

Immunisation for Children and Staff

<Service name>

Background

Children who attend early education and care services are in close contact with a large number of other children for lengthy periods and are at increased risk of catching and transmitting illnesses and diseases. Some of these are preventable through immunisation. Educators are also at risk, particularly when pregnant.

Vaccination is recognised as the most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In Australia, immunisation is optional. However, from 1 January 2016, parents must ensure their child's immunisations are up to date in order to be eligible for Child Care Benefit or Child Care Rebate. Exceptions are made for children with medical contraindications or natural immunity or certain diseases, and for those on a recognised catch-up schedule. Objections on the basis of personal, philosophical or religious beliefs (i.e. vaccination objections) are no longer accepted for exemption (i.e. do not provide eligibility for Child Care Benefit or Child Care Rebate).

Prior to enrolling children, early education and care services are now required to obtain approved documentation from parents about their children's immunisation status.

Policy statement

This Policy

details the Service's practices with regard to the enrolment and continued attendance of children based on their immunisation status. It also details the actions the Service will take in the event of an outbreak of a disease which can be prevented by immunisation. The Service supports the protection of children and educators through immunisation, and provides families and staff with information about immunisation and vaccine preventable illnesses and diseases.

The spread of vaccine preventable diseases within the Service is minimised through: monitoring immunisation records; complying with recommended exclusion guidelines and timeframes for children and staff; and, routine personal and environmental health and hygiene practices.

Strategies and practices

- The *Immunisation for Children and Staff Policy* is explained to parents when they enrol their child in the Service, and their attention is specifically drawn to their responsibilities under the Policy. Excerpts from this Policy are included in the Family Handbook given to all parents. QA 2.1.4
- Parents are required to provide the approved documentation of their child's immunisation status before their child commences at the Service, and evidence of each vaccination thereafter. For young children this will usually occur at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months, and 4 years. The approved documentation required is one of the following:

Immunisation for Children and Staff

- an official immunisation history statement issued by the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) which evidences that the child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations
- a letter from a recognised immunisation provider (e.g. General Practitioner or immunisation nurse) which states the child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations

- an interim vaccination objection form for enrolment in NSW early education and care services (1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016)
- an ACIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form (IM001) which has been signed by a General Practitioner. QA 2.1.4

- If a child's immunisation status is not up to date, the Service may:
 - Refuse to enrol the child;
 - Conditionally accept enrolment and/or attendance of the child with conditions (e.g. attendance may be limited for a specific period of time, or attendance may be limited to particular days or sessions); or,
 - Cancel enrolment or refuse attendance of the child.

- Staff are required to complete a Staff Immunisation Form detailing their immunisation status before they commence at the Service. They are required to review the form annually and update it whenever a change in status occurs. QA 2.1.4

- Staff are encouraged to keep up to date with their immunisations. A list of available and recommended immunisations is provided to all staff.

- The Service maintains a record of the immunisation status of each child and each staff member. It also maintains a Non-Immunised Children – Register and Non-Immunised Staff – Register so that this information can be readily retrieved in the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease. QA 2.1.4

- The Service routinely minimises the spread of illness and disease by promoting correct handwashing and other hygiene practices, and maintaining clean and hygienic environments. QA 2.1.3, 3.1.2

- In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, the Service will notify the relevant health authority, and will follow its recommended guidelines and directives. Children who are not immunised may be excluded from the Service for the duration of the outbreak. In addition, staff who are not immunised may be excluded from work. QA 2.1.1, 2.3.3

- As soon as practicable after the outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease at the Service, staff will notify parents or authorised emergency contacts when they collect their children, and send a note home with the child. Information sheets will be distributed to families. Parents of unimmunised children will be contacted directly and also provided with written notice detailing the specific period their child will be excluded from the Service. Signs will be displayed prominently throughout the Service informing families of the outbreak. QA 2.1.4

