

# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MANAGEMENT POLICY (Victoria)

(Effective from 1 October 2021)

## Introduction

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that was originally identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared that COVID-19 outbreak as a 'pandemic' - a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (effective 11 March 2020). This is mainly due to the speed and scale of transmission of the virus in countries around the world, including Australia. COVID-19 is transmitted from someone who is infected with the virus to others in close contact through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing or by contact with contaminated hands or surfaces. According to Department of Health, the time of exposure to the virus and when symptoms first occur is anywhere from 2-14 days.

Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID-19 may experience:

- o fever
- o flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue
- o shortness of breath

The [Australian Government](#) is constantly updating the current status of COVID-19 including health recommendations, travel restrictions, and a vast collection of resources and information to help people make informed decisions.

As this information is changing rapidly, our Service is monitoring health alerts and implementing measures suggested by key health experts to minimise the transmission of COVID-19.

Our Service has a range of comprehensive policies in place to guide best practice in relation to health and safety, dealing with infectious diseases and maintaining a child safe environment. Our duty of care and responsibilities to children, parents, families and all staff to provide a safe environment is of utmost importance.

The evolving nature of COVID-19 and the unprecedented steps required to protect our community as recommended by the Australian Government, has resulted in the development of a specific policy to assist our Service manage this pandemic.

This policy will change as required to ensure the protective measures against COVID-19 as advised by our government are implemented by our Service.

[COVID-19 information for the early childhood education and care sector](#)

see: [Current COVIDSafe Setting early childhood education and care services](#) for Victorian Services.

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
93	Administration of medication
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

## RELATED POLICIES

Control of Infectious Diseases Policy Immunisation Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy Medical Conditions Policy	Nappy Change and Toileting Policy Payment of Fees Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Physical Environment Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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## PURPOSE

Our Service will minimise our staff and children’s exposure to COVID-19 by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the Australian Government- Department of Health and Department of Health to slow the spread of the virus. We will implement practices that help to reduce the transmission of the virus including the exclusion of any person (child, educator, staff, parent, visitor, or volunteer) that is suspected or has tested positive to having COVID-19. Our Service will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures and increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high touch areas as per SafeWork Australia recommendations.

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government, Department of Health and state Ministry of Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Federal Government Department of Health will be strictly adhered to at all times.

Our Service has implemented a [COVIDSafe Plan](#) as mandated by the Victorian Government. This plan will be revised regularly to reflect any changes in requirements by the Government to protect our workplace and all employees, children and visitors.



### SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus by implementing recommendations provided by the [Australian Government- Department of Health](#) and Safe Work Australia.

Our Service implements procedures as stated in the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (Fifth Edition) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council as part of our day-to-day operation of the Service.

We are guided by explicit decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of any infectious disease by the *Australian Government- Department of Health* and local Public Health Units in our jurisdiction under the Public Health Act. COVID-19 is a notifiable condition in all states and territories of Australia.

The Department of Health may contact the Approved Provider in the event of any child, educator, staff

member or visitor who has attended our Service and has tested positive to COVID-19. Contact tracing will be conducted by the DHHS and further advice provided.

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line
<b>1800 020 080</b> Call 131 450 for translating and interpreting service
24/7 Coronavirus Hotline <b>1800 675 398</b>
Department of Health <b>1300 651 160</b>
Health Direct <b>1800 022 222</b>
COVID-19 Hotline Department of Education and Training (DET) <b>1800 338 663</b>
WorkSafe Victoria 13 23 60

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Service policies:

- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Interactions with Children, Families and staff Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy

## Minimising the transmission of COVID-19

### Risk Management

Our Service has effective and systematic risk management processes in place to identify any possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices related to COVID-19. Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised these risks as is reasonably practicable. Control measures are reviewed in consultation with staff members. Due to the constant changes in managing our Service during the pandemic, our approach to risk management is ongoing and fluid. Effective 6 April 2020 the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee](#) made recommendations to the general public to help manage the spread of COVID-19. These measures include implementing good hygiene, self-isolation and social distancing.

