

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, volunteers 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.
- All educators and WCS staff are vaccinated for COVID-19 or have received an exemption from the Chief Health Officer.
- 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 equipment each day. This includes but 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 contract cleaners or additional staff to undertake cleaning requirements 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, and after going to the bathroom.
- 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 high numbers of transmission and active cases within the Canberra region, experiences where children share resources that cannot be easily cleaned will be limited.
- Strict hygiene practices during food preparation will be adhered to. Gloves are worn and thrown out immediately after use.
- Children are supervised to ensure strict hygiene measures are adhered to when helping with food preparation, service or washing up procedures. Where practical, cooking experiences should involve children using their own ingredients to avoid cross contamination.

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 high risk of transmission will be reviewed and mitigated.
- The service will consider staggered mealtimes or other strategies to manage large groups of children.
- 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.
- 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 must sign in and abide by strict hygiene measures.
- 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.
- During ACT Health directed restrictions, emergency procedure practice may be modified, strategies are discussed with children in smaller groups and discussion documented.

Whilst COVID-19 case numbers and transmission rates remain high, the service will ensure:

- Contact with parents and guardians at pick up and drop off is reduced where possible;
 - Signage is displayed reminding visitors to distance themselves.
 - Where possible, parents/guardians should limit their entry to and time at the service.
 - iPad/tablet used for signing in and out of children should be cleaned after each use.
- Adults practice physical distancing as far as reasonably practicable.

Masks

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.

- All staff should continue to wear masks when physical distancing of 1.5 metres cannot be maintained, for example:
 - when providing personal care to a child,
 - when working in close contact with other staff or child, or
 - when travelling to excursions.
- Masks are not required when physical distancing can be maintained, when outdoors, or when eating and drinking. Wearing of masks by staff under these circumstances is considered a reasonable WHS precaution to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Parents, guardians and visitors are encouraged to wear a mask when entering the service to drop off or collect a child.

Signing in

- If required by authorities, 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 lead authorities to speak to a service representative in the event of an emergency.

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 and 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, the affected person must make a report to ACT Health who will provide direction on further management.
- Quarantine –
 - Children, parents/guardians and staff members diagnosed with COVID-19 who have been directed by ACT Health to quarantine must not attend the service during this time.

Household contacts

- Household contacts must satisfy risk mitigation requirements set by ACT Health to continue to attend the service [Risk mitigation requirements for household contacts - COVID-19](#).
- Household contacts must contact the service to notify them they are a household contact. This will assist the service determine whether the household contact can attend the service, if mutually agreed.
- Household contacts must not attend the service if they have, or develop, any symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild.
- Household contacts must undergo COVID-19 testing and isolate until a negative result is received.
 - If a positive result is returned, the person must immediately comply with requirements for people who test positive for COVID-19.
 - If a negative result is returned on a rapid antigen test (RAT), it is recommended to have a PCR test and continue to isolate until the person receives the test result.
- Staff identified as household contacts must test for COVID-19 and return a negative result every day before their shift. Additional RATs will be provided to staff by the service.
- Household contacts, including children, families and staff, are not to attend a WCS Early Learning Centre. They should not interact or work with people at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. People at high risk includes children in the Early Learning Centres who are too young to be vaccinated for COVID-19.
- Household contacts should practice COVID safe behaviours and maintain physical distancing as much as practicable.
 - Practice good hand and respiratory hygiene at all times.
 - Avoid prolonged periods in indoor spaces, wherever possible.
 - Wear a mask in any indoor setting that is not their own home if they are aged 12 years and over.

Service response

If there is an exposure to COVID-19 at a service the required response will depend on the risk factors. In all circumstances services must follow the advice and current information given by ACT Health and other lead authorities.

Communication

Families are notified of COVID-19 cases at the service and any testing and quarantine requirements.

Closure

If the service is required to close immediately, the Regulatory Authority will provide an Emergency Action Notice to the service. This notice will provide details of the actions required by the service in line with ACT Health guidelines.

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 demonstrated that the service has met all regulatory requirements.

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 etiquette) 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 where applicable.
- Wear a mask when entering the service.
- 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 your child is diagnosed with COVID-19 and attended the service during the two days prior to having symptoms or receiving a positive test result.
- Inform the service if your child is a household contact of someone with COVID-19.
- Do not attend the Service if asked by ACT Health to quarantine or while waiting for COVID-19 test results.
- 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 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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| Service line Service area | Children's Services | Version | 2.1 |
| Process owner | Director, Children, Youth and Family | Date of issue | May 2022 |
| Approved by | Vivienne Gould | Scheduled review date | May 2023 |

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 |
| 2.1 | May 2022 | Krysta Cordina | Vivienne Gould | Review of procedures in line with updates to ACT Health guidelines. |