- If a child becomes unwell or is suspected of symptoms of an excludable infectious illness, the child's parents or authorised emergency contact are contacted immediately to collect their child. Wherever possible, the child is separated from the main group of children and one educator nominated to care for the child to reduce the risk of cross infection. QA 2.1.4

Immunisation for Children and Staff

- In the case of serious ill health or hospitalisation, the child or staff member is to provide a medical certificate from their doctor verifying that they are sufficiently recovered to return to the Service. However, the Nominated Supervisor has the final say on whether the child or a staff member may return to the Service. QA 2.1.1
- The Service maintains an Illness and Infectious Disease Register with the date, time, name and age of the child, symptoms, room/group, action taken, and diagnosis. QA 7.3.1
- The Service encourages staff to discuss with their doctor the topic of immunisation and the additional risks of contracting a vaccine preventable illness or disease inherent in their close, regular contact with the children. The Service also recommends that staff who may be considering pregnancy apply for screening for immunity for infections which carry risks of miscarriage or damage to the foetus (e.g. rubella, chicken pox, cytomegalovirus). QA 2.1.4
- The National Immunisation Schedule is displayed on notice boards throughout the Service. Factsheets and other resource materials on specific vaccine preventable diseases are available and, if required, can be obtained in a variety of languages. QA 2.1.4
- Educators are informed of the symptoms of excludable illnesses and disease and infection control through staff meetings and professional development, and are provided with educational materials. QA 2.1.4
- Risk assessments are conducted for unimmunised educators and pregnant staff to determine if any alteration to their work is necessary (e.g. not to change nappies)

Additional safe practices for babies

- To ensure accurate immunisation records are maintained and consistently updated in line with the immunisation schedule for babies.

Responsibilities of parents

- To provide documentation of their child's immunisation status before the child commences at the Service, and update this as changes occur.
- To inform the Service if a communicable disease occurs in the family because the child may become a carrier.

Links to other policies

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Interactions with Families Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regs	88	Infectious diseases
	90	Medical conditions policy
	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

Immunisation for Children and Staff

QA	2.1.1	Each child's health needs are supported
	2.1.3	Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.1.4	Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines
	2.3.2	Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury
	2.3.3	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
	3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
	7.3.1	Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements

Sources

- Department of Human Services (Australian Government). *Changes to immunisation requirements starting 1 January 2016*. <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/health-professionals/news/changes-immunisation-requirements-starting-1-january-2016> accessed 16 February 2016.
- Department of Health (Australian Government). *The Australian Immunisation Handbook*. (2015). 10th Edition. <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook10-home> accessed 15 February 2016.
- Department of Human Services (Australian Government). *Australian childhood immunisation register for health professionals*. <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/patients/acir/index.jsp> accessed 15 February 2016.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011.
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*. 5th edition. http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55_staying_healthy_child_care_5th_edition_0.pdf accessed 15 February 2016.
- Queensland Health. *Immunisation History Statements*. <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/immunisation/service-providers/statements/default.asp> accessed 15 February 2016.

Further reading and useful websites

- Department of Health (Australian Government). *Immunise Australia Program*. <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/> accessed 6 February 2016
- National Health and Medical Research Council – <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/> accessed 6 February 2016
- NCAC. (2011). *NCAC Factsheet for Families: Immunisation and child care*. http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/pcf-articles/P24_FFImmunisation_June11.pdf accessed 6 February 2016
- NSW Health. *Interim* vaccination objection form for enrolment in NSW childcare centres*. <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Documents/vaccination-objection-form-for-child-care-centres.pdf>
- NSW Health. *New immunisation requirements in child care from 1 January 2016*. <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/child-care-enrolment-changes-2016.aspx> accessed 15 February 2016.

Immunisation for Children and Staff

- Queensland Health – <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/> accessed 6 February 2016.
- Service for Community Child Health – <http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/> accessed 6 February 2016.
- Workplace Health and Safety (Queensland). (2013). *Immunisation in early childhood education and care services*.
https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/82975/childcare-immunisation.pdf accessed 15 February 2016.

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Date(s) reviewed:

Next review Date: