



# Infectious Disease Prevention and Control

## Policy Statement

As part of North Belconnen Community Association Inc (NBCA) approach to prioritising health and safety, we implement effective infectious disease prevention and control practices and work to address any instances of infectious disease in line with the Education and Care Services National Regulations (the Regulations) and advice of public health experts. This policy is intended to ensure that staff employed at the NBCA meet their mandatory obligations under Part 6 of the Public Health Act 1997 to report a notifiable condition.

## Background Statement

The Regulations require approved providers, such as NBCA, to ensure their services have policies in place to deal 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.

Bacteria and viruses may survive on surfaces and children may touch a contaminated surface, then put their hands in their mouth and become infected. 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.

## Procedures

### **The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor are responsible for:**

- ensuring that reasonable steps are implemented across the Centre to prevent the spread of infectious disease (Regulation 88(1));
- ensuring that if a child develops symptoms that may indicate an infectious disease while at a Centre, a parent/guardian (or authorised emergency contact) is notified as soon as is practicable (Regulation 88(2));
- ensuring that information from the ACT Health Directorate about the minimum exclusion periods is displayed at the Centre and made available to all stakeholders;



- ensuring children with infectious diseases do not attend the Centre within the exclusion period;
- ensuring that any changes to the exclusion period table, immunisation legislation, identification and management of infectious diseases, blood-borne viruses and infestations are communicated to staff and families in a timely manner;
- contacting the parent/guardian and the ACT Health Public Health Unit within 24 hours if the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor believes that a child enrolled at the Centre is suffering from a vaccine preventable disease, including: Pertussis, Poliomyelitis, Measles, Mumps, Rubella or Meningococcal C;
- notifying the ACT Health Public Health Unit in accordance with Part 6 of the Public Health Act 1997 if they suspect that a child has a **notifiable condition**, such as if there are is a respiratory illness in three or more related cases in the centre within 72 hours and/or if there is gastroenteritis involving two or more cases in the centre within 24 hours;
- ensuring children who are offered a confirmed place have the appropriate immunisation documentation;
- keeping informed about current legislation, information, research, and best practice;
- utilising discretion to determine whether a child is unwell, uncomfortable or potentially infectious and needs to be collected from the Centre; and
- ensuring that procedures are developed, implemented and systematically reviewed to prevent or reduce the spread of infections. For further information on these procedures, see below.

### **Educators Responsibilities**

If a child is identified or suspected of having an infectious disease, educators are responsible for ensuring that the following procedure is implemented:

- isolating the child from other children to reduce the spread of infection;
- ensuring the child is comfortable and appropriately supervised by educators;
- notifying management (Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor) to determine whether the child needs to be sent home to reduce the spread of infection;
- contacting the child's parents/guardians or nominated emergency contact and advising them of the child's condition. If appropriate, and as discussed with Management or Nominated Supervisor, advising parent/guardian that child needs to be collected from the Centre;
- Comply with the procedures for infection control in the Health hygiene and Infection Control Policy. In particular to blood-borne viruses;
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy);
- notifying families and educators, in relevant sections/rooms of the centre, of the infectious disease and providing information about the infectious disease and the exclusion period;
- ensuring confidentiality of any personal health information obtained by the Centre and educators in relation to children or their families; and
- ensuring that the Centre adheres to the legislated exclusion period.

To reduce the spread of gastroenteritis, educators are responsible for ensuring that the following procedures are implemented:

- contact the child's parents/guardians or nominated emergency contact and advise them of the child's condition;
- if appropriate, and as discussed with Management or Nominated Supervisor, ensure that the parents/guardians of the child who has vomited or had two cases of diarrhoea at the Centre are notified and advised to collect their child;
- ensure that the child does not return to the Centre until at least 24 hours after the vomiting or diarrhoea has ceased; and

- If a child returns to the Centre after having gastroenteritis, and vomits or has diarrhoea, the parents/guardians are notified and advised to collect their child and that the 24-hour exclusion period will re-commence.

If a child presents with a rash, ensure that the following procedures are implemented:

- Management or Nominated Supervisor are notified to determine whether the child needs to be sent home;
- Educators will monitor the child closely for any other symptoms;
- To minimise irritation of the skin, gently rinse and wipe the area with clean water (do not scrub) to remove sunscreen, sweat, dirt or irritants;
- if required, apply a cool compress (such as a paper towel wet with cool water) to relieve itching; and
- if an infectious disease is reported, ensure appropriate cleaning procedures are implemented to reduce the potential spread.

### **Families are responsible for:**

- keeping their children at home if they are unwell or have an excludable infectious disease
- complying with the recommended minimum exclusion periods;
- informing the educator in their child's room or management (Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor) as soon as practicable if their child has an infectious disease or has been in contact with a person who has an infectious disease;
- providing appropriate immunisation documentation for their child
- notifying the Centre if head lice or lice eggs have been found in their child's hair and when treatment was commenced;
- complying with requests to collect their child from the Centre if their child is unwell
- providing a clearance from their General Practitioner to return to the Centre if their child has had an infectious disease; and
- Seeking medical attention and advice for ongoing or recurring illness.

## **Related Policies**

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Exclusion
- Hand Washing
- Immunisation
- Medical Conditions
- Supervision
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Health Hygiene and Infection Control

NQS: 2.1.2, 2.2, 6.1, and 7

Regulations: 85-88, 103 and 170-175

Sources:

- ACT Health updates and information - [www.health.act.gov.au/](http://www.health.act.gov.au/)
- National Quality Framework
- NBCA Workplace Health and Safety Handbooks
- Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5<sup>th</sup> edition) 2013

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