

## POLICY AIM

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Sweetpeas aims to minimise the spread of infectious diseases within the service by adhering to all recommended guidelines from relevant government authorities regarding the prevention of infectious diseases, promoting practices that reduce the transmission of infection, ensuring the exclusion of sick children and educators, supporting child immunisation, and implementing effective hygiene practices.

## RATIONALE

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Children encounter many other children and adults within the Service environment which can result in the contraction of infectious illnesses. Our Service has a duty of care to ensure that children, families, educators, and visitors of the Service are provided with a high level of protection during the hours of the Service's operation.

Immunisation is a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases before they come into contact with them in the community. Immunisation not only protects individuals, but also others within the community, by reducing the spread of disease and illnesses.

## SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

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- Educators
- Children
- Families
- Staff
- Management
- Students and Visitors

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

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### QUALITY AREA 2 - CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Element 2.1.1 (Wellbeing and comfort) - *Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.*
- Element 2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures) - *Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.*
- Standard 2.2 (Safety) - *Each child is protected.*

## RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

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### RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Administration of Medication Policy
- Bottle Preparation Procedures
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- COVID-19 Management Policy
- Dental Health Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Food Preparation, Safety and Storage Policy
- Handwashing Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Nappy Change and Toileting Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Sleep and Rest Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

### RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Law s172 Offence to fail to display prescribed information
- Reg 77 Health, hygiene and safe food practices
- Reg 85 Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
- Reg 86 Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
- Reg 87 Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
- Reg 88 Infectious diseases
- Reg 90 Medical conditions policy
- Reg 93 Administration of medication
- Reg 162 Health information to be kept in enrolment record
- Reg 168 Education and care service must have policies and procedures
- Reg 170 Policies and procedures to be followed
- Reg 172(2)(g) a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises

- Reg 173 Prescribed information to be displayed
- Reg 175 Prescribed information to be notified to the Regulatory Authority

## TERMINOLOGY

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- **Exclusion period** - Families keeping their children at home in the event of illness or disease within the service. The aim is to reduce the spread of infectious diseases in the service, as the less contact there is between people who have an infectious disease and people who are at risk of catching the disease, the less chance the disease has of spreading.
- **Immunisation** - Immunisation can prevent some infections. It works by giving a person a vaccine - often a dead or modified version of the germ - against a particular disease. This makes the person's immune system respond in a similar way to how it would respond if they actually had the disease, but with less severe symptoms. If the person comes in contact with that germ in the future, their immune system can rapidly respond and prevent the person becoming ill.
  - Immunisation also protects other people who are not immunised, such as children who are too young to be immunised, or people whose immune systems did not respond to the vaccine. This is because the more people who are immunised against a disease, the lower the chance that a person will ever come into contact with someone who has the disease (also known as herd immunity).
  - For families to receive the Child Care Subsidy and Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A, their child must meet the immunisation requirements.
- **Infectious disease** - A disease that is designated under a law of a relevant jurisdiction or by a health authority as a disease that would require a person with the disease to be excluded from an education and care service.

## GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

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- **AHPPC** - Australian Health Protection Principal Committee
- **AIR** - Australian Immunisation Register
- **CCS** - Child Care Subsidy
- **LHD** - Local Health District
- **NHMRC** - National Health and Medical Research Council
- **NIP** - National Immunisation Program
- **PHU** - Public Health Unit

## PENRITH PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT (NEPEAN BLUE MOUNTAINS LHD)

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PO Box 63, Penrith 2751  
Phone: (02) 4734 2022  
Fax: (02) 4734 3300 / 4734 3444 (secure line)

### *After hours*

Phone: (02) 4734 2000  
(Westmead Hospital)  
- ask for Public Health Officer on call

## IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

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Under regulation 88, if an infectious disease occurs at a service, the approved provider must ensure that:

- reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of the infectious disease
- parents or an authorised emergency contact of children at the service are notified of the occurrence as soon as practicable.

In addition, the approved provider must also:

- display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service premises (section 172, regulation 173)

- ensure that notification requirements to the regulatory authority are met in relation to an outbreak of an infectious disease that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children attending the service (section 174, regulation 175).

Our Service is committed to minimise the spread of infectious diseases and viruses by implementing recommendations as stated in the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th Edition)* developed by the *Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council* and advice provided from the *Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC)*.

We are guided by decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases by the *Australian Government- Department of Health, NSW Health* and the local Public Health Unit in our jurisdiction as per the *Public Health Act*.

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded from the Service depends on:

- how easily the infection can spread
- how long the person is likely to be infectious and
- the severity of the infectious disease or illness.

## PREVENTING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Children enter education and care services when their immune systems are still developing. They have not been exposed to many common germs and therefore are susceptible to bacteria that may cause infections. Given the close physical contact children have with other children in early childhood and care, it is very easy for infectious diseases and illnesses to spread through normal daily activities.

Our Service implements rigorous hygienic practices to limit the spread of illness and infectious diseases including:

- effective hand washing hygiene
- cough and sneeze etiquette
- appropriate use of gloves
- exclusion of children, educators or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus
- effective environmental cleaning including toys and resources (including bedding)
- requesting parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure at the Service
- physical distancing (if recommended by NSW Health and/or Safe Work Australia)
- use of face masks (as mandated by NSW Health)
- (when applicable) restricting parents and visitors from entering our service to reduce threat of spread of a community disease outbreak (e.g.: COVID-19)

## IMMUNISATION REQUIREMENTS

Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent many childhood infectious diseases. Unvaccinated children due to their parent's conscientious objection are no longer able to be enrolled in approved early childcare services. Children who cannot be fully vaccinated due to a medical condition or who are on a recognised catch-up schedule may still be enrolled upon presentation of the appropriate form signed by a medical practitioner who meets the criteria stated by the Australian Government.

Only parents of children who are fully immunised (or are on a recognised catch-up schedule) can receive *Child Care Subsidy (CCS)* and the *Family Tax Benefit Part A* end of year supplement.

The relevant vaccinations are those under the *National Immunisation Program (NIP)*, which covers the vaccines usually administered before age five. These vaccinations must be recorded on the *Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)*.

Educators and other staff at our Service are highly recommended to keep up to date with all immunisations including yearly influenza vaccinations. These include vaccinations recommended by the *National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)*. Educators, staff and visitors, including health professionals, volunteers, students, committee members and contractors were previously required to be fully vaccinated (two vaccines) for COVID-19 under Public Health Orders in NSW.

## REPORTING OUTBREAKS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Outbreaks of communicable diseases and contagious viruses represent a threat to public health. To help prevent outbreaks, the Department of Health monitors the number of people who contract certain infectious diseases and their characteristics, the recent travel or attendance of infected people in a public place or on public transport and works with health specialists and doctors to help prevent the transmission of diseases to other people.

The *Public Health Act 2010* lawfully required and authorised childcare centre directors to confidentially notify the Public Health Unit (PHU) of patients with certain conditions, and to provide the required information on the [notification forms](#). Specialist trained public health staff review this information and if necessary, contact the patient's doctor, and sometimes the patient, to provide advice about disease control and to complete the collection of information.

All information is held confidentially in order to protect the patient's privacy. Both the NSW and Commonwealth Privacy Acts only release/disclose patient information where it is lawfully required or authorised.

Management is required to notify the local PHU by phone (call 1300 066 055) as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled at the Service is suffering from one of the following vaccine preventable diseases:

- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Haemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella ('German measles')
- Measles
- Pertussis ('whooping cough')
- Tetanus
- An outbreak of 2 or more people with gastrointestinal or respiratory illness

Directors are also encouraged to seek advice from Penrith PHU when they suspect an infectious disease outbreak is affecting their Service, such as outbreaks of a gastrointestinal or respiratory illness.

