

Children's Services

Responding to COVID-19 Policy

Rationale

Woden Community Service (WCS) is committed to providing a safe environment to its employees and service users. WCS Children's Services will continue to offer education and care services as long as directed to do so by relevant authorities (ACT Health Directorate, ACT Education Directorate and ACT Children's Education and Care Assurance). Educators will take steps to minimise the risk of exposure for children, families, staff and visitors to COVID-19 as far as reasonably practicable.

Aim

To minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in our services. Educators together with the children and families will identify risks and where possible eliminate or minimise those risks in accordance with guidelines and recommended practices.

Strategies to minimise risk

Physical distancing

Limiting physical proximity between people to at least 1.5m is one of the most effective ways to limit the spread of COVID-19. Due to the nature of the service, educators will continue to have close/physical contact with children who need comfort or support, but steps are in place to minimise risks of exposure to COVID-19. Practical measures implemented to encourage physical distancing include:

- Signage is displayed reminding visitors to distance themselves.
- Educators, children and families are reminded to physically distance from each other when possible and explained the reasons for this.
- Children are encouraged to play outdoors.
- Progressive meal times will be considered to allow for more space and time between children. Plates and food are not shared.
- The number of visitors to the service is limited.
- Lockdown practice may be modified, strategies are discussed with children in smaller groups and discussion is documented.
- Educators are encouraged to take breaks away from the children and other staff. The times for breaks are staggered.

Health and hygiene

Child hygiene

Children will be reminded to:

- Wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when they arrive at the service, before eating, and when changing activities. Educators will supervise children washing their hands, and support them to do this effectively. Hand sanitiser is used when handwashing is not practicable.
- Avoid touching their faces.
- Use hand sanitiser to clean hands at regular intervals.

- Cough or sneeze into a flexed elbow or cover mouth with a tissue. Tissue must be thrown straight in the bin. Hands must be cleaned with alcohol-based rub or soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Physically distance and avoid close contact with other children and educators as much as possible.
- Stay home if sick.
- Stay home if in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and quarantine for 14 days after the last contact with the case in their infectious period.

Educator health and hygiene

It is strongly recommended that all educators be vaccinated against influenza. WCS will be subsidising the cost of flu injections for all staff. Educators will practise and model good hygiene. They will:

- Wash hands regularly and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Intentionally teach children handwashing techniques and personal hygiene strategies.
- Apply an alcohol based hand sanitizer between activities.
- Use single-use disposable gloves for food preparation, cleaning and other tasks.
- Avoid touching mouth, nose and eyes.
- Limit contact with others where possible and comply with physical distancing when possible or practical.
- Cover mouth while coughing or sneezing, by either coughing into a flexed elbow, or into a tissue which is immediately thrown in the bin. Hands must be cleaned with alcohol-based rub or soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Stay home if sick.
- Stay home if in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and quarantine for 14 days after the last contact with the case in their infectious period.
- Make sure an adequate supply of soap, hand sanitizer and tissues are available to educators, children and visitors.

Environmental hygiene and cleaning

The amount of time the COVID-19 virus remains on inanimate objects and surfaces varies. Cleaning is one way to remove the virus that causes COVID-19. The service will:

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as tables, chairs, toys, tablets/iPads, phones etc. using appropriate detergent or disinfectant solutions.
- During periods of active cases within the Canberra region, limit experiences where children will share resources that cannot be easily cleaned e.g. playdough.
- Adhere to strict hygiene practices during food preparation. Gloves are worn and thrown out immediately after use.
- During a Covid-19 outbreak, children do not help with food preparation or washing up procedures, unless taking part in a supervised cooking experience where children are cooking for themselves using their own ingredients to avoid cross contamination while being closely supervised by an educator.

- Check washroom facilities for soap and toilet paper, and restock these as needed.
- Ensure daily cleaning is carried out by contracted cleaners.

Restrictions in place

The following people will not be permitted to enter the service, including educators and family members:

- People who have returned from overseas in the last 14 days.
- People who have come in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days, including contact 24 hours prior to the person showing symptoms.
- People with fever or symptoms of acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath).

Steps in case of a confirmed COVID-19 case

WCS Children's Services will remain operational unless advice is received from the ACT Health or Education Directorate. If a service closes because of a confirmed COVID-19 case on the premises, or as a precaution, the service will meet their infectious disease and reporting responsibilities.

- The service will make sure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread at the service.
- The Approved Provider (WCS) will ensure that a parent/guardian or an authorised emergency contact of each child being educated and cared for is notified of the occurrence as soon as practicable.
- The service will follow directions from ACT Health Directorate regarding cleaning of the premises.
- The service and Approved Provider will notify Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA) and the ACT Health Directorate's Communicable Disease Control Unit on 02 5124 9213.
- The service will submit a notification to CECA using the National Agenda IT System (NQAITS) to meet notification requirements in addition to contacting CECA on 02 6207 1114 or email CECA@act.gov.au.
- The service will re-open only after approval from the authorities has been given.

Responsibilities of parents/guardians

- Make sure children wash hands as they arrive at the service.
- Remind children about personal hygiene (hand washing, coughing) and physical distancing.
- Keep unwell children away from the service.
- Remain away from the service when unwell.
- Do not attend the service for 14 days after returning from overseas.
- Do not attend the service for 14 days after being in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Inform the service if the child or anyone who collects them has been in close contact with someone who has been confirmed as having COVID-19.

Links to Education and Care Services National regulations 2010, National Quality Standard 2018

Regs	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
	161	Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record
	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record

QA	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
	2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
	2.2.2	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
	6.1.3	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
	7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

Sources and further reading

- Safe Work Australia – Early Education COVID-19 information: https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/early_childhood_care_minimising_the_risk_of_exposure_to_covid-19.pdf
- ACT Education Directorate – Early Childhood COVID-19 information: https://www.education.act.gov.au/early-childhood/information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-for-early-childhood/_nocache
- ACT Health: <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>
- Staying Healthy in Childcare: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1>
- Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC): <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-coronavirus-covid-19-statement-on-3-april-2020>

Current version

Service line Service area	Children's Services	Version	1.2
Process owner	Director, Children, Youth and Family	Date of issue	November 2020
Approved by	Kate West	Scheduled review date	November 2021

Modification history (including current version)

Version	Date	Author	Approved by	Description of changes
1.0	Feb 2020	Krysta Cordina	Kate West	New policy statement
1.1	May 2020	Krysta Cordina	Kate West	Lifting of restrictions to allow for incursions and training
1.2	Nov 2020	Krysta Cordina	Kate West	Lifting of more restrictions – changes to lockdown/evacuation procedures, use of resources, cooking activities

