

Children's Services

Responding to a Pandemic

Infection control during COVID-19 – Procedure

Statement

Woden Community Service (WCS) will ensure best practice is implemented to protect each Children's Service community during the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.

Purpose

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. All procedures are based on current ACT Health advice.

Scope

This procedure applies to all WCS Children's Services staff, including educators, volunteers and students on placement. References to educators in this document apply to all staff employed to work with children on a permanent, contract or casual basis.

This procedure applies to all children who attend a WCS Children's Service as well their parents, guardians and carers.

Procedure

Protecting children and educators

Ventilation

- Ventilation needs of the service are discussed with the owner or manager of the building and procedures are developed.
- Windows and doors are opened to promote air flow where possible and safe to do so, balanced against temperature and supervision considerations.
- Outdoor play spaces will be utilised where possible.

Vaccination

- Educators will comply with health directions and government mandate requirements for COVID-19 vaccinations.
- WCS will conduct site level monitoring of staff vaccination rates to ensure the safety of all staff and children.
- WCS will collect evidence of COVID-19 vaccination status of Children's Services staff as required.

Supplies

- The service will check supplies of all essential PPE and general hygiene supplies each day. This includes but is not limited to – facemasks, gloves, thermometers, sanitizer, cleaning materials, antibacterial cleaning products, disinfectant and detergent.
- Bathrooms and washroom facilities are checked for adequate supplies of soap and paper towel and restocked as needed.
- The service will endeavour to source supplies in a timely manner to ensure adequate supplies are available every day.

Adequate cleaning

- High traffic areas such as door handles and doorknobs of the service will be cleaned comprehensively at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Tablets/iPads and phones should be wiped using a disinfectant wipe or solution after each use.
- Frequently touched surfaces such as tables, chairs and toys will be cleaned using appropriate detergent or disinfectant solutions.
- Every toy will be cleaned regularly. Mouthed toys should be removed immediately when the child is no longer engaged with the item and cleaned with disinfectant and detergent.
- The service will employ additional staff at each site to be responsible for undertaking the cleaning requirements. This educator will be additional to ratios and not an educator working directly with the children.
- The service will employ contract cleaners as needed.

Hygiene

- Children and educators will be reminded to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when they arrive at the service, before and after consuming food and drink, after going to the bathroom 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.
- Educators will intentionally teach children handwashing techniques and personal hygiene strategies.
- Children and educators will be reminded to:
 - Avoid touching their faces
 - 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.
 - Wash hands with soap and water or apply an alcohol based hand sanitiser to clean hands between activities and at regular intervals.
- During periods of active cases within the Canberra region, experiences where children will share resources that cannot be easily cleaned (e.g. playdough) will be limited.
- Strict hygiene practices during food preparation will be adhered to. Gloves are worn and thrown out immediately after use.
- During a COVID-19 outbreak, children do not help with food preparation, service 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.

Physical distancing

General health advice is to maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres from others. However, social distancing with and between children is not practicable. The following strategies will reduce risk of transmission.

- Activities involving a higher risk of transmission will be avoided (shared equipment, play dough, food sharing).
- The service will consider staggered mealtimes or other strategies to manage large groups of children.
- Procedures for group times and signing in to After School Care etc. will be structured to minimise large groups interactions.

- An indoor/outdoor program will operate whenever feasible. This provides more space for children and the setup of more activities for children to engage in.
- More time will be spent outdoors when possible and activities placed across the outdoor space.
- The number of whole group activities will be limited. Small group activities will be encouraged.
- Individual activities will be set up throughout the room.
- Furniture such as tables, cots and highchairs will be spaced apart as much as possible.
- Activities will be set up at each end of a table in order to space children out as much as possible.
- Mixing of staff and children between rooms will be avoided where possible.
- Educators will continue to have close/physical contact with children who need personal care, comfort or support.

Adults – both staff and parents/guardians – should maintain physical distancing between themselves while at the service.

- Visitors to the service will be limited.
- Where possible, staff will be limited to working at one site. This is to help prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 between sites in the event that a service becomes an exposure location.
- Excursions and incursions may be cancelled or postponed during an outbreak of COVID-19.
- Access of trades people will be restricted during operating hours where possible.
- Emergency procedure practice may be modified, strategies are discussed with children in smaller groups and discussion documented.

Whilst there is known transmission of COVID-19 in the ACT community, the service will ensure:

- Contact with parents and guardians at pick up and drop off is reduced or eliminated (as far as possible);
 - Signage is displayed reminding visitors to distance themselves.
 - Where possible, parents/guardians should not enter the service to drop off or collect children except in the case of an emergency or an event which is negotiated in advance.
 - iPad/tablet used for signing in and out of children should be cleaned after each use. The service may assign an educator to perform signing in and out for all children to limit contact.
- Health directions to wear facemasks are followed at all times by people 12 years and over, this includes educators, parents and guardians;
 - The wearing of masks for primary students is at the discretion of the student and their parents/guardians but is not recommended for children in Early Learning Centres or for children in Preschool to Year 2.
 - Masks are to be worn correctly to cover the nose and mouth.
 - Masks should be changed during lunch breaks or every four hours.
 - The use of masks, including exceptions to their use and when they can be removed, will align with current Public Health Directions.
- Adults practice physical distancing as far as reasonably practicable.
 - Density quotients aligning with current Public Health Directions should be adhered to by all adults in non-student areas.