Management will closely monitor health alerts and guidelines from Public Health Units and the Australian Government- Department of Health for any advice and emergency health management in the event of a contagious illness outbreak.

The Approved Provider must also notify the Regulatory Authority of any incidence of a notifiable infectious disease or illness. ACECQA: [contact regulatory authority](#)

## MANAGING A POSITIVE CASE OF COVID-19 IN AN ECEC SETTING

NSW Health recommends workers:

- Stay home until your obvious symptoms (runny nose, sore throat, cough and fever) have gone. Medical clearance may not be necessary for a worker to return to the workplace.
- Talk to your Director/Management about when you should return to the workplace. Timeframes may vary depending on various factors.
- If Management needs you to return to the workplace before this time, they may ask the worker to take additional steps to protect others (e.g. wear a mask), depending on the work, and a health and safety assessment.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

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### MANAGEMENT WILL ENSURE:

- that all information regarding the prevention and transmission of infectious diseases is sourced from a recognised Government Health authority, e.g. NSW Health.
- exclusion periods for people with infectious diseases recommended by Government Authorities are implemented for all staff, children, parents, families and visitors.

- the Service implements recommendations from *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* to maintain a healthy environment.
- advice and recommendations from the *Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC)* and *Safe Work Australia* will be implemented, where reasonably possible.
- children are protected from harm by ensuring relevant policies and procedures are followed regarding health and safety within the Service.
- required enrolment information, including health and immunisation records of enrolled children is collected, maintained and appropriately and securely stored.
- a record is kept of all staff's COVID-19 vaccinations [if mandated by Public Health Orders].
- the Public Health Unit is notified in the event of an outbreak of viral gastroenteritis. Management must document the number of cases, dates of onset, duration of symptoms. An outbreak is when two or more children or staff have a sudden onset of diarrhoea or vomiting in a 2-day period. (NSW Government- Health 2019)
- a notice is clearly displayed stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service.

## A NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON WILL ENSURE:

- a hygienic environment is promoted and maintained.
- children are supported in their understanding of health and hygiene practices throughout the daily program and routine (hand washing, hand drying, cough and sneeze etiquette).
- educators and staff are aware of relevant immunisation guidelines for children and themselves.
- wall charts about immunisation are displayed for families, where applicable.
- an *Immunisation History Statement* for each child is collected on enrolment and maintained/updated regarding the child's immunisation status (AIR) and any medical conditions.
- families are provided with relevant sourced materials and information on infectious diseases, health, and hygiene including:
  - the current NSW Immunisation Schedule,
  - exclusion guidelines in the event of a vaccine preventable illness at the Service for children that are not immunised or have not yet received all their immunisations
  - advice and information regarding any infectious diseases in general and information regarding any specific infectious illnesses that are suspected/present in the Service.
- families are provided with information about an infectious disease verbally and by displaying and emailing the information and details.
- information or factsheets related to the disease/infection and the necessary precautions/exclusions required will be provided to families.
- families are advised that they must alert the Service if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness.
- all educators are mindful and maintain confidentiality of individual children's medical circumstances.
- that opportunities for educators to source pertinent up to date information from trusted sources on the prevention of infectious diseases and maintaining health and hygiene are provided.
- that opportunities for staff, children, and families to have access to health professionals by organising visits/guest speakers to attend the service to confirm best practice are provided.
- families are advised to keep children at home if they are unwell. If a child has been sick, they must be well for 24hrs before returning to the Service.
  - For example, if a child is absent due to illness or is sent home due to illness, they will be unable to attend the next day as a minimum. The Nominated Supervisor may approve the child's return to the Service if families provide a doctor's certificate/clearance certifying that the child is no longer contagious and is in good health.
  - Please note: it is not always possible to obtain a doctor's certificate or clearance for suspected cases of an illness. The decision to approve a child's return is up to the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor/Director.
- to complete the register of illness and/or document incidents of infectious diseases no later than 24 hours of an illness or infectious disease occurring in the Service.
- educators or staff who have diarrhoea or an infectious disease do not handle food for others and are not to return to work until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.
- any risk to a child or adult with complex medical needs is minimised in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus. This may require a risk assessment and decision-making regarding the suitability of attendance of the child or staff member during this time.

## EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- that any child suspected of having an infectious illness is responded to and their health and emotional needs supported at all times.
- any child suspected of having an infectious illness is isolated from other children and supervised whilst waiting for collection by parents or guardian.
- that appropriate health and safety procedures are implemented when treating ill children- wear disposable gloves, face mask or other PPE if needed.
- families are aware of the need to collect their unwell child/children as soon as practicable from the Service.
- after confirmation that a child is suffering from an infectious disease, and as soon as practical, the family of each child must be notified whilst maintaining the privacy of the ill/infectious child. Communication may be:
  - verbally
  - through a letter from the educator or Approved Provider
  - posting a note or sign at the entry of the Service
  - via electronic message- text message or email.
- all resources or items touched by a child with a suspected illness are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected- (cushions, pillows, toys).
- their own immunisation status is maintained, and the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor is advised of any updates to their immunisation status.
- opportunities are provided for children to participate in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities, and intentional practice such as hand washing, sneezing and cough etiquette.
- consideration is given to the combination of children to decrease the risk of attaining an infectious illness when planning the routines/program of the day.
- they adhere to the Service's health and hygiene policy including:
  - hand washing
  - daily cleaning of the Service
  - wearing gloves (particularly when in direct contact with bodily fluids- nappy changing and toileting)
  - appropriate and hygienic handling and preparation of food
  - wearing face masks if mandated by PHU
- they maintain up-to-date knowledge with respect to Health and Safety through on-going professional development opportunities.
- that children rest 'head to toe' to avoid cross infection while resting or sleeping, where possible.
- that cots or mattresses are placed at least 1.5m away from each other (*if physical distancing measures are required to be implemented*)
- children do not to share beds at the same time
- bedding is cleaned using detergent and water if the surface is known to be contaminated with a potential infectious disease, disinfectant is also used to clean beds
- that all play dough is freshly made every week. If there is an outbreak of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, or any other contagious communicable disease, play dough is to be discarded at the end of each day and a new batch made each day for the duration of the outbreak.
- children wash their hands before and after using play dough.

## PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR MINIMISING THE SPREAD OF DISEASE WITHIN OUR SERVICE INCLUDE ALL STAFF ENSURING:

- full adherence to the NHMRC childcare cleaning guidelines
- to clean surfaces first with detergent and water before using disinfectants. (Disinfectants cannot kill germs unless areas are clean)
- mops used for toilet accidents are to be soaked in disinfectant in a bucket in the laundry sink and then air-dried
- that a daily clean is carried out on other surfaces that may transmit germs such as high touch objects including doorknobs, tables, light switches, handles, remotes, play gyms, low shelving, etc. This will be increased to several times a day if an outbreak of an infectious disease/virus has been recorded in the Service or to minimise the risk of transmission of a virus such as COVID-19
- that if a child has a toileting accident, the items are placed in a plastic bag with the child's name on it for parents to take home

- cloths are colour coded so that a separate cloth is used to clean floors, bathroom, art and craft, and meal surfaces
- that any toy that is mouthed by a child is placed immediately in the 'toys to be washed' bucket and washed with warm soapy water at the end of the day. All washable toys out on display for the children are to be washed on a weekly basis to decrease the risk of cross contamination and recorded with the date as evidence.
- toys and equipment (that are difficult to wash) will be washed with detergent (or soap and water) and air-dried in sunlight.
- washable toys and equipment will be washed in detergent and hot water or the dishwasher and aired to dry (toys will not be washed in the dishwasher at the same time as dishes). All toys and equipment that have been cleaned will be recorded on the toy cleaning register.
- all cleaning procedures will be recorded on the Service's Cleaning Checklist
- furnishings, fabric tablecloths and pillowcases will be laundered at the end of each week and hung out to dry.
- floor surfaces will be cleaned on a daily basis after each meal and at the end of each day
- toilets/bathrooms will be cleaned in the middle of the day, the end of the day and whenever needed throughout the day using detergent and water followed by disinfectant and paper towel
- when cleaning up spills of faeces, vomit or urine off beds, floors, bathrooms etc. educators will use disinfectant on the surface after cleaning it with detergent and warm water
- pregnant staff members should not change nappies or assist in toileting or cleaning up toileting accidents to prevent unexpected cross contamination and risk of contracting Cytomegalovirus (CMV). These tasks should be continued with the approval of the staff member's Doctor.

## FAMILIES WILL:

- adhere to the Service's policies.
- adhere to the Service's restrictions of entry into the Service in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus.
- adhere to the Service's policy regarding Hand Washing.
- exclude their child from care if they display symptoms of an infectious illness or disease or in the event of a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the Service and their child is not immunised fully.
- advise the Service of their child's immunisation status, by providing a current Immunisation History Statement recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) for the Service to copy and place in the child's file.
- advise the Service when their child's medical action plan is updated.
- provide sufficient spare clothing, particularly if the child is toilet training.
- adhere to the Service's risk minimisation strategies if their child has complex medical needs in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus.

## REFERENCES

- ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. Dealing with Infectious Diseases.
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).
- Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).
- Gastroenteritis Information Pack for Childcare Centres:  
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/gastroenteritis/Documents/ccc-gastro-pack.pdf>
- Guidance for businesses with a worker who tests positive for COVID-19:  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/business/guidance-for-businesses-a-worker-who-tests-positive-for-covid-19>
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).
- Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2020).
- Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020).
- Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit For Early Childhood Education and Care Services- Vaccine preventable diseases, including staff vaccination:  
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Publications/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit.pdf#page=15>

- Medicare Australia (Department of Human Services): <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/medicare>
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2014). Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services. (6<sup>th</sup> ed)
- NSW Government Department of Health. Vaccination requirements for child care. [https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/childcare\\_qa.aspx](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/childcare_qa.aspx)
- NSW Health: Disease Notification: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Pages/notification.aspx#3>
- NSW Public Health Unit: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Pages/plus.aspx>
- Public Health Act 2010
- Public Health Amendment Act 2017
- Public Health Regulation 2012
- Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
- Safe Work Australia
- Sweetpeas Philosophy
- Vaccine Preventable Diseases Notification Form: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Documents/vpd-notification-form.pdf>

## REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted existing Sweetpeas policy</li> </ul>	July 2017	Cassandra Way (Admin + Educator) Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated NQS references</li> </ul>	July 2018	Cassandra Way (Admin + Educator)
1.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes required</li> </ul>	July 2019	Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
1.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checked the policy works for pandemics and other such viruses</li> <li>• Formatting</li> <li>• NQS &amp; Regulations Added</li> </ul>	March 2020	Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
1.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes required</li> </ul>	July 2021	Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
1.5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviewed, no changes made. Will be reviewed again when template is updated</li> </ul>	July 2022	Janine Evans (Managing Director)
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosmetic changes updating to new template</li> <li>• Checked all links</li> <li>• Added new policy sections                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Terminology</li> <li>○ Glossary of Abbreviations</li> <li>○ Public Health Unit</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Updated COVID-19 recommendations. Policy replacing COVID-19 Management Policy.</li> </ul>	April 2023	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager) Janine Evans (Managing Director)

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
2.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Checked and updated hotlinks</li><li>• No major changes required</li></ul>	April 2024	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)
2.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updated references to Staying Healthy to 6<sup>th</sup> edition</li><li>• Updated links and references</li><li>• Small edits for spelling/grammar fixes</li><li>• No other changes required.</li></ul>	April 2025	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)