



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.

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

POLICY GUIDELINES

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

The policy and procedures must address regulations 155 and 156, which require the approved provider to take reasonable steps to ensure that the service provides education and care to children in a way that:

- encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions
- allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child
- gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour
- has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child at the service
- ensures children have opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and with educators, staff and volunteers. In providing these opportunities, the size and composition of groups of children must be considered.

Your policy and procedures should address these requirements, as well as quality practices relating to interactions with children that align with the National Quality Standard, especially Quality Area 5 – Relationships with children.

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

Interactions with children policy

2. Policy statement

The policy statement will reflect your service's philosophy and approach to interactions with children.

For example:

We recognise the importance of respectful and positive relationships that children have with each other and with educators, and we encourage a child-centred approach that promotes self-expression, self-reliance and self-esteem, and maintains each child's dignity and rights. We are committed to meeting our regulatory requirements in relation to interactions with children.

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 interactions with children.

4. Legislative requirements

Your policy must be consistent with, and refer to, legislative requirements for interactions with children.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

Section/regulation	Description
Section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Section 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
Section 168	Offence related to required programs
Section 169	Offence relating to staffing arrangements
Regulation 73	Educational program
Regulation 84	Awareness of child protection law
Regulation 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
Regulation 117A	Placing a person in day to day charge
Regulation 118	Educational leader
Regulation 123	Educator to child ratios – centre-based services
Regulation 123A	Family day care co-ordinator to educator ratios – family day care service
Regulation 124	Number of children who can be educated and cared for – family day care educator
Regulation 126	Centre-based services – general educator qualifications
Regulation 127	Family day care educator qualifications
Regulation 143A	Minimum requirements for a family day care educator
Regulation 145	Staff record
Regulation 155	Interactions with children
Regulation 156	Relationships in groups
Regulation 163	Residents at family day care residence and family day care educator assistants to be fit and proper persons
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

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 **Interactions with children 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 have separate policies for *Positive interactions between educators and children* and *Positive relationships between children*.

5. Principles to inform your policy

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

- We see positive educator to child interactions as central to ensuring quality outcomes for children’s education and care.
- We value the important role our educators and staff play in children’s education and care. We equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to interact positively with the children and promote relationships between children.
- Our educational program encourages children’s self-expression, promotes self-reliance, maintains their dignity and rights, gives positive guidance, and recognises their culture, values and abilities. We regularly reflect on and refine the program as needed in this regard.

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
Dignity and rights of the child	Element 5.1.2 of the National Quality Standard (‘Dignity and rights of the child’) aims to achieve the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability. Article 19 of the Convention states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.	Guide to the NQF (Element 5.1.2)
Positive interactions between educators and children	<p>Involves educators viewing each child as capable and competent, with a right to a voice, and able to contribute to decisions that affect them. This enables educators to focus their practices on children’s strengths and inclusion in the group environment.</p> <p>Educators who are responsive to children’s thoughts and feelings are supporting them to develop a strong sense of wellbeing. By interacting positively and meaningfully with children, educators help each child to feel accepted and to develop a sense of attachment and trust.</p> <p>Children who are supported to understand themselves experience a sense of belonging that fosters self-esteem which contributes to the development of identity and is critical to children’s capacity to understand their own strengths, abilities and interests. When children feel safe, secure and supported, they develop confidence to explore and learn.</p>	<p>Guide to the NQF (Element 5.1.1)</p> <p>Early Years Learning Framework, p. 20</p> <p>Framework for School Age Care, p. 19</p>

Term	Meaning	Source
Relationships between children	<p>When educators create supportive environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships, children respond accordingly.</p> <p>Positive relationships provide children with the confidence and agency to explore and learn about their world.</p> <p>As their relationships become more complex and far-reaching over time, children’s interactions with others also help them to extend their knowledge, thinking and ability to apply what they already know in new and unfamiliar contexts.</p> <p>Developing effective relationships with others is a key part of children’s social development and these relationships also provide a base for children’s learning.</p>	<p>Guide to the NQF (Standard 5.2)</p> <p>Early Years Learning Framework, p. 25</p> <p>Framework for School Age Care, p. 24</p>
Relationships between educators and children	<p>When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respected. Consistent emotional support contributes to children developing a strong sense of wellbeing and belonging.</p> <p>Relationships are the foundation for the construction of identity, and help shape children’s thinking about who they are, how they belong and what influences them.</p>	<p>Guide to the NQF (Standard 5.1)</p> <p>Early Years Learning Framework, p. 20</p> <p>Framework for School Age Care, p. 19</p>

