



## **ILLNESS & MEDICAL: DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

### **PURPOSE**

This policy provides clear guidelines for preventing, managing, and controlling infectious diseases at Essential Early Learning. We are committed to protecting the health and wellbeing of all children, educators, staff, and visitors by minimizing the spread of infectious diseases through effective hygiene practices, exclusion procedures, and communication.

Our service will:

- Implement rigorous hygiene practices to prevent the spread of infectious diseases
  - Follow evidence-based exclusion guidelines for infectious diseases
  - Notify families and relevant authorities when infectious diseases are identified
  - Maintain a clean and hygienic environment
  - Educate children about hygiene and infection control
  - Work in partnership with families to manage infectious diseases
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### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to:

- All children enrolled at the service
  - The approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and staff
  - Students on placement, volunteers and visitors
  - Families and parents/guardians
  - All situations involving infectious diseases at the service
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### **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 77: Health, hygiene and safe food practices
- Regulation 85: Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
- Regulation 86: Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
- Regulation 87: Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
- Regulation 88: Infectious diseases
- Regulation 106: Laundry and hygiene facilities
- Regulation 109: Toilet and hygiene facilities
- 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
- Element 2.1.2: Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and hazard



- Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

### NSW-Specific Legislation:

- Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)
  - Public Health Regulation 2022 (NSW)
  - Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
  - Privacy Act 1988
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## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Infectious Disease:** An illness caused by a specific infectious agent or its toxic products that can be transmitted from an infected person, animal, or reservoir to a susceptible host.

**Notifiable Disease:** An infectious disease that must be reported to NSW Health's Public Health Unit as required by law under the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW).

**Exclusion:** The period during which a child or staff member with an infectious disease must remain away from the service to prevent transmission to others.

**Outbreak:** An increase in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected. For gastroenteritis in early childhood services, this is defined as 2 or more children or staff with sudden onset of diarrhoea and/or vomiting in a 2-day period.

**Immunisation:** The process of making a person immune or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by vaccination.

**Standard Precautions:** A set of infection control practices used to prevent transmission of diseases through blood, body fluids, secretions, or excretions (excluding sweat).

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## POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. Prevention and Hygiene Practices

#### Hand Hygiene:

Hand hygiene is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. All children, educators, and staff will wash their hands:

- On arrival at the service
- Before eating or handling food
- After using the toilet or having nappies changed
- After blowing nose, coughing or sneezing
- After contact with body fluids (blood, saliva, mucus, vomit, urine, faeces)
- After handling animals or animal waste
- After outdoor play
- Before and after administering first aid or medication
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty

#### Proper Hand Washing Technique:

- Wet hands with warm running water
- Apply liquid soap
- Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds (covering all surfaces including backs of hands, between fingers, under nails)
- Rinse thoroughly under running water



- Dry hands with single-use paper towel or air dryer
- Turn off tap with paper towel (not bare hands)

#### **Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette:**

- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Use tissues to contain respiratory secretions
- Dispose of tissues in the bin immediately
- Wash hands after coughing, sneezing, or using tissues
- If no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into inner elbow (not hands)
- Children will be taught proper cough and sneeze etiquette

#### **Environmental Hygiene:**

- The service will be cleaned daily with particular attention to high-touch surfaces
- Toys and equipment will be cleaned regularly and after contamination
- Mouthed toys will be removed from use, cleaned, and disinfected before being returned
- Toilets, bathrooms, and nappy change areas will be cleaned and disinfected regularly
- Food preparation areas will be kept separate from nappy change and toileting areas
- Appropriate cleaning and disinfecting products will be used and stored safely

#### **Standard Precautions:**

Educators and staff will use standard precautions when dealing with blood and body fluids:

- Wear disposable gloves when handling blood or body fluids
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after glove use
- Clean up spills immediately using appropriate methods
- Dispose of contaminated materials in sealed plastic bags
- Handle soiled linen and clothing appropriately

## **2. Immunisation**

#### **Immunisation Requirements:**

In accordance with the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation in NSW (Public Health Act 2010), children must be:

- Fully immunised for their age according to the National Immunisation Program Schedule, OR
- On a recognised catch-up schedule, OR
- Have a medical contraindication to vaccination (certified by a medical practitioner)

#### **Documentation:**

- Families must provide an approved Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) on enrolment
- Immunisation records will be checked and updated regularly
- Families will be reminded when vaccinations are due

#### **During Disease Outbreaks:**

If a vaccine-preventable disease occurs at the service:

- Unimmunised children may be excluded for the duration of the outbreak as directed by NSW Health
- Families will be notified immediately
- NSW Health Public Health Unit will be contacted for advice (1300 066 055)

## **3. Exclusion of Sick Children and Staff**

#### **When Children Must Be Excluded:**

Children will be excluded from the service if they:



- Have a fever of 38°C or above
- Are too unwell to participate comfortably in normal activities
- Require more care than educators can provide without compromising care of other children
- Have an infectious disease requiring exclusion as per 'Staying Healthy' guidelines
- Have uncontrolled diarrhoea or vomiting
- Have unexplained rashes or skin lesions
- Have been diagnosed with a notifiable disease (until medical clearance is provided)

#### **Exclusion Guidelines:**

The service follows minimum exclusion periods as outlined in 'Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services' (6th edition, 2024) published by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

A table of common infectious diseases and exclusion periods is displayed at the service and provided to families.

#### **Return to Service:**

Children may return to the service when:

- They have been free from fever (without medication) for 24 hours
- They are well enough to participate in all normal activities
- The minimum exclusion period has been completed
- A medical clearance certificate is provided (if required for certain diseases)

#### **Staff Exclusion:**

Educators and staff with infectious diseases will be excluded according to the same guidelines as children. Staff will not attend work if they:

- Have symptoms of an infectious disease
- Are within the exclusion period for an infectious disease
- Are too unwell to perform their duties safely

## **4. Management of Infectious Diseases at the Service**

#### **When a Child Becomes Unwell:**

If a child shows signs of illness during the day, educators will:

- Assess the child's condition and comfort
- Take the child's temperature if fever is suspected
- Separate the child from other children in a comfortable, supervised area
- Contact parents/guardians immediately to arrange collection
- Provide comfort and care until parents/guardians arrive
- Complete an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record
- Clean and disinfect any areas or items the child came into contact with

#### **Isolation of Unwell Children:**

- Unwell children will be separated from other children while waiting for collection
- They will remain within sight and hearing of an educator at all times
- A comfortable, quiet space will be provided
- Educator-to-child ratios will be maintained

#### **Common Infectious Disease Management:**

##### **Gastroenteritis (Diarrhoea and Vomiting):**



- Parents will be contacted immediately to collect their child
- Child must be excluded until there has been no loose bowel motions or vomiting for 24 hours
- Enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures will be implemented
- If 2 or more children or staff have gastroenteritis in a 2-day period, NSW Health Public Health Unit will be notified (1300 066 055)

#### **Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):**

- Children will be excluded until discharge from eyes has ceased or antibiotic treatment has commenced
- Frequent hand washing will be reinforced

#### **Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease:**

- Children should be excluded until all blisters have dried
- Enhanced hand hygiene will be practiced

#### **Head Lice:**

- Children do not need to be excluded (head lice are not considered a public health risk)
- Parents will be notified confidentially and asked to treat their child
- A general notice will be sent to all families
- Information about effective treatment will be provided

## **5. Notification and Communication**

#### **Notification to Families:**

When an infectious disease is identified at the service:

- Parents/guardians of the affected child will be contacted immediately
- All families will be notified (without breaching privacy) when infectious diseases are present
- A notice will be displayed at the service entrance
- Information about the disease, symptoms, and exclusion periods will be provided
- Families will be asked to monitor their children for symptoms

#### **Notification to NSW Health Public Health Unit:**

The service will notify NSW Health Public Health Unit (1300 066 055) when:

- A notifiable disease is diagnosed (as listed in the Public Health Act 2010)
- An outbreak of gastroenteritis occurs (2 or more cases in a 2-day period)
- There is an unusual pattern of illness
- Advice is needed on managing an infectious disease situation

#### **Notifiable Diseases in NSW Include:**

- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Pertussis (Whooping cough)
- Meningococcal disease
- Hepatitis A
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
- Tuberculosis
- And others as specified in the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)

#### **Privacy and Confidentiality:**

- The identity of children with infectious diseases will be kept confidential
- General notifications will not identify specific children



- Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with Privacy Act 1988

## 6. Education and Awareness

### Children's Education:

Children will be taught about:

- Proper hand washing techniques
- Cough and sneeze etiquette
- Not sharing food, drinks, or personal items
- When to wash hands
- Why hygiene is important
- How germs spread

### Staff Education:

All educators and staff will:

- Be familiar with this policy and 'Staying Healthy' guidelines
- Participate in training on infection control and hygiene practices
- Understand standard precautions
- Know how to recognize common infectious diseases
- Understand exclusion requirements
- Be updated on changes to infectious disease guidelines

### Family Education:

Families will receive:

- A copy of this policy on enrolment
- Information about exclusion periods for common infectious diseases
- Regular updates about infectious diseases in the community
- Information about immunisation
- Resources on good hygiene practices at home

## Educator and staff responsibilities:

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

- Ensure all staff understand and follow this policy
- Monitor children and staff for signs of illness
- Make decisions about exclusion of sick children and staff
- Contact NSW Health Public Health Unit when required
- Notify families of infectious diseases at the service
- Ensure hygiene practices are maintained
- Coordinate enhanced cleaning during outbreaks
- Maintain records of infectious diseases
- Check and update immunisation records

### All Educators and Staff:

- Follow hand hygiene procedures consistently
- Model good hygiene practices
- Teach children about hygiene
- Monitor children for signs of illness
- Report any signs of infectious disease to the nominated supervisor
- Follow standard precautions when dealing with blood and body fluids



- Clean and disinfect toys and equipment regularly
- Maintain a clean and hygienic environment
- Not attend work when unwell with an infectious disease
- Complete incident reports for illness

#### **Families are responsible for:**

- Keeping their child at home when unwell
- Notifying the service if their child has an infectious disease
- Collecting their child promptly when contacted by the service
- Following exclusion periods as outlined in 'Staying Healthy' guidelines
- Providing medical clearance certificates when required
- Ensuring their child's immunisations are up to date
- Providing current immunisation documentation
- Teaching their child good hygiene practices at home
- Monitoring their child for symptoms after notification of infectious disease at service
- Communicating openly with educators about their child's health
- Seeking medical advice when their child is unwell

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### **RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Immunisation Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Food Safety Policy
- Nappy Change Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

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### **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](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): Staying Healthy - Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th edition, 2024)
- NSW Health: [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)
- NSW Health Public Health Unit: 1300 066 055
- Australian Immunisation Handbook
- Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)
- Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)
- Public Health Regulation 2022 (NSW)
- NSW Government: No Jab No Play information



## **POLICY REVIEW**

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

- Legislative changes
- Changes in best practice or 'Staying Healthy' guidelines
- Following an infectious disease outbreak
- Feedback from families, educators or staff
- Following regulatory assessment and rating
- Updates from NSW Health or NHMRC
- Changes to immunisation requirements

**Date policy was last reviewed:** 07/01/26

**Date for next review:** 07/01/28

**Reviewed by:** Director and Staff