Amendments to this statement have been updated regularly and include recommendations for risk mitigation measures such as:

- the mandatory use of electronic record keeping of all parents and visitors to our Service using the Services Victoria QR Code (24 June 2021)
- adhering to density limits when required ([Department of Education and Training website](#))
- wearing of [face masks](#) [see Face Mask section]
- ensuring social distancing measures whenever possible
- exclusion of unwell staff, children and visitors
- enhanced personal hygiene for children, staff and parents
- full adherence to the NHMRC childcare cleaning guidelines and cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces at least twice daily, washing and laundering play items and toys
- providing information and posters about [COVID-19 vaccination roll out](#)
- requiring all educators and staff who work in early childhood education and care (ECEC) including Out of School hours care (OSHC) services, to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by 29 November 2021 unless a medical exemption applies
- recommending influenza vaccination for children, staff and parents.

Parents of children with a current Asthma Action Plan are advised to update this if needed in consultation with their child's health care professional. Updated plans should be provided to management for distribution to relevant staff members. (Asthma Australia).

Staff with compromised immune systems are also requested to seek medical advice whilst working in early education and care during the pandemic. The AHPPC reiterates the need to practise physical distancing, practise good cough and hygiene and consider downloading the COVIDSafe app.

[\(AHPPC Statement 6 July 2020\)](#)

### Infection Control Training

Our staff are committed to assist in infection prevention controls and have completed [COVID-19 infection control training](#).

We strongly recommend that all staff and families receive the COVID-19 vaccination as their eligibility to receive the vaccine becomes available. Seasonal influenza vaccinations are recommended for staff, parents and children.

see: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/book-your-vaccine-appointment>

### Hygiene practices

Our Service will ensure [signs and posters](#) remind employees and visitors of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread including hand washing and hand rub procedures and information about COVID-19. <https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare>

These will also be communicated to families through email, newsletters and social media.. If parents decide to apply this to their child, they must supervise the child to avoid rubbing it into their eyes or a child swallowing the gel/liquid. Our Service will supply disposable tissues and have bins available with plastic liners available in several locations for disposing used items.

Information provided to families may include:

- symptoms of COVID-19
- transmission of the virus
- self-isolation and exclusion
- prevention strategies- including hand hygiene and self-isolation
- contact details for health assistance
- CCS and ACCS information
- Public Health Orders
- Wearing of face coverings
- COVID-19 Vaccination rollout

**The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, families and visitors will comply with the following:**

### **Exclusion/ Self-isolation/ Self-quarantine**

Our Service has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of employees, children and visitors in our workplace, so far as reasonably practicable. We may therefore collect information from visitors about their potential exposure to COVID-19 in order to identify, assess and control risks of infection in line with Victorian Government guidelines. Information collected will only be viewed by designated staff members (Centre Manager or PMC) and will be stored securely. To comply with privacy laws, personal information will only be disclosed on a 'need to know' basis to the Public Health Unit to prevent and manage COVID-19 if required. (ACTU Privacy at work).

[Risk mitigation strategies may change due to the fluid nature of the Coronavirus pandemic. Services must regularly check the Victorian Department of Education and Training Coronavirus advice page for up-to-date information and make adjustments as required. The following are some strategies that have been implemented during the pandemic. They may not be current when lockdowns are announced by the Victorian Government]

- all parents and carers, visitors including contractors, external staff and building and maintenance staff are required to use the Victorian Government QR Code Service for electronic record keeping- (staff and children are exempt)
- any person visiting our Service- including families 'dropping off' children, must sign the Parent/Visitor Health Declaration confirming that they have not come into *close contact* with anyone with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis in the past 7 days
- effective 28 March 2020, **any person** entering Australia from any destination will be required to undertake 14-day quarantine at designated facilities (Australian Government)
- any person who has been in close contact with someone who has a positive diagnosis must self-isolate for 7 days (see: [Quarantine for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#))
- household members of a person who has a confirmed case (including children) of COVID-19 must also be isolated from the childcare Service and general public until they receive clearance from the Department of Health ([close contact of a person diagnosed with COVID-19](#))
- the Department of Health will provide further information on a case-by-case basis as to the length and place of isolation. (see: [COVID-19 self-isolation](#))
- in the event of a staff member, parent, child or visitor being diagnosed with COVID-19 the Department of Health will conduct contact tracing and provide further advice to our Service if required
- any person (employee, enrolled child, parent, caregiver, visitor or contractor) who is displaying symptoms such as: **fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath**, should be tested either by visiting a free COVID-19 respiratory clinic or contacting their GP to arrange a test for COVID- 19 and not attend our Service **under any circumstance**.

### Implement effective hygiene measures

The national campaign *Help Stop The Spread and Stay Healthy*, launched by the Australian Government has emphasised that effective handwashing is a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds whenever you cough, sneeze or blow your nose, prepare food or eat, touch your face or use the toilet is recommended.

Our Service will adhere to National Regulation requirements and Government guidelines to ensure all educators, children, families and visitors to the Service implement best practice. We are guided by the recommendations and current health advice by the Victorian Government for early childhood education- <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-education-and-care>

## Face coverings

Parents and carers, and any person aged 12 and over must wear a fitted face mask during drop-off and pick-up times. Face masks must be worn in public indoor and outdoor spaces, unless there is a lawful reason not to. Face masks must be carried at all times.

Educators and carers working in early childhood are not required to wear a mask whilst educating and caring for children, but those who wish to do so, can.

Staff must wear face coverings whilst completing other duties in within the ECEC service.

A person who has a medical condition, disability or a mental health condition is not required to wear a mask or face covering. Our Service will educate staff on how to wear a face covering correctly and other risk mitigation strategies to ensure the face covering does not become contaminated.

[Face coverings: whole of Victoria](#)

Our Service will ensure:

- Service Victoria QR Code check-ins are used by all parents/carers and visitors (this includes contractors and external staff)
- a workplace attendance register is maintained for all staff, children and visitors at all times (including contact phone numbers) as per National Regulations
- all employees, parents, children and visitors must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser provided upon arrival to the Service
- hands must be thoroughly dried using disposal paper and disposed of in the bin provided
- disposable tissues must be used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use
- hands must be washed following the use of tissues
- hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- cough and sneeze etiquette must be used- cover your cough and sneeze with your hand or elbow
- children are supervised when washing hands
- educators and staff must adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures
- educators will wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitiser, before wearing gloves and wash their hands after wearing gloves
- educators and staff must adhere to our *strict* cleaning and disinfecting practices on surfaces and equipment (such as toys, puzzles, outdoor toys, bedding, playdough etc) as per *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* recommendations
- staff will maintain a cleaning register of all surfaces and equipment conducted



- equipment, resources and surfaces including high-touch surfaces- taps, door handles, light switches, nappy change areas, toys, keyboards and laptops/iPads will be cleaned more frequently as required using detergent and water followed by disinfectant
- cleaning contractors hygienically clean the Service to ensure risk of contamination is removed as per [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#) or [Cleaning and disinfecting after a confirmed case of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) factsheet](#)
- washroom facilities for employees have adequate supplies of soap, toilet paper and alcohol-based sanitiser

NOTE: According to the World Health Organisation, COVID-19 may survive on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days.  
(March 14 2020)

### Social/Physical distancing in childcare

Social or physical distancing is important because COVID-19 is most likely spread from person-to-person through close contact with a person while they are infectious, close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes or from touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection and then touching your nose or mouth. (source: Australian Government Department of Health. Coronavirus disease)

Social or physical distancing in early childhood education and care is not feasible for educators to perform their job, however we will implement measures to minimise the risk of exposure as *reasonably practicable*.

Early Childhood Education and Care services in Victoria may be subject to restrictions on how many people (adults or children) can be on the premises at one time. Our Service will apply a density limit of one person per four square metres in areas accessible to families and visitors (reception/foyer areas) and children's rooms (if these are open to visitors).

Our Service will encourage educators to apply physical distancing measures where possible and not gather in groups or encourage groups of parents to congregate. (Worksafe Victoria, AHPPC)

### To reduce the spread of COVID-19 parents are reminded of the following:

- electronic record keeping is mandatory using Services Victoria QR Code for all parents and carers (effective 25 June 2021)
- if your child is sick, do not send them to our Service
- do not visit our Service if you or another family member is unwell
- sanitise your hands at regular intervals throughout the day

- avoid physical contact with other people who may be sick- such as older people and people with existing health conditions
- clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly (door handles, car seats, mobile phone, toys, dummies)
- promote strictest hygiene measures when preparing food at home and at the Service
- promote the importance of families and children over the age of 12 years to receive their COVID-19 vaccine

### To minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 our Service will:

- undertake a risk assessment to identify potential risks and mitigate with consideration risks to children and staff
- revisit the risk assessment whenever new risks or potential risks are identified and adjust our management plan
- establish an external area for parents/carers to drop off and pick up their child/ren
- ensure parents and carers wear a face mask
- ensure all visitors, parents and carers check in to our Service using the Services Victoria QR Code
- display QR code posters in various locations to avoid congregations of parents at peak times of the day (e.g., foyer, building, fence line)
- ensure parents and carers keep at least 1.5metres distance from others wherever possible
- provide an alternative check in 'kiosk' for persons who do not have smartphones or are otherwise unable to use the QR Code record
- restrict the number of visitors to our Service (including students, delivery of goods)
- restrict the number of family members visiting our Service- (subject to physical distancing between adults)- only applicable in regional areas
- restrict the number of educators using the staff room at any one time
- encourage staff to take breaks and eat lunch outside if possible
- reduce mixing of children by separating cohorts (including staggering meals and play times)
- where possible, outdoor play will be promoted within our Service to provide children with additional personal space
- large groups will be monitored to provide flexible learning to ensure groups are smaller in both the indoor and outdoor environment
- mixing of staff and children between rooms should be avoided where possible
- office staff should, where reasonable practical use separate areas or separate themselves as much as possible from one another

- increase ventilation and fresh air flow into the indoor spaces within the Service
- switch air handling units with central recirculation to 100% outdoor air to increase ventilation
- ensure air conditioners and/or heaters are well maintained
- ensure cots, mats, cushions, highchairs etc are positioned at least 1.5 metres apart
- seat children at opposite ends of a table when playing and eating
- staff should serve children food and avoid children to self-serve from a shared plate
- avoid any situation when children are required to queue- waiting their turn to use bathroom for handwashing or toileting, waiting their turn to use a piece of equipment etc.
- contact parents of children who have chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression as they may be at an increased risk of disease and require additional support/care

### Suspected cases of COVID-19 at our Service

As per our *Control Infectious Diseases Policy* and *Incident, Injury Trauma Illness Policy* we reserve the right to refuse a child into care if they:

- are unwell and unable to participate in normal activities or require additional attention
- have had a temperature/fever, or vomiting in the last 24 hours
- have had diarrhoea in the last 48 hours
- have been given medication for a temperature prior to arriving at the Service
- have started a course of anti-biotics in the last 24 hours

If a child becomes ill whilst at the Service, educators/staff will respond to their individual symptoms of illness and provide comfort and care. The child will be cared for in an area that is separated from other children in the service to await pick up from their parent/carer.

Educators will take the child's temperature. If the temperature is above 37.5°C parents will be contacted immediately and required to collect their child within 30 minutes. If they are unable to collect their child, an emergency contact person/authorised nominee will be contacted, and they must collect your child within 30 minutes. [DHHS (Vic) classifies a fever as temperature reading at or above 37.5°C]

**Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)** CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units  
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm>

Educators will attempt to lower the child's temperature by:

- removing excessive clothing (shoes, socks, jumpers)
- encourage the child to take small sips of water
- move the child to a quiet area where they can rest whilst being supervised

Educators will wear disposable gloves and a face mask to avoid possible contamination. All items/resources touched by the child will be cleaned and disinfected to avoid possible cross contamination.

Educators will keep accurate records of the child's temperature, time taken, time parent/s were contacted, staff member's name and time of collection.

All information will be recorded in our *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness* Record. Parents will be required to sign this record upon collection of their child.

Parents are reminded to ensure their contact details are current and emergency contact details are updated if required.

Our Service also reserves the right to prevent employees, parents, family members or visitors to enter our premises if the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor suspects instances of COVID-19 due to symptoms being displayed.

### Notification

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor is mandated by law to notify the Department of Health (DH) on **1300 651 160** of any confirmed case of COVID-19. In addition, the Approved Provider must also notify the Department of Education's Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) through the National Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) or call 1300 307 415.

Effective 28 July 2020, all services in Victoria must notify WorkSafe within 48 hours if an employer becomes aware that an employee or independent contractor has received a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 and has attended the workplace within the infectious period (14 days prior to receiving the confirmed diagnosis and until clearance from isolation has been received). Failing to notify WorkSafe may result in a significant fine.

WorkSafe – 13 23 60 (<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/report-confirmed-positive-case-covid-19>)

Management reserves the right to request employees to self-isolate if they suspect they have come into contact with someone who has a confirmed COVID-19 infection. At all times, privacy laws must be adhered to and information about individuals must not be shared without permission.

### Talking to children about COVID-19

As per our *Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy*, our Service is committed to maintaining positive interactions and relationships with children and their families. Information provided to children

about COVID-19 will be age appropriate and sensitive to their emotional wellbeing. Educators will both acknowledge children's concerns and be open to discussions about COVID-19.

Educators will inform children about the virus and emphasise preventative measures such as handwashing, use of tissues, cough and sneeze techniques and limiting touching other children's faces.

Posters to demonstrate correct handwashing methods will be referred to and educators will model techniques.

Children's emotional well-being will be closely monitored by all educators and staff and any concerns communicated with parents and families. Children's questions will be respected and supported.

Staff will be supported in professional learning to help children deal with trauma related to COVID-19 through resources, webinars and online modules. (Emerging Minds, beYou)

In the event of the Service being closed as a precaution to limit the spread of the virus, information will be provided to parents/families to help explain the situation to young children.

### Payment of Fees (Child Care Subsidy- CCS)

As per our *Payment of Fees Policy*, fees are payable in advance of your child's attendance. CCS hourly rate caps will be adjusted from 12 July 2021. see: [Child Care Subsidy rates](#). Children must continue to meet immunisation requirements.

### Waiving of gap fees

Effective 13 August 2021, services located in a [Commonwealth-declared COVID-19 Hotspot](#) that are subject to stay-at-home orders can waive gap-fees for families of children that do not attend early childhood education and care services. The gap fee is the difference between the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) the Government pays to a service and the remaining fee paid by the family. Gap fees may be waived if:

- the Commonwealth Declared Hotspot must run for more than seven days (Gap fees can be waived from day eight) or
- when the Commonwealth Declared Hotspot runs for seven days or fewer, but the state or territory has limited who can access childcare.

Check the [Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment website](#) for further information regarding the Local Government Areas subjected to stay at home orders.

Our Service will waive any gap fees during the lockdown period as directed from the government, and health department. This decision will be in place while the stay-at-home orders are in place but is not retrospective.

We request families notify the Service at least 2 days in advance if their child/ren will not be attending during the lockdown period for the Service to manage staffing requirements.

Families will be required to request in writing that they wish to have their gap-fee waived during the lockdown period. Where families have opted to have the gap-fee waived and the child/ren does not attend due to a COVID-19 related reason, any sessions of care will be submitted as an absence.

Gap fees will NOT be waived if a family chooses to cease enrolment at our Service.

Families can continue to receive CCS for 42 absence days within each financial year.

### Child Care Safety Net- Additional Child Care Subsidy (Temporary Financial Hardship)

The Child Care Safety Net gives families and services extra support if they are vulnerable or disadvantaged or located in a regional or remote community. Families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) (ACCS) due to temporary financial hardship, such as loss of income and be entitled to access up to 100 hours of subsidised childcare per fortnight for up to 13 weeks. Families will need to apply for ACCS (Temporary Financial hardship) and update their activity levels through [myGov](#). ACCS is also available for families to support their children's safety and wellbeing, for grandparents who care for their grandchildren and parents transitioning from welfare to work.

### Allowable Absences from childcare/COVID-19 Lockdowns

Allowable absences have been reset for the 2021/22 financial year to 42 days.

Services in a Commonwealth-declared COVID-19 hotspot can access additional allowable absences if the declaration extends for more than seven days. Absences will be available from the first day of the hotspot declaration until the end of the declaration. [see: [Absences](#) updated 5 August 2021]

### What happens if our Service is forced to close?

The decision to close our Service will be made, and advised, by the DHHS. This may be due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our Service community.

Should this occur, all families will be notified immediately via email and/or phone. Contact tracing may be conducted by our Service and the DHHS. It is mandated that all families and visitors use the Victoria Government QR Code Service to check in. Educators, staff and children must be signed in and out each day as per National Regulations.

The Approved Provider must notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) within 24 hours of any closure via the [NQA IT System](#), WorkSafe and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE). In addition, Services that need to temporarily close for COVID-19 related reasons must now also report closures (and re-openings) via your third party software or the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#).

Victoria: [CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au)

Our Service will receive a 'deep clean' to ensure all areas are cleaned and disinfected.

We will continue to keep families informed as to when we are expected to re-open as advised by the DHHS.

### Waiving of gap fees

If our Service is advised or directed to close on public health advice as a result of COVID-19, out of pocket fees- Gap Fees- **will** be waived. (Effective 30 June 2021 until 31 December 2021).

### Staff entitlements if sick or suspected to have COVID-19

Under workplace health and safety laws, our Service must ensure the health and safety of all employees.

### Confirmed COVID-19

If an educator or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19, they are unable to attend the workplace and cannot return to work until they have completed a period of self-isolation of at least 14 days and receive a negative test result. Employees must make a declaration that they are *fit for work* and have no symptoms of COVID-19 for the past 72 hours (3 days). A doctor's certificate or clearance is not required. Full and part-time employees who cannot attend work due to illness can take paid sick leave. Employees who have no leave entitlements remaining may be eligible to apply for Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.

As per our privacy obligations under the *Privacy Act*, the identity of a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 will only be shared with Department of Health and/or on a strictly 'need to know' basis. Access to personal or medical information can only be shared with the consent of the employee.

### Caring for a family member or emergency

If an employee cannot attend work due to caring for a family member due to COVID-19, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave. Casual employees are eligible to have 2 days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. See [Fair Work Act](#) for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees. Reasonable evidence is required to justify the absence.

### Self-isolation due to travel or returning from interstate where borders are closed

As per Australian Government's new measures for COVID-19 effective 28 March 2020, any person returning from overseas will be mandated to isolate in a designated facility. The employee **is not entitled** to be paid (unless they use paid leave entitlements- annual leave.) Employees are not entitled to use personal sick leave as they are not 'sick'. Employers may choose to adopt an option to satisfy both parties. (See: [Australian Business Lawyers and Advisors](#) for further information)

Similarly, any person required to self-isolate due to travel restrictions within Australia are not entitled to be paid. Employees may be eligible to access up to 2 weeks [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#).

### Self-Isolation Unpaid Pandemic Leave

Effective 8 April 2020, employees who are required to self-isolate by government or medical authorities or acting on advice of a medical practitioner may access unpaid [pandemic leave](#). (Extended until 31 December 2021). The agreement has to be in writing and the employer needs to keep it as a record.

This leave provides employees with:

- 2 weeks of unpaid pandemic leave
- the ability to take twice as much annual leave at half their normal pay if their employer agrees.

### Paid pandemic leave (Victorian services only)

Should an employee be instructed by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to self-isolate or quarantine at home or are caring for someone with COVID-19 and have no entitlements remaining, they may be eligible for Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment (\$1500).

