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PROVIDING A CHILD-SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law Act 2010	
73	Educational programs
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
75	Information about the educational program to be kept available
76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
80	Weekly menu
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
102	Authorisation for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing and security
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
107	Space requirements—indoor
108	Space requirements—outdoor space
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
110	Ventilation and natural light
111	Administrative space (Centre-based services)
112	Nappy change facilities
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
156	Relationships in groups
158	Children's attendance records to be kept by approved provider
168	Policies and procedures are required in relation to enrolment and orientation
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

Introduction

Woden Early Childhood Centre (WECC) recognises the importance of providing a safe environment for all children at WECC. All children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that safeguards and promotes their health and safety.

The physical environment can contribute to children's wellbeing, happiness, creativity and promote the development of independence. It can contribute to and express the quality of children's learning and experiences. The choices made in an education and care service about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air and light quality and access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor environment, have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

Scope

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

Goals

Our Service will ensure the environment is safe, clean and well maintained for children, families, educators and visitors. Children's awareness of the environment and suitable practices will be supported through daily routines, resources and interactions. The physical environment will support children's learning, safety, levels of engagement and access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships.

WECC will:

- ensure that children are adequately supervised at all times
- maximise children's engagement and positive experiences
- provide space where children can experience quality care in a safe and healthy environment
- meet licensing requirements for buildings, space requirements, fencing, light, ventilation, firefighting equipment, emergency evacuation exits and safety glass for National Regulations, the Building Code of Australia (BCA), Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, local councils and regulatory authorities.
- Provide adequate storage to meet the needs and requirements of the service
- organise rooms and environments to minimise risks to children
- monitor and minimise hazards and safety risks in the environment
- implement WECC's *Child Protection and Accident, Illness and Injury* policies
- take every reasonable precaution to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury

Strategies

Our Service is committed to providing an environment that promotes safety and enhances children's learning and development

Supervision

The Nominated Supervisor or Director will:

- ensure that enough educators are on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements and to always ensure adequate supervision of children as per the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
- adopt policies and procedures to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury
- engage casual educators as appropriate
- ensure educators are always aware of the need for adequate supervision of children. This may include the development of supervision charts for outdoor or indoor areas

Educators will:

- supervise children within their room/group
- inform the Nominated Supervisor or Director whenever supervision in their room is inadequate to ensure the health and safety of all children

Organisation of rooms and environments

The Nominated Supervisor or Director will:

- make sufficient allowance within budgets for the maintenance and repair of equipment and resources in the indoor and outdoor environments, to ensure children's safety
- organise repairs and maintenance to equipment and environments in a timely manner
- organise rooms and grouping to enable adequate supervision of children and to minimise risks

Educators will:

- organise indoor and outdoor spaces to minimise risks to the health and safety of children
- inform the Nominated Supervisor or Director of repairs and maintenance needed to ensure children's health and safety

Risk assessment

The Nominated Supervisor or Director will:

- conduct a risk assessment of the Service environment on an annual basis to determine any risks to children's health and safety
- analyse and evaluate the risks associated with identified hazards
- determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control identified hazards
- review risk assessments after any serious incident report is made to the ACT Department of Community Services

Educators will:

- report any risks or hazards within WECC to the Nominated Supervisor or Director as soon as possible

Choosing appropriate resources and equipment

There are several things to consider when choosing appropriate resources and equipment.

The Approved Provider will be responsible for any large purchases of equipment. The Nominated Supervisor or Director is responsible for the daily running of those purchases

The Approved Provider will:

- provide sufficient and accessible hand washing, toileting, eating and sleeping facilities
- Toileting and hand washing facilities will be accessible from both indoor and outdoor environments
- provide appropriate, well-constructed and hygienic facilities for nappy changing, to ensure children's safety
- ensure the environment incorporates natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating and cooling, and fresh air
- provide appropriate areas for food preparation
- provide a separate indoor space for children under two years of age
- provide an area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- provide appropriately sized furniture and equipment in both the indoor and outdoor environment for the age range represented at the Service
- encouraging educators to participate in ongoing professional development in order to ensure a safe and educational environment
- In line with WECC's *Sun Protection* policy and procedures, provide adequate shading for children
- provide an environment that ensures children are able to be appropriately supervised at all times
- ensure that all required fencing is in working condition and complies with current regulations
- provide or source families with the latest safety information on relevant equipment or resources as requested
- keep a maintenance log and register for toys and equipment
- ensure that all equipment and resources, including prams, strollers, cots etc. meet relevant Australian Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly, if appropriate
- ensure regular pest inspections are carried out by an accredited pest control company. Documentation of these inspections will be kept and any finding from the pest control check will be carried out in line with the recommendation of the pest control company
- ensure individuals visiting the Service are signed in on arrival and out on departure

Educators will:

- compile a list of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis, twice annually, and provide it to the Nominated Supervisor or Director actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding toys and equipment at the Service
- ensure resources and equipment reflect the cultural diversity of the service's community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- ensure the environment is organised to ensure the safety of, and minimal disruption to, children. This includes:
 - ensuring climbing equipment is set up in a safe way and compliant with Australian Safety Standards (e.g. incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up)
 - conducting consistent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment in order to minimise risk and hazards
 - providing an environment that allows children in several dispositions to occur in the same space (e.g. quiet play areas and loud play areas)
 - consider any additional needs children may have, to ensure an inclusive environment
 - provide a natural environment for children to explore and experience, which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud or water
 - provide a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences, catering for children's interests and abilities
 - support the children to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment. These resources will be adequate for the number of children attending our service and will be developmentally appropriate
 - provide an environment where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking that is developmentally appropriate
 - provide an environment that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups and access resources autonomously
 - provide an environment that incorporates commercial, natural, recycled, homemade and resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning
 - Educators will discuss with children the safety considerations of particular toys and equipment, as appropriate
 - Where appropriate, involve the children in setting classroom guidelines
 - ensure that power points not in use have safety caps, all double adaptors and power boards are out of reach of children and all electrical cords are secured and not dangling
 - ensure our indoor and outdoor environment provides opportunities for intentional teaching and spontaneous play throughout the day

Laundering of soiled items

- soiled clothing will be returned to a child's home for laundering. Educators will remove soiled content and placed the clothing in a plastic bag

Rearranging, adding or removing furniture

- WECC will keep a record of any changes that are made to the physical environment of the service, such as rearranging of rooms, to show continuous improvement
- WECC will document the links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment and the children's learning in the program

The sleeping/rest environment

- cots and beds should be positioned to encourage a calm and relaxing environment, and be separated by a minimum of 30cm and positioned head to toe to reduce the possibility of cross infection
- cots should be regularly checked to ensure all bolts and fittings are secure and safe
- beds should be located in a dry area that is easy for all educators and other staff to access. Beds should not be placed on high shelves or in unstable or difficult to reach stacks
- educators should use correct handling techniques when moving beds, to ensure this is done in a safe manner

Grouping of children

- WECC groups the children in accordance with their age and/or developmental stage. Within that space, there are a variety of different learning areas and opportunities for play experiences
- each age group has mandated adult-child ratios, which are always adhered to in both the indoor and outdoor environment

Safety checks

A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children begin to arrive, including:

- service perimeters
- fences/fence line
- gates
- paths
- buildings
- all rooms accessible by children
- fixed equipment
- sand pit

This must be done to identify any dangerous objects in the grounds, ranging from sharps to poisonous or dangerous plants and animals.

In the event of a sharp object being found (e.g. a syringe) educators will wear gloves and use tongs to pick up the object and place it in the 'sharp object box' which is stored in the office. This box will be disposed of as per the recommendations of our local council.

Similarly, trees in the grounds must be checked regularly for overhanging, dead or dangerous looking branches, infestations or nests.

Non-fixed play equipment in the Service grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be supervised at all times by an educator.

The Indoor and Outdoor Daily Safety Checklists will be used as the procedure to conduct the above safety checks. A record of these will be kept by the Service. The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will make the appropriate arrangements to have repairs carried out as soon as possible.

Children's bathroom

- Supervision in the Toddler/Intro children's bathroom is required when in use
- Supervision in the Pre School children's bathroom is important when in use, to assist as necessary
- Educators and other staff should encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices
- Bathrooms should be cleaned at least twice a day and as required
- Bathroom floors should always be mopped
- Mopping of bathrooms occurs while children are resting to ensure that the floor has time to dry prior to use
- Educators are to ensure they follow the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedures

Child protection

The Nominated Supervisor or Director, working with educators, will comply with the requirements of WECC's *Child Protection* policy to ensure the risk of harm to children is minimised.

Centre closure

Educators will:

- follow Centre-closing procedures each night
- ensure a minimum of two educators must close the Service each night
- ensure those educators check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed
- sign the sign in and out sheets to confirm all children are signed out
- In the event a parent has omitted to sign their child out, and the educators did not witness the child leave the Centre, the educators must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left the Centre. If unable to contact the family, the educators are to contact other educators present on that day for confirmation that the child has been collected. The Nominated Supervisor is then to be notified before leaving the Centre
- ensure absences during the day are recorded

Senior Practitioner Act 2018

The Senior Practitioner Act 2018 (the Act), which came into effect on 1 September 2018, provides a formal framework for the reduction and elimination of restrictive practices by service providers in the ACT.

Woden Early Childhood Centre will abide by the Act and ensure educators do not engage in restrictive practices.

What is a restrictive practice? 'Restrictive practice' means a practice that is used to restrict the rights or freedom of movement of a person for the primary purpose of protecting the person or others from harm. Restrictive practice does not include reasonable action taken to monitor and protect a child from harm Examples:

1. holding a child's hand while crossing a road
2. fencing around the Centre

Educators will:

- Be aware of the individual child's stage of development and particular needs and plan the Educational Program accordingly. Unrealistic challenges in a program can create unnecessary stresses for a child possibly resulting in challenging behaviour.
- Keep up to date records on all children. Note relevant conversations with parents that may relate to a child's behaviour change (eg. parents separating, new baby in the family, etc.)
- Children with special needs may need more physical contact and physical guidance than other children.

Work with parents to record appropriate procedures for toilet learning and/or behaviour management principles

In some cases, a Positive Behaviour Support Plan may be created in partnership with families, Educators, and the Director. A plan including restrictive practice as a strategy needs to be approved by a registered Positive Behaviour Support Panel and registered by the Senior Practitioner. For example, it may be necessary to physically restrain a child for their own protection or the protection of others. This may result in their child needing to be isolated from others for short periods of time.

- Educators are to engage only in practices that are respectful of and provide security for children and in no way degrade, endanger, exploit, intimidate, or harm them psychologically or physically.
- Educators should be aware of their own levels of tolerance and stress factors. Acknowledge that there may be some children that some educators find more difficult to relate to than other children. Discuss this honestly with educators to develop strategies to assist them.

Evaluation

Children are healthy and safe at our service and the number of serious health and safety incidents is reduced over time. Data will be obtained from the Centre's Accident and Injury Forms

Related policies /documents

- *Cleaning and maintaining the environment*
- *Health and Safety*
- *Incident, injury, trauma and illness*
- *Promoting positive risk in play*
- *Safe storage of dangerous goods*
- *Sleep and Rest*
- *Sun Protection*
- *Water Safety*
- *Work Health and Safety*

Statutory legislation and considerations

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Senior Practitioner Act 2018

Sources and references

- Community Child Care Co-operative New South Wales Sample Policies
- Senior Practitioner Act 2018

Policy Reviewed	September 2022	Ratified Date	Next Review Date
Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated education and care services national regulations• Addition of Senior Practitioner Act 2018• Minor wording edits• Sources and references checked• Addition of review table with modifications and updates• New Format	Sept 2022	Sept 2025
Policy Reviewed	July 2017	Ratified Date	Next Review Date
Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing policy	July 2017	July 2020

Authorisation

Paul Halloran
President
2021-22 WECC Management Committee

