



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

These guidelines are part of a series intended to assist in the development of your service's policies and procedures required under regulations 168 and 169. They set out the main components to be included in your policies and procedures, and considerations for each component.

They should guide how you develop your policies and procedures, and are not an exact format to be followed.

DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES

POLICY GUIDELINES

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, an approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place in relation to dealing with infectious diseases (regulation 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (regulation 170).

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 or family day care (FDC) residence or venue 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, FDC residence or approved venue (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).

Your policies and practices should also address the requirements and recommendations of jurisdictional and recognised authorities relating to dealing with infectious diseases, as well as quality practices that align with the National Quality Standard.

Every service is different so it is not sufficient to apply generic policies and procedures to multiple services. You will need to contextualise your policies and procedures to your service's operations and its unique context.

1. Title

Dealing with infectious diseases policy

2. Policy statement

The policy statement will reflect your service's philosophy and approach to dealing with infectious diseases.

For example:

As part of our approach to prioritising health and safety, we implement effective hygiene practices and work to prevent and effectively deal with any infectious disease in line with the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* and the advice of health experts.

3. Background

Your policy needs to include a statement of why this policy is in place.

For example:

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place in relation to dealing with infectious diseases.

Infectious diseases can spread rapidly in education and care services. As noted in the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*, when children – especially younger children – are in close contact with others, they often put objects in their mouths, and they may not always cover their coughs or sneezes. As some bacteria and viruses can survive on surfaces, children may touch a contaminated surface, then put their hands in their mouth and become infected. Additionally, if a child has an ill family member at home, they could be incubating the illness, and risk bringing germs from home into the service.

It is for this reason that it is especially important for our service to have effective policies and procedures in place that can promote awareness of infectious diseases and safe hygiene practices, that help to prevent any infectious disease from occurring, and outline the processes to manage any outbreak.

4. Legislative requirements

Your policy must be consistent with, and refer to, legislative requirements for dealing with infectious diseases.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

| Section/regulation | Description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Section 172 | Offence to fail to display prescribed information |
| Section 174 | Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority |
| Regulation 85 | Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures |
| Regulation 86 | Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness |
| Regulation 87 | Incident, injury, trauma and illness record |
| Regulation 88 | Infectious diseases |
| Regulation 103 | Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair |
| Regulation 168 | Education and care service must have policies and procedures |
| Regulation 169 | Additional policies and procedures – family day care service |
| Regulation 170 | Policies and procedures to be followed |
| Regulation 171 | Policies and procedures to be kept available |
| Regulation 172 | Notification of change to policies or procedures |
| Regulation 173 | Prescribed information to be displayed |
| Regulation 175 | Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority |

When writing your policy, you will need to break down what is required under each regulation and how your service will meet these requirements. How these work in practice will be contained in your procedures.

As you reflect on your **Dealing with infectious diseases policy**, it might highlight the need to split its various areas into different policies and procedures that can be readily accessed by all educators and staff members to follow. For example, you may wish to develop specific policies for COVID-19 or other infectious diseases that are relevant or common in your location.

5. Principles to inform your policy

All decision-making should be carried out in accordance with the principles of your service’s **Dealing with infectious diseases policy**. Examples of principles could include, but are not limited to:

- Children’s health, safety and wellbeing is a priority. We implement all regulatory requirements in this regard, including any jurisdictional conditions relating to enrolling children who are not up-to-date with their vaccinations. We also adopt quality practices to help prevent and manage any occurrences of infectious diseases, recognising in particular the effectiveness of good hygiene (e.g. washing hands regularly).
- Our educators and staff play an important role in safeguarding the children’s health, safety and wellbeing. We equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to deal with infectious diseases and to role model hygiene practices.
- We support children to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing. Our educators and staff model health and personal hygiene practices with children and reinforce these messages with families.
- We recognise the contribution of families in helping to prevent illness and disease at the service. As part of the enrolment process and ongoing communications, we advise them about our hygiene and the infection control practices and procedures.

6. Key terms

To make it easier for your audience, provide definitions of key terms that may not be used every day. For example:

| Term | Meaning | Source |
|--|--|--|
| ACECQA – Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority | The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children. | acecqa.gov.au |
| 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. | <i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services</i> (Exclusion periods explained – information for families) nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1 |

| Term | Meaning | Source |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Immunisation | <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>For families to receive the Child Care Subsidy and Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A, their child must meet the immunisation requirements.</p> <p>Jurisdictional requirements may also prevent children who are not immunised from attending a service.</p> | <p><i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services</i> (1.3.3 Immunisation)</p> <p>nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1</p> <p>servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/topics/what-are-immunisation-requirements/35396</p> <p>health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/national-immunisation-program-schedule</p> |
| 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. | National Regulations (Definitions) |

7. Links to other policies

Refer to related policies and procedures, for example:

- Providing a child safe environment
- Enrolment and orientation
- Dealing with medical conditions in children
- Incident, injury, trauma and illness
- The administration of first aid
- Delivery of children to, and collection from, education and care premises
- Water safety
- Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements
- Governance and management

8. Induction and ongoing training

State information about induction training and frequency of ongoing training and information sharing to assist managers, co-ordinators, educators and other staff to fulfil their roles effectively.

9. Policy created/reviewed

Include the date the policy was created, reviewed or changes were made.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and review

State when the policy will be reviewed and who will be responsible for this.

11. Checklist

- Have you referenced the relevant regulations and are these reflected in the policy?
- Does the title provide a clear and concise statement identifying the intent of the policy?
- Have you checked the policy requirements and referenced related legislation that applies to your service type?
- Does your policy statement provide a framework for decision-making and ensure consistent practice?
- Does your policy statement reflect your service’s philosophy?
- Is it clear why this policy exists?

PROCEDURES GUIDELINES

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, an approved provider must ensure policies and procedures are in place in relation to dealing with infectious diseases. These guidelines are part of a series and are intended to assist in the development of your policies and procedures required under regulations 168 and 169. They are to guide you to develop your policies and procedures, and are not an exact format to be followed.

Your procedures should be written in clear and concise language, making them easy to read, understand and implement.

The steps and guidelines you document will not only guide your practice, but also inform regulatory authorities of educator and staff expectations and responsibilities at the service.

When thinking about your procedures for dealing with infectious diseases, they also need to be practical and achievable. For example, if your procedures state that you disinfect toys daily, you will need to make sure that steps are in place for this to occur.

1. Title

Dealing with infectious diseases procedures

2. Reference to policy and philosophy

Here you refer to your ***Dealing with infectious diseases policy*** as seen in your policy documents. You can reference where you will find the policy to help those looking for it.

Your procedures will also reflect your service's overall philosophy and evidence-based quality practice guidelines for dealing with infectious diseases.

3. Procedures

This is where you detail the way you will implement the ***Dealing with infectious diseases policy***.

It is the 'How to' in your service and includes specific step-by-step procedures for dealing with infectious diseases.

Some areas that will be outlined here will include:

- where the procedures will be kept
- when they were last reviewed
- templates and documents that might be required and/or used as a part of the procedures (e.g. cleaning schedules)
- resources required for the implementation of procedures (e.g. *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*)
- systems to monitor the implementation of the procedures.

You will also need to consider:

- exclusion periods that are consistent with current information from a relevant recognised authority
- any jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations
- cleaning and maintenance processes, especially for high risk areas (e.g. bathroom, toilet, nappy change area, sandpit), furniture (e.g. cots), clothing, linen, and equipment (e.g. toys, carpets, mats)
- food safety
- hygiene practices for cleaning hands, nappy changing, nose wiping and toileting
- appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. gloves, face masks)
- other situations requiring special consideration: celebration cakes and blowing out candles, play dough, animals

- ensuring that educators and staff are immunised against infectious diseases as recommended by recognised authorities
- incorporating infectious disease considerations in risk assessments
- integration of infection control awareness, hygiene and protective practices in educational programming and planning
- how families are advised of cases of infectious illnesses in the service, including information about the nature of the illness, incubation and infectious periods and the service's exclusion requirements for the illness
- notification requirements to the jurisdictional health authority (e.g. Department of Health)
- notification requirements to the regulatory authority in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease in the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children attending the service.

You will need to consider how other procedures interact with the ***Dealing with infectious diseases procedures***. These include procedures relating to *Dealing with medical conditions in children, Incident, injury, trauma and illness, The administration of first aid* and *Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements*.

As you reflect on your ***Dealing with infectious diseases policy***, it might highlight the need to split its various areas into different procedures, which will be displayed or accessed by all educators and staff to follow in relation to their required actions. For example, you may wish to develop specific procedures in relation to COVID-19 or other infectious diseases that are relevant or common in your location.

4. Roles and responsibilities

This is where you will designate specific roles and responsibilities for the people who hold different positions within your service. This needs to align with the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (see pp. 8–10 below).

It is important to note that it is the legal responsibility of approved providers to ensure systems are in place to minimise risk and ensure health and safety procedures are implemented by the responsible people in services including FDC environments (if applicable). Ultimate responsibility lies with the approved provider to ensure their service/s are meeting the requirements under the *Education and Care Services National Law*.

When developing this section consider:

- What are the roles and responsibilities of the approved provider, responsible person, nominated supervisor, educators, other staff, volunteers, students and families in your service in relation to dealing with infectious diseases?
- How will you clearly define these roles and expectations and where will it be documented?
- Why are clear and robust procedures for dealing with infectious diseases important for children's safety and wellbeing?
- How will you learn from the administration of these procedures to improve your practices?
- How will you ensure that the necessary tools are available so the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and other staff members can follow the procedures? How will they be made aware of the procedures?
- Do the roles and responsibilities reflect your service type?

