, curtains drawn)
- Each child will be settled in their designated bed/cot
- Children may have their comfort item (if provided by family)
- Educators will use gentle settling techniques (pat, rub back, soft voice)



- A consistent, calm routine will be followed

Children Who Do Not Sleep:

- Children will be given 20-30 minutes to settle and rest
- If a child is not sleeping after this time and is disrupting others, they may engage in quiet activities
- Quiet activities may include: books, puzzles, drawing, sensory play
- These children will remain in a calm environment and be closely supervised

Waking:

- Children will be allowed to wake naturally when possible
- Children who wake will be assisted to transition back into activities
- Nappies will be checked and changed as needed
- Children will use the toilet after waking
- Afternoon snack will be offered

5. Preschool Room (4-5 Years) Rest and Quiet Time Procedures

Rest and Quiet Time Philosophy:

Most preschool-aged children (4-5 years) do not require a scheduled sleep time during the day. However, all children benefit from a period of rest and relaxation. Our preschool room provides:

- A designated quiet time after lunch
- Opportunities for children to rest if they are tired
- Calm, relaxing activities as an alternative to sleep
- Respect for individual children's needs

Quiet Time Schedule:

- A designated quiet time will be scheduled daily after lunch
- The typical quiet time is approximately 30-60 minutes
- Children are not required to sleep
- Children who need to sleep will be provided with a comfortable place to rest

Quiet Time Activities:

During quiet time, children may:

- Rest on their mat with a quiet activity (book, soft toy)
- Listen to stories or calming music
- Engage in relaxation exercises or meditation
- Look at books independently
- Do quiet drawing or colouring
- Complete simple puzzles
- Sleep if they are tired

Environment:

- The room will be calm and peaceful with reduced noise levels
- Lighting will be dimmed but sufficient for quiet activities
- Soft music or stories may be played
- Each child will have a designated rest area (mat or bed)



Children Who Need to Sleep:

- If a preschool child shows signs of tiredness, they will be offered an opportunity to sleep
- A comfortable bed or mat will be provided in a quiet area
- Safe sleep practices will be followed
- Regular supervision and sleep checks will be conducted
- Families will be informed if their child slept during the day

6. Responding to Individual Sleep and Rest Needs

Recognising Individual Differences:

We recognize that each child has unique sleep and rest needs. Educators will:

- Observe and respond to each child's individual sleep patterns and needs
- Communicate regularly with families about their child's sleep and rest
- Be flexible in accommodating different sleep schedules and routines
- Respect cultural practices and family preferences regarding sleep
- Support children who are transitioning from regular naps to no naps

Children Who Require Additional Rest:

- If a child appears tired outside of scheduled rest times, they will be offered an opportunity to rest
- A quiet space will be provided
- Safe sleep practices will always be followed
- Families will be informed

Children Who Do Not Want to Sleep:

- No child will be forced to sleep
- Children must have an opportunity to rest, but sleeping is not mandatory
- Quiet alternative activities will be provided
- Children's comfort and wellbeing will be prioritised

Medical Considerations:

- If a child has a medical condition affecting sleep, educators will follow the child's Medical Management Plan
- Any specific requirements will be discussed with families and documented
- Additional monitoring may be implemented as required

7. Hygiene and Infection Control

Bedding and Linen:

- Each child has their own individual bedding
- Bedding is not shared between children
- Sheets are sent home for weekly washing or whenever soiled
- Sleeping beds are wiped down with disinfectant regularly
- Soiled sleeping beds are removed immediately and washed

Sleep Environment Cleaning:

- Sleep areas are cleaned daily
- Floors are vacuumed and mopped regularly



- Sleeping wiped down with disinfectant regularly
- The sleep environment is well-ventilated

Personal Items:

- Comfort items (if provided) are clearly labelled with the child's name
- Comfort items are not shared between children
- Families are asked to wash comfort items regularly at home

8. Communication and Partnership with Families

Information Gathering:

On enrolment, families will be asked to provide information about their child's:

- Usual sleep patterns and routines
- Preferred sleep position
- Sleep preferences (comfort items, settling techniques)
- Any medical conditions affecting sleep
- Cultural practices related to sleep
- Family preferences and concerns

Ongoing Communication:

Educators will:

- Communicate daily with families about their child's sleep and rest
- Document sleep times and duration
- Share observations about sleep patterns or concerns
- Work with families to ensure consistency between home and service
- Discuss any changes to sleep routines with families
- Respect family preferences while maintaining safety standards

Family Education:

The service will:

- Provide families with information about safe sleep practices
- Share resources from Red Nose (formerly SIDS and Kids)
- Discuss the service's sleep and rest policy during orientation
- Display safe sleep information in the service
- Address any family concerns or questions promptly

EDUCATOR AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Nominated Supervisor/Person in Day-to-Day Charge:

- Ensure all staff understand and follow this policy
- Ensure safe sleep practices are implemented
- Monitor sleep areas for safety and hygiene
- Ensure adequate supervision during sleep and rest times
- Maintain sleep equipment in good condition
- Coordinate safe sleep training for educators
- Review and document sleep check procedures
- Respond to family concerns or questions



All Educators and Staff:

- Follow safe sleep practices at all times
- Place children on their back to sleep
- Maintain constant supervision during sleep and rest
- Conduct and document regular sleep checks
- Respond immediately to any signs of distress
- Respect each child's individual sleep and rest needs
- Communicate with families about their child's sleep
- Maintain hygiene standards for bedding and sleep areas
- Create calm and nurturing sleep environments
- Report any concerns or equipment issues

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Families are responsible for:

- Providing accurate information about their child's sleep patterns and needs
- Updating the service about any changes to sleep routines
- Providing appropriate sleepwear and comfort items (if desired)
- Labelling all bedding and comfort items
- Washing comfort items regularly at home
- Understanding and supporting the service's safe sleep practices
- Communicating any concerns about their child's sleep
- Providing Medical Management Plans for any medical conditions affecting sleep
- Working collaboratively with educators to support their child's wellbeing

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- ACECQA: Guide to the National Quality Framework
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Red Nose (formerly SIDS and Kids): Safe Sleep advice - www.rednose.org.au
- Red Nose: Six Safe Sleep recommendations



- Safe Sleep Space: www.safesleepspace.com.au
- Sleep Health Foundation: www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au
- Raising Children Network: Sleep guides - www.raisingchildren.net.au
- NSW Health: Safe Infant Sleeping Guidelines
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC): Product Safety - Cots and mattresses

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently if required due to:

- Legislative changes
- Changes in best practice or safe sleep guidelines
- Following a sleep-related incident
- Feedback from families, educators or staff
- Following regulatory assessment and rating
- Updates from Red Nose or other safe sleep authorities

Date policy was last reviewed: 05/01/2026

Date for next review: 05/01/2028

Reviewed by: Director & Staff