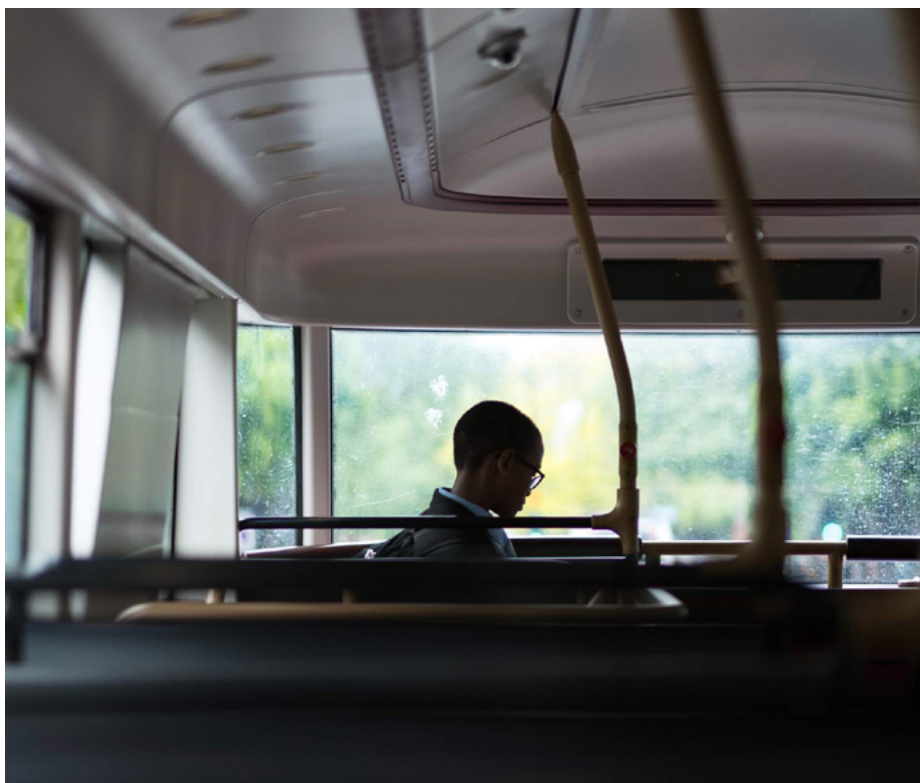




QUALITY AREA 2

MINIMISING THE RISK OF CHILDREN BEING LEFT BEHIND IN VEHICLES

Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard (NQS) aims to safeguard and promote children's health and safety, minimise risks and protect children from harm and injury. The approved provider, nominated supervisors, family day care coordinators and educators have responsibility for supporting the health, protection, safety and wellbeing of all children.



Transportation can present heightened risks to children's safety, in particular, during the period of moving between transport and embarking or disembarking from a vehicle. The consequences of leaving a child behind in vehicles can be fatal. Many of these types of serious incidents have occurred as a result of system failures when children embark or disembark from a vehicle.

Examples of when children have been left behind in a vehicle during transportation include but are not limited to being:

- locked in a vehicle after being collected from home and arriving at the service.
- left in a vehicle after attending an excursion.

Approved providers are required to notify state and territory regulatory authorities about serious incidents under section 174(2)(a) of the Education and Care Services National Law within 24 hours of the incident. A serious incident is defined in regulation 12 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations. Family day care (FDC) educators must notify the approved provider of the service if a serious incident occurs as per section 174A of the National Law.

IMPROVING CHILDREN'S SAFETY DURING REGULAR TRANSPORTATION

New requirements under the National Law for centre-based services that offer, or arrange, regular transportation of children as part of the education and care service will commence from 1 March 2023. These relate to:

- approved provider, nominated supervisor, staff and driver responsibilities.
- a staff member or nominated supervisor (other than the driver) being present at the service to account for all children as they embark and disembark at the service premises, make and keep a record of how each child was accounted for.
- a check of the interior of the vehicle to ensure there are no children left behind.
- mandatory notification to the regulatory authority when regular transportation starts being provided or arranged by the service, or ceases.

It is good practice for every approved provider, nominated supervisor, FDC coordinator and educator to apply these safety requirements for regular transportation to all periods of transportation including single trips.



FDC providers should consider establishing clear and consistent procedures, through effective risk assessment, that ensure no children are left in vehicles when the FDC educator or FDC educator assistant is transporting children.

WAYS TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF CHILDREN BEING LEFT BEHIND IN VEHICLES:



- ensuring the number of educators or other responsible adults is appropriate to provide supervision ensuring active and effective supervision at all times – with a particular focus on the seating of children and positioning of educator/s.



- actively engaging with the children over the course of the journey.



- establishing effective signing in and out procedures which may include having a second person to check the record.



- conducting regular headcounts and attendance checks of children including but not limited to before each departure, after each child embarks and disembarks the vehicle and after all children have disembarked.



- ensuring procedures for managing unexpected risks, such as if a child is absent from a collection point, are established and understood by all staff.



- ensuring procedures for embarking and disembarking the vehicle and processes for entering and exiting each location are documented and understood by all staff.



- embedding safety procedures for every trip including trips as part of an excursion or single trips. This may include having two people to conduct physical inspections of the vehicle at all destinations to ensure no children remain on the vehicle every time children disembark.



- ensuring relevant policies and procedures are up-to-date, provided to staff and families and that all staff are trained so that they understand their roles and responsibilities.



- embedding clear and effective procedures to ensure each educator/staff member is aware of their responsibilities for each trip and so do not assume someone else has completed a check.



- staff training on safe transportation of children is included in induction processes and refresher training is held annually.



- embedding risk assessment and management procedures such as the use of safety checklists for each trip. See ACECQA's [Safe transportation of children safety checklist template](#).



- Embedding effective communication plans/procedures with families to ensure that parents/carers inform the service that children will not be attending the service and do not need to be collected from another location.

Consider the following questions when reviewing your procedures to ensure children's safety during transportation:

- Do your policies and procedures address the National Law and Regulations requirements relating to transportation?
- Do your policies and procedures reflect your service's operations, unique context and nature of transportation? Do procedures include clear step-by-step instructions to be followed before, during, after and in between stops for each trip?
- What processes do you have in place to ensure that staff are trained and retrained in the use of the policies and procedures?
- How do you assess staff's understanding of the policies and procedures?
- How and how often do you audit staff compliance with the policies and procedures?
- What are the current 'handover' practices of staff that occur before, during and after each transportation trip? How is information about each child shared with the driver, educator/s, families and school staff (where relevant)?
- What factors do you consider when planning for staffing arrangements for transportation? Are the staff undertaking the transportation suitably experienced and trained to undertake this important role?



- What procedures are in place when regular staff are absent and/or children's pick up and drop off arrangements change?
- When are the risk assessments for transportation reviewed, who reviews them and how are staff informed of the outcome of the review?
- How is road and transport safety embedded in the educational program? What experiences are planned and implemented to encourage children to develop the skills to assess and manage risks to their own safety?
- When are regular staff discussions, debriefs and reviews about transporting children held at your service? How does the service critically reflect on any serious incidents or any identified risk or concern?
- How do you communicate with and seek feedback from families and/or from other relevant stakeholders such as school staff about your transport policies and procedures?

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

For additional information, please refer to Section 3 in the [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).

Visit the ACECQA website at www.acecqa.gov.au to download:

[National Law and National Regulations](#)
[Information sheet- Safe transportation of children](#)

Find other useful resources

[Transporting-children-safely-know-the-facts](#) (ela.org.au)
[Car and Road Safety | Kidsafe Australia](#)