7. Links to other policies

Refer to related policies and procedures, for example:

- Providing a child safe environment
- Enrolment and orientation
- Staffing
- Governance and management

8. Induction and ongoing training

State information about induction training and frequency of ongoing training and information sharing to assist managers, coordinators, 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 interactions with children. 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 in your procedures 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 interactions with children, they need to be practical and achievable. For example, if your procedures require educators to encourage children's self-expression in their interactions with them, they need to set out practical steps educators can follow to promote that.

1. Title

Interactions with children procedures

2. Reference to policy and philosophy

Here you refer to your ***Interactions with children 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 best practice guidelines for interactions with children.

3. Procedures

This is where you detail the way you will implement the ***Interactions with children policy***.

It is the 'How to' in your service and includes specific step-by-step procedures for staffing arrangements.

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
- systems to monitor the implementation of the procedures.

As you reflect on your ***Interactions with children policy***, it might highlight the need to split its various areas into different procedures, which will be displayed or accessed by all staff to follow in relation to their required actions. For example, you may wish to have separate procedures for *Positive interactions between educators and children* and *Positive relationships between children*.

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. 7–9 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 family day care (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 interactions with children?
- How will you clearly define these roles and expectations and where will it be documented?
- Why are clear and robust procedures for interactions with children 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 the 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 the service provides education and care to children in a way that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions • allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem • maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child • gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour • has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child (regulation 155) • ensure that the service provides children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful relationships with each other and with educators, staff and volunteers, having regard to the size and the composition of the groups in which children are being educated and cared for (regulation 156) • ensure the service meets minimum educator and staff requirements, such as qualifications and educator to child ratios • ensure that FDC educators are at least 18 years old, are suitably qualified, have adequate knowledge of education and care, and are ‘fit and proper’ persons • ensure all educators and staff have undertaken current child protection legislation training, including for the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their jurisdiction • ensure that no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or inappropriate in the circumstances • take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators, staff and volunteers follow the <i>Interactions with children policy</i> and <i>procedures</i> • ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators, staff, volunteers and families, 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement the <i>Interactions with children policy</i> and <i>procedures</i> • devise methods to lead the development and implementation of quality practices across the service that ensure that the requirements of regulations 155 and 156 are met • support educators to promote quality practice approaches to interactions with children • ensure minimum educator and staff requirements are met, such as qualifications and educator to child ratios • ensure all educators and staff have undertaken current child protection legislation training, including for the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their jurisdiction • ensure that no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances.

Roles	Responsibilities
Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribute to the development of, and implement, quality practices that ensure that the requirements of regulations 155 and 156 are met promote quality practice approaches to interactions with children be aware of current child protection legislation, including the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations monitor and maintain staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision of children support children in line with the strategies in the ACECQA Relationships with children information sheet: acecqa.gov.au/media/22966

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
Educator and child interactions Act: 165, 166, 168, 169 Regs: 73, 84, 115, 117A, 118, 123, 123A, 124, 126, 127, 145, 155–156, 168–172 QA1: 1.2 QA2 QA3 QA4: 4.1.1 QA5 QA6 QA7: 7.1.1, 7.1.3, 7.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you will design and implement an educational program and daily practices that effectively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage the children to express themselves and their opinions allow the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem maintain each child's dignity and rights at all times give each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour have regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child provide children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful relationships with each other and with educators, staff and volunteers (having regard to the size and the composition of the groups of children). What other areas could be incorporated into your educational program and practices to promote quality interactions with children. How educators will be supported to implement the educational program and promote quality practice approaches to interactions with children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure your policy and procedures are available for all to access. Hold regular reflective sessions with educators and staff on the planning cycle, educational program and practices. Regular reflections on all stages in the planning cycle and how each stage promotes quality interactions with children. For centre-based services, provide educators with time off the floor for reflection and programming. Provide opportunities for children and families to contribute to programming and planning. Provide educator and staff induction training, standalone training sessions, and regular updates and reviews at team meetings. Regular reflections (e.g. at team meetings) about how educators and staff interact with children. Set clear roles and responsibilities for educators and staff. 	Providing a child safe environment Staffing Governance and management