Signing in

- All visitors must check into the service each time they arrive using the check-in CBR app.
- All staff and visitors to the service must confirm their shift and sign in and out of the service.

Communication

Emergency contact

- The service will update after-hours emergency contact details in the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS). These numbers will be used by ACT Health to speak to a service representative in the event of a positive case at the service.

Contact details

- Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring the contact details of each child's parent/guardian/authorised emergency person are kept up to date on each child's enrolment record.
- Changes to contact details must be communicated for each day a child is in attendance, to ensure that a person will be available to collect the child at any time across the period of care being provided.
- The service will keep contact details for ACT Health, the Regulatory Authority and emergency services on hand in case of a critical situation.

Updates

- A communication plan is developed to ensure staff and families are informed of any changes that the lead authorities may notify the Service of.

Action in the event of a case

- Children and educators who are unwell must not attend a Children's Service and should stay home and get tested.
- If children or educators attend while unwell, they must be sent home.
- In circumstances where children or educators have other medical reasons for recurrent symptoms, a letter from the GP is sufficient to allow return to the Service without a negative test.

Managing suspected or confirmed cases to prevent further transmission

- Staff, children, young people or visitors with COVID-19 symptoms –
 - Children experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath) must be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/guardian as soon as possible.
 - Staff and visitors should be advised to travel directly home.
 - The symptomatic person should wear a mask while waiting to be picked up or waiting to return home. If a child can't tolerate wearing a mask, then staff caring for a child who becomes sick whilst at the service should wear a mask, carry out frequent hand hygiene and practice physical distancing.
 - There is no need for the staff member to then isolate unless they themselves become unwell or the child is confirmed to have COVID-19.
 - If unwell, staff should get tested and isolate until they receive a negative test result.
- Confirmed cases –
 - If a staff member, child, young person, or family member is diagnosed with COVID-19, ACT Health will provide direction on further management. This may result in full or partial service closure while site cleaning and contact tracing is undertaken.

Service response

If there is an exposure to COVID-19 at a service the required response will depend on whether the risk is due to a close, casual or secondary contact, and the specific instructions provided by ACT Health. This information may also be provided by the Regulatory Authority. In all circumstances services must follow the advice given by the lead authorities.

Closure

If the service is required to close immediately, such as when there is a close contact, the Regulatory Authority will provide an Emergency Action Notice to the service. This notice will provide details of the actions required by the service, including completing a deep clean of the service in line with ACT Health guidelines.

Communication

ACT Health will provide information for services to communicate to families and staff and any precautions they should undertake as advised by the lead authorities. In most circumstances ACT Health will provide letters to send out to staff and families which give details of testing and quarantine requirements.

Cleaning

A [comprehensive clean](#) of the centre in line with [ACT Health advice](#) must be undertaken to make sure it is virus free. Advice on this process will be given by ACT Health.

Re-opening

The centre will re-open only after approval from the lead authorities has been given. For services closed due to an Emergency Action Notice from the Regulatory Authority, this will be when;

- The provider has provided evidence that they have met ACT Health requirements in relation to deep cleaning of service premises;
- The provider advice, and provide evidence if available, that they understand staff cannot return to the service until they have provided evidence that they have finished quarantines and/ or cleared to work via negative COVID-19 test results;
- The service has received a declaration from parents/guardians that all children/ families that were identified as close or casual contacts have received a negative COVID-19 test result and have been released from quarantine by ACT Health before they return to the service;
- All internal policy and procedures have been adhered to, and that action plans have been followed in relation to COVID-19 including communication with families;
- The provider has provided evidence that any other requirements of an associated Emergency Action Notice have been met.
- Communication has been prepared to advise stakeholders of re-opening of the service, and guidelines to follow;
- The provider has demonstrated that adequate staffing arrangements and reasonable precautions have been taken to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 transmission/ spread.
- CECA has provided written confirmation that the emergency action notice has been lifted once all requirements have been met.

The service will meet all notification requirements.

- ACT Health Directorate's Communicable Disease Control Unit 02 5124 9213
- Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA) 02 6207 1114 or email CECA@act.gov.au. A notification will be submitted through the NQAITS.

Responsibilities of parents/guardians

- Encourage or remind children to wash hands as they arrive at the service.
- Remind children about personal hygiene (hand washing, coughing) and physical distancing.
- Clean and disinfect the iPad/tablet after signing children in/out.
- Check in to the site using the Check in CBR app.
- Ensure contact details of each child's parent/guardian/authorised emergency person are up to date.

- Make sure a person is available to collect the child at any time, and immediately if contacted to do so.
- Keep unwell children away from the service.
- Remain away from the service when unwell.
- 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.
- Do not attend the Service if asked by ACT Health to isolate or while waiting for COVID-19 test results.
- 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 a family member has been instructed to quarantine by ACT Health.
- Provide required documentation to the service as needed (COVID-19 test result, evidence of end of quarantine, casual/close contact declaration etc.).

Useful links

[ACT Health Directorate](#)

[Australia Health Protection Principal Committee](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

[Australian Government Department of Health](#)

[ACT Education Directorate](#)

[Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment](#)

[ACECQA](#)

Current version

Service line Service area	Children's Services	Version	2.0
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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
2.0	Oct 2021	Krysta Cordina	Vivienne Gould	Changes to nature of pandemic and ACT Health response