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment-victoria/who-can-get-it>

### Self-isolation as a precaution

If an employee wants to stay home as a precaution of contracting COVID-19 they **may negotiate** to take unpaid leave, annual leave or long service leave with Management. Victorian workers can also apply for a \$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Test Isolation Payment](#).

### Waivers

In the event of staff members requiring to self-isolate due to possible infection of COVID-19, the Approved Provider will apply to the Regulatory Authority for waivers for qualifications and/or ratios to



minimise disruptions to our provision of care. (Payment for waivers must be paid, however will be reimbursed by the regulatory authority). see: [NGA ITS Portal Emergency Management Help Guide](#)

### Communicating with families

Our Service will establish continue regular communication channels with families and share information about COVID-19 as required including mandatory requirements such as:

- wearing of face masks
- QR code check in
- Mandated COVID-19 vaccinations for all educators and staff in Early Childhood Education and Care settings- (including OSHC and Family Day Care)

Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the necessity of self-isolation for some staff members, our Service will endeavour to inform parents and families of any staff changes on a daily basis.

Staff who have approved leave will be replaced with casual staff and families will be informed as per our usual practices to ensure continuity of care where possible.

Our risk mitigation measures will change as per guidelines from DHHS and the Chief Health Officer. Any changes to our current organisational plans will be communicated clearly with families.

### Caring for our community

We understand that the outbreak of COVID-19 and the constant amount of information received through the media may be very stressful to young children and parents. The anxiety about this virus may be overwhelming and cause fear and anxiety to some people, especially children.

Our Service is committed to continue to provide quality education and care to all children and support families responsibly during this unprecedented challenge with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Knowing how to look after yourself, and others is very important during this crisis. We will promote a safe and supportive environment by:

- reassuring children they are safe
- acknowledging and listening to children's questions
- promoting and implementing hygiene routines for handwashing and cough and sneezing
- keeping regular and familiar routines within our Service
- ensuring children eat well throughout the day
- engaging children in play, games and other physical activities
- being alert to children's level of anxiety and provide quiet and relaxing activities
- ensuring children are provided with rest and sleep when needed

- o providing information to families and support services as required

Dr Michelle Dickinson- Video for kids about COVID-19

<https://youtu.be/OPsY-jLqaXM>

Emerging Minds- Talking to Children about Natural Disasters, Traumatic Events or Worries About the Future

<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/supporting-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/>

Play School- Hello Friends! (A COVID-19 Special)

<https://www.abc.net.au/abckids/shows/play-school/covid-19/12114308>

[UNICEF- How to talk to your child about COVID-19](#)

In Home Care Support Agency resources – [Talking to children about COVID-19](#)

Asthma Australia- [What does Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) mean for people with Asthma](#)

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this 'draft' policy is based on current information from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Government- The Treasury, Family Assistance Law and Fairwork Ombudsmen (1<sup>st</sup> October 2021).

Services are required to make changes to this policy to reflect their decisions related to temperature testing of children/staff, restricting entry to service premise by parents/families, discouraging use of public transport by staff and wearing of face masks within the early education and care service if not mandated by Department of Health (DH).

## More information and resources

[Child Care Centre Desktop- COVID-19 Support Module and Resources-available on our home page](#)

[Australian Business Lawyers & Advisors](#)

[Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment- absences from child care due to local emergency](#)

[Beyond Blue Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supporting educators, children and young people](#)

[CCS Helpdesk 1300 667 276](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources Australian Government](#)

[COVID-19 Infection control training](#)

[Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit](#)

[Fairwork Australia- Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)

[Healthdirect Coronavirus hub](#)

[Home Isolation Information](#)

[Information for people with a suspected case](#)

[Information for employers](#)

[Information on Social distancing](#)

[Local state and territory health departments](#)

[Raising Children](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

[Victoria State Government Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for early childhood services](#)

Victoria Department of Education and Training [Health and safety advice for early childhood education and care services in the context of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Victoria Department of Education and Training Coronavirus: Early Childhood Education and Care Services Initial Closure Communications [Communication Pack](#)

## Posters and Visuals

[COVID-19 coronavirus in pictures](#)

[Manuela Moina- Children's book- "Hello! I am the Coronavirus"](#)

[Simple Steps To Help Stop The Spread Poster](#)

[Poster for service entrance \(pdf - 42.94kb\)](#)

[Poster for staff \(pdf - 79.86kb\)](#)

[Poster for families \(pdf - 54.42kb\)](#)

[When to use a face covering \(pdf - 31.73kb\)](#)

[Are you wearing your mask correctly? \(pdf - 31.14kb\)](#)

## State and Territory specific information

[ACT Health- Latest information about COVID-19](#)

[NSW Health alert COVID 19](#)

[Northern Territory Government Department of Health](#)

[Queensland Health – Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[SA Health – Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Tasmanian Government Department of Health – Coronavirus](#)

[Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Western Australian Government Department of Health – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

## Source

Australian Council of Trade Unions Coronavirus (COVID-19) Privacy at work <https://www.actu.org.au/coronavirus>

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Health *Health Topics* [Health Topics Coronavirus COVID-19](#)

Australian Government Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for travellers

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>

Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman *Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws* (updated 13 March

2020) <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Australian Government Department of Health  
 Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).  
 Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020)  
 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.*  
*Public Health Act 2010*  
*Public Health Amendment Act 2017*  
 Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria  
 The Australian Parenting website Raisingchildren <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia>  
 Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).  
 Safe Work Australia (2020)

## REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	Nikia Nankervis	Centre Manager	15/12/2021
POLICY REVIEWED	OCTOBER 2021	NEXT REVIEW DATE	As required
UPDATED 10 AUGUST 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addition of mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for all ECEC educators and staff by 29 November 2021</li> <li>new and enhanced COVIDSafe practices added to existing policy</li> </ul>		
AUGUST 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updates to adhere to new restrictions for Victoria (5 August 2021) [face masks, density limits, operational advice]</li> <li>Broken links to DESE/ Department of Education Victoria repaired</li> <li>Allowable Absences for 2021/22 updated</li> <li>Gap fee waiver information added</li> <li>sources checked for currency</li> </ul>		
JUNE 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>updates from DHS- re: CovidSafe settings</li> <li>mandatory QR code check in for parents/carers and visitors at all ECE services</li> <li>removed temperature testing for Victorian ECE services</li> <li>mandatory mask wearing for parents/carers for pick up/drop off</li> <li>mandatory mask wearing whilst indoors for all persons over age of 12 (educators when teaching and learning are exempt)</li> <li>information related to COVID-19 vaccinations added</li> <li>extension of gap fee waiving- 31 Dec 21</li> <li>extension of Pandemic Leave- 31 Dec 21</li> <li>allowable absences extended until 30 Jun 2021</li> <li>links checked for currency and edited where required</li> <li>removed references to recovery package, activity test details for CCS</li> </ul>		
NOVEMBER 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>updates including Last Step for reopening road map (22 November)</li> <li>extension of changes to Activity Test</li> <li>extension of Pandemic Leave</li> <li>Information about Test Isolation payment added</li> <li>added information about Recovery Package</li> <li>funding for sessional Kindergarten programs added</li> <li>Deleted information related to Transition Payment/ Leave</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional absence allowance for services in Victoria added</li> <li>• Sources checked and edited where needed</li> </ul>
UPDATED 13 AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation of COVIDSafe Plan added</li> <li>• Workplace attendance register</li> <li>• Permitted Worker Scheme (Victorian services only)</li> <li>• Additional allowable absences (Victorian services only- Stage 3 &amp; 4)</li> <li>• Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment (Victorian services only)</li> <li>• Coronavirus isolation payment (Victorian services only)</li> <li>• Additional viability support payment for OSHC (Victorian services only)</li> </ul>
UPDATED 31 JULY 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FOR VICTORIAN SERVICES ONLY</b></li> <li>• mandated wearing of face covering from 2 August 2020</li> <li>• Mandatory notification to WorkSafe Victoria re confirmed COVID-19 case in workplace</li> <li>• Additional posters for Victorian Services- use of masks</li> </ul>