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
Educator and child interactions (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How you will ensure those aspects of the <i>Providing a child safe environment policy</i> and <i>procedures</i> relating to interactions with children are met, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting educator to child ratio and qualification requirements • monitoring staffing and supervision requirements and practices • implementing and monitoring of behaviour guidance to promote safe, positive play and children’s agency • keeping up-to-date with current legislation in relation to child protection, including obligations under mandatory reporting guidelines, e.g. who must report, what to report, when to report and how to report • ensuring all educators and staff know how to identify if a child or young person is, or may be, at risk and how to respond appropriately • actions to take if you reasonably believe or receive an allegation that abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service. • What practices you will put in place among educators and staff to ensure that all children will be treated with dignity and respect, and relationships are positive and engaging. • How the service respects and encourages families’ views and expectations regarding positive interactions with children. 		

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
<p>Supporting child to child interactions</p> <p>Act: 165, 168, 169</p> <p>Regs: 73, 115, 155, 156, 168–172</p> <p>QA1</p> <p>QA2: 2.2.1, 2.2.3</p> <p>QA3</p> <p>QA4: 4.1.1</p> <p>QA5: 5.2</p> <p>QA6</p> <p>QA7: 7.1.1, 7.1.3, 7.2.2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How you will design and implement an educational program and daily practices that promote interactions between children, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support children to become effective communicators • provide time for children to engage in uninterrupted play experiences with their peers • facilitate opportunities for children to learn from and help each other; share their knowledge, skills and experiences; and respond positively to ideas and suggestions from others. • How to facilitate the development of peer relationships for children who are new to the service. • How to ensure appropriate supervision so that children are safe in their interactions with other children. • How to share information about children as they transition between environments, to support them in building relationships with other children. • How educators can assess and evaluate social skill development as part of their observations of children. • How to support children of all ages to develop peer learning groups and support their progress through different stages of play and learning. • How you can encourage families' views and expectations about positive interactions between children. • How your service philosophy can act as a guide for educators and staff to support children in self-regulation or responding to the behaviour of others. • How educators can support children to identify their emotions and the emotions of others, and how their own actions affect others. This includes children with diagnosed additional needs (such as an Autism Spectrum Disorder or Attention Deficit Disorder). • How to work with and support families who have different expectations about guiding children's behaviour. • How to ensure educators are equipped to support children who are struggling to build social skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular reflective sessions with educators and staff on the planning cycle, educational program and practices and how each stage promotes quality interactions between children. • For centre-based services, provide educators with time off the floor for reflection on group dynamics and children learning from one another. • Provide opportunities for children to contribute to programming, planning and leading experiences. • Develop relationships with specialist agencies, such as a relevant Inclusion Support Agency. • Provide educator and staff training to support children whose additional needs can impact on their relationships with others. 	<p>Providing a child safe environment</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>Governance and management</p>

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 **Interactions with children procedures** align with your **Interactions with children 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 they 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 [acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)
- ACECQA – Inappropriate discipline information sheet [acecqa.gov.au/media/29626](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/29626)
- ACECQA – Opening a new service [acecqa.gov.au/resources/opening-a-new-service](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/opening-a-new-service)
- ACECQA – Relationships with children information sheet [acecqa.gov.au/media/22966](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22966)
- ACECQA – Supporting agency: Involving children in decision-making information sheet [acecqa.gov.au/media/22936](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22936)
- ACECQA – Supporting children to regulate their own behaviour information sheet [acecqa.gov.au/media/22971](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22971)
- Commonwealth of Australia – Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) [acecqa.gov.au/media/24251](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24251)
- Commonwealth of Australia – My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care [acecqa.gov.au/media/24641](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24641)
- Starting Blocks – Developing children’s positive behaviour in child care startingblocks.gov.au/other-resources/factsheets/developing-childrens-positive-behaviour-in-child-care
- UNICEF – United Nations Convention on the rights of the child [unicef.org/child-rights-convention](https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention)