

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Management Policy



Policy Objective

To minimise exposure to, and spread of, the COVID-19 virus amongst children, families, educators, and staff of Hawthorn Child Care Centre.

Implementation

The evolving nature of COVID-19, and the unprecedented steps required to protect our community as recommended by the Australian Government, has resulted in the development of a specific policy to assist Hawthorn Child Care Centre to manage this pandemic. This policy will change as required to ensure the protective measures against COVID-19 as advised by the Australian Government are implemented by our service.

Hawthorn Child Care Centre will minimise our staff, educator, families and children's exposure to, and transition of, COVID-19 by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the Australian Government's Department of Health and SA Health to slow the spread of the virus and minimise the risk of transmission. We will implement the following practices and procedures to help to reduce the risk of exposure and transmission of the virus:

- Hawthorn Child Care Centre has undertaken a risk assessment to identify any possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices related to COVID-19. Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised these risks as is reasonably practicable. We will revisit the risk assessment whenever new risks or potential risks are identified and adjust our management plan.
- Whilst there is no vaccination for COVID-19, we strongly recommend that all children and families receive the seasonal influenza vaccination.
- Educators and staff of Hawthorn Child Care Centre are asked to receive the seasonal influenza vaccination and provide the service with proof of vaccination.
- Where possible, visitors are requested not to enter the Centre.
- If a tradesperson is required to attend the Centre the following steps will be taken:
 - The tradesperson will be provided entry to the Service either prior to opening or after hours where possible
 - Hands must be sanitized using the provided alcohol-based sanitizer on arrival at the service
 - ensure all equipment brought into the Service is disinfected
 - be provided with strict protocols and procedures for entry into the premises- including respecting social distancing, locations of internal hygiene stations and touching of other surfaces
 - be escorted by a staff member to the site of repair/installation that has been pre-prepared for safety and social distancing measures
 - Hands must be sanitized using the provided alcohol-based sanitizer prior to leaving the Service
 - be escorted from the Service once the task has been completed
- Delivery drivers are asked to contact the service on arrival so that they can be met in the carpark or garage by a staff member to receive the delivery. If a signature is required, staff will use their own pen or if signing on a device, they will use hand sanitiser immediately after touching the device. Social distancing will apply at all times.
- Incursions and excursions are cancelled for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, or until otherwise recommended by government health authorities.
- The mixing of children will be reduced by separating cohorts when required:

- Two entries to the Centre are provided at in the mornings and afternoons to reduce mixing of children aged under 2 years and over 2 years
- Each room will utilize the outdoor spaces at different times
- Entry doors to the service and the rooms are left open, where safe, during peak times to avoid surfaces being touched by multiple persons.
- Families and staff are asked to wipe down the entry key pad after use.
- Families are asked to use the Xplor app to sign their children in and out of the service, supporting contact-free use of the communal iPads.
- All staff members will complete the Department of Health's COVID-19 infection control training program.

Hygiene Practices

Hawthorn Child Care Centre will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures and will adhere to National Regulation requirements and Government guidelines to ensure all educators, children, families and visitors to the Service implement best practice.

Our Service will ensure:

- All employees, parents, children and visitors must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser provided upon arrival to the service
 - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be kept out of reach of young children and only available for adults to use. If parents decide to apply this to their child, they must supervise the child to avoid rubbing it into their eyes or a child swallowing the gel/liquid
- Hands must be thoroughly dried using disposal paper and disposed of in the bin provided
- Disposable tissues must be used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use
- Hands must be washed following the use of tissues
- Hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- Cough and sneeze etiquette must be used- cover your cough and sneeze with your hand or elbow
- Educators and staff must adhere to our handwashing policy at all times
- Children are supervised when washing hands
- Educators and staff must adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures as per the centre's [food safety and hygiene](#) policy
- Educators will wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitiser, before wearing gloves and wash their hands after wearing gloves
- Educators and staff must adhere to our [effective environmental cleaning policy](#) for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and equipment (such as toys, puzzles, outdoor toys, bedding, playdough etc) as per *Staying Healthy: preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (fifth edition)
- Staff will maintain a cleaning register of all surfaces and equipment conducted
- Equipment, resources and surfaces including high-touch surfaces- taps, door handles, light switches, nappy change areas and toys will be cleaned more frequently as required using detergent and water followed by disinfectant
- Bathroom facilities for children and adults will have adequate supplies of soap, toilet paper and paper towel
- Educators and staff adhere to our [illness and infectious disease management](#) policy at all times

Illness

In the case of an unwell child or staff member steps will be taken as per the Centre's [Illness and Infectious Disease Management](#) policy and [Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness](#) policy.

Any child or staff member who is displaying 2 or more signs of COVID-19 including persistent cough, fever, shortness of breath, unexplained loss of smell or altered sense of taste, chills or body aches, sore throat, headaches, runny nose or diarrhoea will be isolated from others and sent home immediately and must seek urgent medical attention to determine if they need to be tested for COVID-19. All surfaces and resources touched by anyone who is suspected to have an infection must be cleaned with soap and water followed by disinfectant.

