

# Policy

## Early Years Policy - Dealing with Infectious Diseases (including Child Immunisations)

<b>Date of Adoption</b>	April 2013		
<b>Adoption Method</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Council	<input type="checkbox"/> CEO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Director Community
<b>Director Signature</b>	Signed by:  A4566C08D5B4450...		<b>Date</b> 06-12-2024
<b>Responsible Officer and Unit</b>	Samantha Waymouth, Coordinator Early Years Services		
<b>Nominated Review Period</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Annually	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Every 4 years	<input type="checkbox"/> Other ( <i>please specify</i> )
<b>Last Endorsement Date</b>	October 2020		
<b>Next Endorsement Date</b>	December 2025		

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

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## Purpose/Objective

This policy provides clear guidelines and procedures to follow:

- when a child attending a Council Early Years Service shows symptoms of an infectious disease
- when a child attending a Council Early Years Service has been diagnosed with an infectious disease
- for managing and minimising the spread of infectious diseases, illnesses and infestations (including head lice)
- for managing and minimising infections relating to blood-borne viruses
- for managing and minimising infections related to epidemics (refer to Definitions) and pandemics (refer to Definitions) e.g. Coronavirus (COVID-19).

## Scope

This policy applies to the staff, students on placement at kindergartens, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Council's Early Years Services.

## Background/Reasons for Policy

Infectious diseases are common in children. Children are at a greater risk of exposure to infections in an Early Years setting than at home, due to the amount of time spent with a large number of children. Infectious diseases are divided into four categories (A, B, C, D) on the basis of the method of notification and information required. The Victorian Department of Health has developed a document, *Minimum Period of Exclusion from Primary Schools and Children's Services Centres for Infectious Diseases Cases and Contacts*, to assist in protecting the public by preventing, or containing, outbreaks of infectious conditions common in schools and other children's services, and is regulated by the *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001*.

An approved service must take reasonable steps to prevent the spread of infectious diseases at the service, and ensure that the parent/guardian, authorised nominee or emergency contact of each child enrolled of the service is notified of the occurrence of an infectious disease as soon as possible. The service must have policies and procedures in place for dealing with infectious

diseases (Regulations 4, 88). The service has a duty of care to ensure that everyone attending is provided with a high level of health protection during all hours that the service is in operation.

Protection can include:

- notifying children, families and educators/staff when an excludable illness/disease is detected at the service
- parents complying with exclusion periods and not sending their child for the exclusion period
- preventing the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases through simple hygiene practices such as hand washing, and effective cleaning procedures
- complying with relevant health department exclusion guidelines
- increasing educator/staff awareness of cross-infection through physical contact with others.

The Victorian Government offers an immunisation program for children, to assist in preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

## Gender Impact Assessment

In accordance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, a Gender Impact Assessment was not required in relation to the subject matter of this policy.

## Definitions

Term	Definition
Acceptable immunisation documentation	Documentation, as defined by the Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood education and care services, as acceptable evidence that a child is fully vaccinated for their age, or is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind their vaccinations; or has a medical reason not to be vaccinated; or has been assessed as being eligible for a 16 week grace period.

Blood-borne virus	A virus that is spread when blood from an infected person enters another person's bloodstream. Examples of blood-borne viruses include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B, hepatitis C and viral haemorrhagic fevers. Where basic hygiene, safety, infection control and first aid procedures are followed, the risks of contracting a blood-borne virus are negligible.
Communicable Disease Section	Unit of the Victorian Department of Health with responsibility for communication and advice in relation to infectious diseases. The unit must be contacted by telephone on 1300 651 160.
Epidemic	The outbreak of a contagious disease that spreads rapidly and extensively, and affects many individuals simultaneously in an area or population.
Exclusion	Inability to attend or participate in the program at the service.
Illness	Any sickness and/or associated symptoms that affect the child's normal participation in the program at the service.
Infection	The invasion and multiplication of micro-organisms in bodily tissue.
Infestation	The lodgement, development and reproduction of arthropods (such as head lice), either on the surface of the body of humans or animals, or in clothing.
Infectious disease	An infectious disease designated by the Communicable Disease and Prevention Control Unit, as well as those listed in Schedule 7 of the <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019</i> .
Medication	Any substance, as defined in the <i>Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 (Cth)</i> , that is administered for the treatment of an illness or medical condition.

<p>Minimum exclusion period</p>	<p>The minimum period for excluding any person from attending a children’s service to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, as specified in Schedule 7 of the <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019</i>. An infringement penalty applies for failure to exclude a child with, or exposed to, a specified infectious disease (applicable to a person in charge). The exclusion period table, published by the Victorian Department of Health, can be accessed at <a href="https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion-table">https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion-table</a></p>
<p>Pandemic</p>	<p>An epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a wide geographic area and affecting a large proportion of the population.</p>
<p>Pediculosis (Head lice)</p>	<p>Infestation of head lice that is transmitted by having head-to-head contact with another person who has head lice. head does not contribute to the spread of any infectious diseases, and outbreaks of this condition are common in schools and education and care facilities.</p>
<p>Serious incident</p>	<p>A serious incident is defined (under Regulation 12, Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011) as any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the death of a child while being educated and cared for at the service or following an incident at the service</li> <li>● any incident involving serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or</li> <li>○ the child attended or ought reasonably to have attended a hospital e.g. a broken limb*</li> </ul> </li> <li>● any incident involving serious illness of a child while that child is being educated and cared for by a service for which the child</li> </ul>

attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis\*.