An example of roles and responsibilities could include, but is not limited to:

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|---|--|
| Approved provider | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that obligations under the <i>Education and Care Services National Law</i> and <i>National Regulations</i> are met • ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of any infectious disease at the service • ensure that families or an authorised emergency contact of the children attending are notified of the occurrence as soon as practicable and in a manner that is not prejudicial to the rights of any child, educator or staff member • display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service premises, FDC residence or approved venue • meet jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations • implement exclusion periods consistent with current information from a relevant recognised authority • 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 • ensure the premises, furniture and equipment are kept safe, clean and well maintained, including high risk areas (e.g. bathroom, toilet, nappy change area, sandpit), furniture (e.g. cots), clothing, linen, and equipment (e.g. toys, carpets, mats) • take reasonable steps to ensure that the nominated supervisor, educators and staff follow the policy and procedures • ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, co-ordinators, educators and staff, and available for inspection • notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or • significantly impact the service’s education and care of children or • significantly impact the family’s ability to utilise the service. |
| Nominated supervisor/ Responsible person | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement the <i>Dealing with infectious diseases policy</i> and <i>procedures</i> • ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of any infectious disease at the service • ensure that families or an authorised emergency contact of children attending are notified of the occurrence as soon as practicable and in a manner that is not prejudicial to the rights of any child, educator or staff member • display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises, FDC residence or approved venue • meet jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations • implement exclusion periods consistent with current information from a relevant recognised authority • ensure premises, furniture and equipment are kept safe, clean and well maintained • promote hygiene practices with all children, families, educators and staff • 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. |
| Educators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement the <i>Dealing with infectious diseases policy</i> and <i>procedures</i> • monitor children’s health, safety and wellbeing on a daily basis and manage accordingly • be immunised against infectious diseases as recommended by recognised authorities • stay at home if unwell or have an excludable infectious disease • employ and role model good hygiene practices for cleaning hands, nappy changing, toileting and food handling • integrate infection control awareness, hygiene and protective practices into educational programming and planning • communicate with families about infectious diseases in general and specific expectations within the service (e.g. exclusion periods). |

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|-----------------|---|
| Families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be familiar with and follow the service's <i>Dealing with infectious diseases policy</i> and <i>procedures</i> • provide immunisation documentation upon enrolment and as immunisations are administered • keep their child at home if they are unwell or have an excludable infectious disease • keep their child at home if there is an infectious disease at the service and their child is not fully immunised against it • inform the service if their child has an infectious disease or has been in contact with a person who has an infectious disease. |

The following table will assist you in developing procedures specific to your service's needs and context. Referring to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* when you are writing your procedures will assist you to ensure that you are meeting your obligations.

| Areas to include in your procedures | Things to consider and outline in each area (this will be specific to the context of your service) | Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures | Related policy and/or procedures |
|---|---|--|---|
| Prevention and awareness Regs: 88, 103, 168–173 QA1: 1.3 QA2: 2.1.2, 2.2.2 QA3: 3.1.2 QA4 QA6: 6.1 QA7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the jurisdictional requirements are relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations, and how to effectively meet them. • What cleaning and maintenance procedures will safeguard against the spread of infectious diseases, especially for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high risk areas (e.g. bathroom, toilet, nappy change area, sandpit) • furniture (e.g. cots) • clothing and linen • equipment (e.g. toys, carpets, mats). • Who should undertake cleaning and how often, noting climatic, seasonal flu conditions, and pandemic periods that may influence the need for cleaning frequency. • What food safety practices will be required (refer to your <i>Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements policy and procedures</i>). • What the hygiene processes will be for cleaning hands, nappy changing, nose wiping and toileting. • What other situations may require special consideration, e.g. celebration cakes and blowing out candles, play dough, animals. • Ensuring that educators and staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are immunised against infectious diseases as recommended by recognised authorities • stay at home if unwell or have an excludable infectious disease (consider if your policy for sick leave supports infection control). • Incorporating infectious disease considerations in risk assessments. • Establishing exclusion periods that are consistent with current information from a relevant recognised authority. • What other preventative measures you could implement to reduce infection, e.g. no sharing food, the use of PPE such as gloves and face masks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your policy and procedures are available for all to access. • Refer to recognised authorities/resources for your planning, e.g. jurisdictional health departmental advice/<i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services</i>. • Create a checklist to assist with the monitoring and upkeep of the hygiene and cleaning schedules. • Consider a schedule to ensure children's vaccinations are up-to-date. • Consider developing an illness register to monitor and review illness. • Ensure hygiene and infection control are part of regular planning and programming team reflections. • Place posters near the kitchen, bathroom, toilet, nappy change area showing hygiene practices to be followed. • Hold family information sessions or place information on noticeboards promoting hygiene practices. | Providing a child safe environment Governance and management Interactions with children Enrolment and orientation Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements |

| Areas to include in your procedures | Things to consider and outline in each area (this will be specific to the context of your service) | Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures | Related policy and/or procedures |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prevention and awareness (cont.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking children’s risk minimisation plans for any medical conditions that might make them more susceptible to poor outcomes from an infectious disease, and follow any recommendations. • How educators and staff can role model and encourage safe hygiene practices with children and families, e.g. key messages relating to handwashing, covering mouth when sneezing, tissues in bin etc. • Ways to integrate hygiene practices and infection control awareness into educational programming and planning. • How you will cater for children’s agency, reflecting independence and choice within safe hygiene practices. • How to communicate with families about hygiene practices in general and specific expectations within the service (e.g. washing hands on arrival), including considering their cultural backgrounds, beliefs and traditions. | | |
| Dealing with an infectious occurrence Act: 172, 174 Regs: 85, 86, 87, 88, 168–173, 175 QA1 QA2: 2.1.2, 2.2.2 QA3: 3.1.2 QA4 QA6: 6.1 QA7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What step-by-step actions are needed to stop the spread and minimise the risk of infection, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cleaning and disinfection • appropriate use of PPE, such as gloves and face masks • service access restrictions for families during drop off/pick up and visitors • reconsidering excursions. • How you will monitor the number of cases within the service, identify any patterns in the spread of the infection, and communicate this to educators and staff, and knowing when to report the occurrence to the appropriate authority. • Consider where you will immediately isolate children who are identified as being unwell. • Consider limiting movement of children, educators and staff between groups and rooms at the service. • The process for notifying families or an authorised emergency contact of the children about the occurrence as soon as practicable, and what information to notify (e.g. about the nature of the illness, incubation and infectious periods, the service’s exclusion requirements). This should be done in a manner that is not prejudicial to the rights of any child or educator or staff member (e.g. ‘There has been a case of chicken pox in the toddler room’, rather than ‘John has chicken pox’). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure procedures are part of educator and staff induction training, and regularly reviewed at meetings. • Develop communication plans and templates to be rolled out should the need arise. | Providing a child safe environment Governance and management The administration of first aid Enrolment and orientation |

| Areas to include in your procedures | Things to consider and outline in each area (this will be specific to the context of your service) | Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures | Related policy and/or procedures |
|--|---|--|---|
| Dealing with an infectious occurrence (cont.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process and requirements for notifying the relevant jurisdictional public health authority when there is an outbreak of an infectious disease at the service. • The process for notifying the regulatory authority where an outbreak of an infectious disease poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children attending the service. • How to talk to and support the children about the disease and calm any anxieties. • Displaying a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises, FDC residence or venue. | | |
| Post-incident Regs: 88, 168–172 QA1 QA2: 2.1.2, 2.2.2 QA3: 3.1.2 QA4 QA6: 6.1 QA7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the service’s handling of the infectious disease occurrence, critically reflecting on what could have been done to improve its response. • Review and update the policy and procedures if necessary. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a critical incident form to review the infectious disease occurrence. • Audit how often risk assessments should be completed, e.g. during the different seasons in the year. | Providing a child safe environment Governance and management |

5. Procedures created/reviewed

Include the date the procedures were created or reviewed.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

Your service, in consultation with educators and other key staff, families and other stakeholders, should review the effectiveness of these procedures within a set timeframe or earlier if there is a change in relevant legislation.

State when the procedures will be reviewed and who will be responsible for this.

7. Checklist

- Do the ***Dealing with infectious diseases procedures*** align with your ***Dealing with infectious diseases policy***?
- Have your procedures been written in plain English and can they be easily implemented by an educator or staff new to your service?
- Is it clear who is responsible for the implementation of the procedures?
- Are all educators and staff aware of the procedures and can implement them if required?
- Do you need to develop any resources to monitor and record the procedures?

USEFUL RESOURCES

Include links to useful resources that have helped inform the development of your policy. Be mindful of any state or territory specific content.

Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- ACECQA – Guide to the National Quality Framework [cecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](https://www.cecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)
- ACECQA – Opening a new service [cecqa.gov.au/resources/opening-a-new-service](https://www.cecqa.gov.au/resources/opening-a-new-service)
- Australian Government – Coronavirus (COVID-19) information [australia.gov.au](https://www.australia.gov.au)
- Australian Government – Immunisation requirements [servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/topics/what-are-immunisation-requirements/35396](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/topics/what-are-immunisation-requirements/35396)
- Australian Government – Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services [nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1)
- Starting Blocks – Illness in early learning services [startingblocks.gov.au/other-resources/factsheets/illness-in-child-care-services](https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/other-resources/factsheets/illness-in-child-care-services)