Any child or staff member being tested for COVID-19 are to remain at home until they have a clearance from a medical practitioner to state they have been tested for COVID-19 and the results are negative, and that they are cleared to return to childcare/work. Should children or staff return and still have 2 or more symptoms of COVID-19 they will be required to be retested and provide clearance again.

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will notify the Public Health Unit or Health Information hotline on 1800 020 080 of any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. In addition, the Approved Provider will also notify the Regulatory Authority in within 24 hours.

We are guided by explicit decisions regarding exclusion periods, self-isolation, self-quarantine and notification of any infectious disease by the Australian Government Department of Health and SA Health:

- Any person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must self-isolate until they are cleared by SA Health to leave self-isolation
- Any person who believes they have been in contact with, or have confirmation of contact with, a confirmed case of COVID-19 must self-isolate for 14 days
- Any person who has been tested for COVID-19 should stay in self-isolation until they receive a negative test result
- People who have been advised by SA Health that they are a close contact or a casual contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case must stay in self-isolation until the date provided to them by the Communicable Disease Control Branch.
- Any person who has arrived in Australia after midnight on the 15th of March 2020 must self-isolate for 14 days
- Anyone who has returned to SA from ACT and NSW, other than essential travellers, will be required to:
 - self-quarantine for 14 days after entering SA
 - submit for COVID-19 testing on:
 - the first day of entry to SA (the day of arrival)
 - the twelfth day of arrival.

Families must immediately advise the Centre if they, or anyone in their family, develops any symptoms of the virus or receives a positive result of the virus whilst in isolation.

Any person who is required to be in self-isolation or self-quarantine is not to enter Hawthorn Child Care Centre until their period of self-isolation or self-quarantine is completed.

Hawthorn Child Care Centre reserves the right to prevent children, employees, parents, family members or visitors to enter our premises if the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor suspects instances of COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a notifiable condition in all states and territories of Australia. The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will notify the Public Health Unit or Health Information hotline on 1800 020 080 of any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. In addition, the Approved Provider will also notify the Regulatory Authority in within 24 hours.

Communication of Information

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to families, educators and staff sourced from the Australian Government Department of Health and SA Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available.

- Staff and families are sent regular updates on the COVID-19 pandemic from accurate and reliable sources of information including
 - symptoms of COVID-19
 - transmission of the virus
 - self-isolation and exclusion
 - prevention strategies- including hand hygiene and self-isolation
 - contact details for health assistance
- Staff and families are sent regular updates on the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on early childhood education and care from accurate and reliable sources of information
- Families are notified of any changes to routines and/or practices which are changed or postponed
- Families are provided information about temporary changes to payment of fees
- Families are provided accurate information of the Early Education Fee Relief Rescue Package where they can receive fee free care until the week ending the 12th of July 2020.
- Families are sent resources to facilitate appropriate discussions about COVID- 19 with their children
- Families are sent ideas and strategies for education and care of children kept at home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Signage will be placed in strategic locations around the Service including posters for hand washing, cough and sneeze etiquette, disposal of tissues/hand towel, reduce the risk and physical distancing reminders amongst others.

Talking to Children about COVID-19

Hawthorn Child Care Centre is committed to maintaining positive interactions and relationships with children and their families.

- Information provided to children about COVID-19 will be age appropriate and sensitive to their emotional wellbeing. Educators will both acknowledge children's concerns and be open to discussions about COVID-19.
- Educators will inform children about the virus and emphasise preventative measures such as handwashing, use of tissues, cough and sneeze techniques and limiting touching other children's faces.
- Posters to demonstrate correct handwashing methods will be referred to and educators will model techniques.
- Children's emotional well-being will be closely monitored by all educators and staff and any concerns communicated with parents and families. Children's questions will be respected and supported.
- In the event of the Service being closed as a precaution to limit the spread of the virus, information will be provided to parents/families to help explain the situation to young children.

Payment of Fees

The new Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package, effective the 6th of April 2020, will replace the Child Care Subsidy and the Additional Child Care Subsidy. This is effective until the week ending the 12th of July 2020.

No fees will be charged to families during this time. Our service will waive any gap fees that are due from the 23rd of March to the 5th of April 2020.

Attendance information of children who attend our service will be recorded each day. Families will be provided with a statement of sessions attended.

Placements will be prioritised to provide care for children of essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children.

From the 13th of July 2020, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) return, along with new transition measures.

From the 13th of July 2020 until 4 October 2020, individuals who can no longer engage in the same number of hours of work, training, study or other activity recognised by the CCS activity test immediately prior to the COVID-19 crisis, can advise Centrelink they meet the requirements to access 100 hours of subsidised child care, per child, per fortnight for up to 12 weeks.

From the 13th of July 2020, families will need to update their activity levels to access the 100 hours. This can be done through their Centrelink online account through myGov or the Express Plus Centrelink mobile app

Absences from Childcare

Families have access to 62 allowable absences in the 2019-2020 financial year without the need for families to provide documentation such as a medical certificate.

Absences will not be counted during the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package period commencing the 6th of April 2020.

Closure of Service

The decision to close our Service will be made, and advised, by relevant state and territory governments or the Regulatory Authority. This may be due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our Service community.

Should this occur, all families will be notified immediately via email and/or phone.

The Approved Provider will notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of any closure via the NQA IT System.

Staff

Confirmed COVID-19

If an educator or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19, they are unable to attend the workplace and cannot return to work until they have completed a period of self-isolation of at least 14 days. Employees must provide a declaration from a medical practitioner that they are fit for work and have no symptoms of COVID-19 and have been advised they no longer need to be in isolation.

Full and part-time employees who cannot attend work due to illness can take paid sick leave.

As per our privacy obligations under the Privacy Act, the identity of a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 will only be shared with Public Health and/or on a strictly 'need to know' basis. Access to personal or medical information can only be shared with the consent of the employee.

Caring for A Family Member or Emergency

If an employee cannot attend work due to caring for a family member due to COVID-19, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave. Casual employees are eligible to have 2 days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. See Fair Work Act for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees. Reasonable evidence is required to justify the absence.

Self-Isolation Due to Travel

As per Australian Government's new measures for COVID-19 effective 28 March 2020, any person returning from overseas will be mandated to isolate in a designated facility. The employee is not entitled to be paid (unless they use paid leave entitlements- annual leave. Employees are not entitled to use personal sick leave as they are not 'sick'. Employers may choose to adopt an option to satisfy both parties. (See: Australian Business Lawyers and Advisors for further information)

Self-Isolation Unpaid Pandemic Leave

Effective the 8th of April 2020 to the 30th of June 2020 , employees who are required to self-isolate by government or medical authorities or acting on advice of a medical practitioner may access unpaid pandemic leave.

This leave provides employees with:

- 2 weeks of unpaid pandemic leave
- The ability to take twice as much annual leave at half their normal pay if their employer agrees

Self-Isolation as A Precaution

If an employee wants to stay home as a precaution of contracting COVID-19 they may negotiate to take unpaid leave, annual leave or long service leave with Management.

Employees Who Are Stuck Overseas or In Quarantine

If an employee cannot return to Australia due to the COVID-19 virus, they must contact the Approved Provider immediately. Management will negotiate payment considering accrued annual leave, long service leave or leave without pay.

JobKeeper

Eligible businesses impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) will be able to access a subsidy from the Government to assist in continue in paying employees. Eligible employees are those who:

- are currently employed by the eligible employer (including those stood down or re-hired)
- were employed by the employer at 1 March 2020
- are full-time, part-time or long-term casuals (employed on a regular basis for longer than 12 months as at 1 March 2020)
- are sole traders
- are at least 16 years of age
- are an Australian citizen, permanent visa holder or a Special Category (subclass 444) visa-holder
- are not in receipt of a JobKeeper payment from another employer.

The Approved Provider will notify the Commissioner via the approved Australian Taxation Office (ATO) form that the employer elects to participate in the JobKeeper scheme.

If the employee agrees to be nominated by the Approved Provider as their primary employer and receive JobKeeper payments for them, they must provide the approved ATO nomination form.

Further information about JobKeeper, tax and superannuation will be discussed with each individual employee.

If applicable, employees who have been stood down before the commencement of this scheme, may be able to be reengaged. The Approved Provider will discuss options individually with involved staff members.

As of the 20th of July 2020, JobKeeper will cease for employees of a CCS approved service.

Employees Entitlements- Fair Work Commission

For businesses eligible for JobKeeper, the Approved Provider (employer) is permitted to request employees to perform different duties within their skill and competence.

The Approved Provider will explore options for staffing and flexible work arrangements with individual employees. Any direction must be from consultation with the employee and at least three (3) days provided before any change is implemented.

Arrangements may include reduction in hours, request employees to take annual leave or other leave entitlements or changes to rostering and duties.

Employees may be requested to complete activities such as:

- professional development learning
- programming and documentation
- updating the Quality Improvement Plan
- conducting cleaning within the service and room preparation
- completing any maintenance required as per risk assessments
- development of online activities for children

The Approved Provider must obtain written consent by the employees of any changes in their work conditions.

Waivers

In the event of staff members requiring to self-isolate due to possible infection of COVID-19, the Approved Provider will apply to the Regulatory Authority for waivers for qualifications and/or ratios to minimise disruptions to our provision of care.

Communicating with Families

Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the necessity of self-isolation for some staff members, our Service will endeavour to inform parents and families of any staff changes on a daily basis.

Staff who have approved leave will be replaced with casual staff and families will be informed as per our usual practices to ensure continuity of care where possible.

Changes to Existing Policy

Practices for receiving deliveries were updated. The use of the Xplor app to sign children in was added. Information on the end of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package was added. Information on the removal of children or staff with 2 or more symptoms of COVID-19 from the service was added. The requirement for a clearance from a medical practitioner for children or staff to return to the service was added. Information on self-isolation and self-quarantine were added. The end date of the JobKeeper package was added.

Regulations

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2019

National Quality Standards 2

Sources

Childcare Centre Desktop

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Review Date: August 2020

Next Review Date: Ongoing