*\*In some cases (for example rural and remote locations) a General Practitioner conducts consultation from the hospital site. Only treatment related to serious injury or illness or trauma are required to be notified, not other health matters.*

- any emergency for which emergency services attended<sup>^</sup>

*^This means an incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person/s at an education and care service It does not mean an incident where emergency services attended as a precaution.*

- a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service
- a child appears to have been taken or removed from the service in a manner that contravenes the National Regulations
- a child was mistakenly locked in or out of the service premises or any part of the premises

Examples of serious incidents include amputation (e.g. removal of fingers), anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation, asthma requiring hospitalisation, broken bone/fractures, bronchiolitis, burns, diarrhoea requiring hospitalisation, epileptic seizures, head injuries, measles, meningococcal infection, sexual assault, witnessing violence or a frightening event.

If the approved provider is not aware that the incident was serious until sometime after the incident, they must notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of becoming aware that the incident was serious.

Notifications of serious incidents should be made through the National Quality Agenda IT System portal

	<p>(<a href="https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system">https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system</a>). If this is not practicable, the notification can be made initially in whatever way is best in the circumstances.</p>
Standard precaution practices	<p>Work practices that achieve a basic level of infection prevention and control. Using standard precaution practices aims to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection, particularly those caused by blood-borne viruses. Standard precaution practices include but are not limited to hand hygiene, cleaning equipment and the environment, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette and appropriate use of personal protective equipment.</p>

## References

- > Communicable Disease Section, Victorian Department of Health (2019), A guide to the management and control of gastroenteritis outbreaks in children's centres. Victorian Government, Melbourne: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/a-guide-to-the-management-and-control-of-gastroenteritis-outbreaks-in-childrens>
- > Department of Health, Victoria (2024), Head lice: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/head-lice>
- > Guide to the National Quality Standard (2023), Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-03/Guide-to-the-NQF-March-2023.pdf>
- > Department of Health, Victoria (2024), No Jab No Play for early childhood education and care services: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/no-jab-no-play>
- > Department of Health and Aged Care, Australia (2024), National Immunisation Program Schedule: <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/when-to-get-vaccinated/national-immunisation-program-schedule>
- > National Health and Medical Research Council (2024), Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th edition): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-guidelines>

- > Department of Health and Aged Care, Australia (2024), National Immunisation Program: <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-immunisation-program>
- > Department of Health and Aged Care, Australia (2024), Australian Health Protection Committee (AHPC) statements: <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-health-protection-committee-ahpc/ahpc-statements>
- > Department of Health, Victoria (2024), Disease information and advice: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/disease-information-and-advice>
- > WorkSafe, Victoria (2021) Compliance code: First aid in the workplace: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-first-aid-workplace>

## Related Policies

- > Early Years Policy - Administration of First Aid
- > Early Years Policy - Administration of Medication
- > Early Years Policy - Dealing with Medical Conditions
- > Early Years Enrolment and Fees Policy
- > Early Years Policy - Orientation and Settling In
- > Early Years Policy - Hygiene
- > Early Years Policy - Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- > Privacy Policy (Council)
- > Occupational Health and Safety Policy (Council)

## Related Legislation

- > *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- > *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 88*
- > *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*

- > Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- > Health Records Act 2001
- > National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
- > National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
  - Standard 6.2: Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected
  - Standard 6.3: The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children’s learning and wellbeing
- > Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- > Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009
- > Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

## Responsibilities

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
<b>R</b> indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensuring standard precaution practices (refer to Definitions) are carried out every day to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection	R	✓	✓		✓
Ensuring that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease (refer to Definitions)	R	✓	✓	✓	✓

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
at the service, reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of that infectious disease ( <i>Regulation 88(1)</i> )					
Ensuring that, where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact of each child at the service is notified of the occurrence as soon as is practicable ( <i>Regulation 88(2)</i> )	R	✓	✓		
Ensuring that information from the Victorian Department of Health about minimum exclusion periods (refer to Definitions) is displayed at the service and is available to all stakeholders	R	✓	✓		
Ensuring that a child is excluded from the service in accordance with the minimum exclusion periods, when informed that the child is infected with an infectious disease or has been in contact with a person who is infected with an infectious disease, as required under <i>Regulation 111(1)</i> of the <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019</i>	R	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contacting the Communicable Disease Section (refer to Definitions) if there is an outbreak of two or more cases of gastrointestinal illness in a 48-hour period (refer to References)	R	✓			
Ensuring obligations under No Jab No Play legislation ( <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i> ), including to request, assess and manage acceptable immunisation documentation, are met and to assist parents/guardians and parents/guardians who may face difficulties in meeting the	R	✓			

<b>Responsibilities</b>	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
requirements (refer to the Orientation and Settling in Policy)					
Ensuring, when directed by the Chief Health Officer, that a child who is at material risk of contracting a vaccine-preventable disease is excluded until the Chief Health Officer directs that attendance can be resumed ( <i>Regulation 111(2)(4) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019</i> )	R	✓	✓	✓	
Ensuring that a minimum of one educator with current, approved first aid qualifications is in attendance and immediately available at all times the service is in operation (refer to Early Years Policy - Administration of First Aid)	R	✓	✓		
Notifying the Victorian Department of Education within 24 hours of a serious incident (refer to Definitions) via the National Quality Agenda IT System portal	R	✓			
Conducting a thorough inspection of the service on a regular basis, and consulting with staff to assess any risks by identifying hazards and potential sources of infection	R	✓	✓		✓
Establishing and complying with good hygiene and infection prevention and control procedures (refer to Early Years Policy – Hygiene and– Attachment 3 of this policy )	R	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observing for signs and symptoms of an infectious disease in children, and taking appropriate measures to minimise cross-infection and inform management		✓	✓	✓	✓

<b>Responsibilities</b>	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Providing appropriate and current information and resources to all stakeholders regarding the identification and management of infectious diseases, blood-borne viruses and infestations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Keeping informed of current legislation, information, research and evidence-based practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Complying with the Early Years Policy - Hygiene and procedures for infection prevention and control relating to blood-borne viruses (refer to Early Years Policy – Dealing with Infectious Diseases (including Child Immunisation) – Attachment 3)	R	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communicating changes to the exclusion table or immunisation laws to all stakeholders in a timely manner	R	✓	✓		✓
Complying with the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Department of Health in an epidemic or pandemic event (refer to Early Years Policy – Dealing with Infectious Diseases (including Child Immunisation) – Attachment 4)	R	✓	✓	✓	✓
Notifying everyone at the service of any outbreak of infectious disease at the service, including information about the nature of the illness, incubation and infectious periods, and the service’s exclusion requirements for the illness, and displaying this information in a prominent position	R	✓	✓		

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Advising parents/guardians on enrolment that the <u>minimum exclusion periods</u> will be observed in regard to the outbreak of any infectious diseases or infestations	R	✓	✓		
Providing information to staff and parents/guardians about child immunisation recommendations (refer to Early Years Policy – Dealing with Infectious Diseases (including Child Immunisation) – Attachment 5)	✓	✓			
Advising the parents/guardians of a child who is not fully immunised on enrolment and/or is undertaking the 16 weeks grace period, that they will be required to keep their child at home when a vaccine-preventable disease is diagnosed at the service, and until there are no more occurrences of that disease and the exclusion period has ceased	R	✓	✓		
Ensuring that parents/guardians understand that they must inform the approved provider or nominated supervisor as soon as practicable if the child is infected with an infectious disease or infestation, or has been in contact with a person infected with a condition for which the exclusion of contacts is specified ( <i>Regulation 110, Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019</i> )	R	R	R	R	
Providing information and resources to parents/guardians to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations	✓	✓	✓		

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Ensuring all parents/guardians have consented to head lice inspections (refer to enrolment record in Enrol Now)	R	✓	✓		
Conducting head lice inspections whenever an infestation is suspected, which involves visually checking children’s hair and notifying the approved provider and parents/guardians of the child if an infestation of head lice is suspected		✓	✓		
Providing a head lice action form (refer to Early Years Policy – Dealing with Infectious Diseases (including Child Immunisation) – Attachment 1) to the parents/guardians of a child suspected of having head lice	R	✓	✓		
Providing a head lice notification letter (refer to Early Years Policy – Dealing with Infectious Diseases (including Child Immunisation) – Attachment 2) to all parents/guardians when an infestation of head lice has been detected at the service	R	✓	✓		
Maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to Council’s Privacy Policy)	R	R	R	✓	✓
Keeping their child/ren at home if they are unwell or have an excludable infectious disease or infestation (refer to Definitions)				✓	
Informing service management as soon as practicable if their child has an infectious disease or infestation or has been in contact with a person who has an infectious disease ( <i>Regulation 110 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019</i> )				R	

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Complying with the minimum exclusion periods or as directed by the approved provider or nominated supervisor after the Chief Health Officer directed them to exclude a child enrolled whom the Chief Health Officer has determined to be at material risk of contracting a vaccine-preventable disease ( <i>Regulation 111(2) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019</i> )				R	

## Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the persons with management or control will:

- regularly seek feedback regarding the effectiveness of the policy
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- ensure that all information related to infectious diseases on display and supplied to parents/guardians is current
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the Service’s policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders, including parents/guardians, at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary due to a risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*).

## Attachments

- Attachment 1: Template Head Lice Action Form (D23-74674)
- Attachment 2: Template Head Lice Notification Letter (D23-74676)
- Attachment 3: Procedures for Infection Prevention and Control Relating to Blood-Borne Viruses and Body Fluids (D23-74678)
- Attachment 4: Actions for Early Childhood and Care Services in an Epidemic or Pandemic Event (D23-74681)
- Attachment 5: Child a immunisation recommendation (D23-74683)