Education Standards Board

Education and Early Childhood Services
Registration and Standards Board of SA

Government of South Australia

Policies and procedures for early childhood services

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Early childhood education and care services must have in place policies and procedures as outlined in the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. This fact sheet provides information about:

- the differences between a policy and a procedure
- style and content
- policies and procedures required under the regulations (168 & 169)
- other associated regulatory requirements.

What is the difference between a policy and a procedure?

A policy states what a service will or will not do in a particular situation and why. For example, a service may have a policy about water safety. The policy might say that every reasonable precaution will be taken when children are engaging in or near water based experiences.

A procedure gives instructions on how and who will carry out the steps to meet the policy objective. Procedures should be straight forward but contain enough detail to cover all possible situations. For example, the procedures for a water safety policy might include: direct supervision of children at all times; regular playground checks before children enter the playground; ensuring cleaning buckets are emptied immediately after use and not left in areas accessible to children; safety precautions when using troughs; and the safety precautions at centres with a swimming pool and/or rainwater tank.

Policies should be informed by your service's philosophy statement, Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics and current advice from recognised authorities.

Key things to consider when developing your policy include:
- service type
- location
- profile and needs of families and the community
- strategic direction and future plans of your service.

Style and content

Policies and procedures can be combined in the same document. They do not have to be in any particular style or format or even written separately as listed in regulations 168 & 169, and titles do not need to be exactly worded as in the National Regulations. Procedures can be written by using dot point or numbered lists, flow charts and checklists. Use clear and concise language and avoid jargon where possible. Effective policies and procedures include:
- a document title
- the date the document was created
- the document version number (e.g. Version 2.0)
- a revision due date
- a clear policy statement or statement of intent (how it relates to the service philosophy and why it exists)
- objectives (what the policy aims to achieve)
- details about procedures, expectations and how the policy will be carried out
- content headings (e.g. Rationale, Objective/Aim, Preamble, Purpose, Definitions, Guidelines, topic-related headings, Supporting documents, Appendices)
- definitions (e.g. Infant: a child under the age of one year)
- links to regulations (NQF)
- any resources—such as websites, books and agencies—that were used as references when developing the policy, or which could be useful for further reading.

Resources to help develop and maintain policies for your service can be accessed via The Inclusion & Professional Support Program Online Library. These include:
- the booklet: How To Develop and Update Policies Successfully (without the stress) - http://server05.calyx.net.au:8080/psca-ds/bitstream/handle/123456789/171/how%20to%20series%20PoliciesWEB.pdf?sequence=1
- a range of policy templates that can be adapted to meet your service requirements - http://www.ipsplibrary.net.au/cgi-bin/koha/opac-search.pl?q=policies+in+practice.

Policies and procedures required under the regulations

Under regulations 168 & 169, policies and procedures are required in relation to the following:

Health and safety (National Standard Quality Area 2)
- Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements
- Sun protection
- Water safety (including safety during any water-based activities)
- Administration of first aid
- Incident, injury, trauma and illness (procedures to comply with regulation 85)
- Dealing with infectious diseases (including procedures complying with regulation 88)
- Dealing with medical conditions in children (including the matters set out in regulation 90)
- Emergency and evacuation (including the matters set out in regulation 97)
- Delivery of children to, and collection of children from, education and care service premises (including procedures complying with regulation 99)
- Excursions (including procedures complying with regulations 100 to 102)
- Providing a child safe environment

Staffing arrangements (National Standard Quality Area 4)
- Code of conduct
- Determining the responsible person present
- Participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements

Relationships with children (National Standard Quality Area 5)
- Interactions with children (including the matters set out in regulations 155 and 156)

Service management (National Standard Quality Area 7)
- Enrolment and orientation
- Governance and management of the service (including confidentiality of records)
- Acceptance and refusal of authorisations
- Payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the service
- Dealing with complaints

Additional policies and procedures required for family day care services (regulation 169)

In addition to regulation 168, policies and procedures for family day care services are also required in relation to the following:
- assessment, approval and reassessment of approved family day care venues and family day care residences (including
- matters to meet the requirements of regulation 116)
- engagement or registration of family day care educators

- keeping of a register of family day care educators under regulation 153
- monitoring, support and supervision of family day care educators, including how the service will manage educators at remote locations
- assessment of family day care educators, family day care educator assistants and persons residing at family day care residences (including the matters required under regulation 163)
- visitors to family day care residences and venues while education and care is being provided to children as part of a family day care service
- the provision of information, assistance and training to family day care educators the engagement or registration of family day care educator assistants.

Other associated regulatory requirements

The following is a summary of the requirements for regulations 170-172 (refer to the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 for full details).

Policies and procedures to be followed (regulation 170)

Approved providers must take reasonable steps to ensure that all staff members and volunteers engaged by or registered with the service follow the policies and procedures required under regulations 168 & 169.

Policies and procedures to be kept available (regulation 171)

Approved providers must ensure that the current policies and procedures required under regulation 168 and, in the case of family day care services, regulation 169, are available for inspection at any time the service is educating and caring for children.

Notification of change to policies or procedures (regulation 172)

Unless approved providers have reason to believe the safety, health or wellbeing of any child enrolled at their service is at risk they must ensure that parents of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure referred to in regulations 168 & 169 that may:
- significantly impact the service's provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service, or the family's ability to utilise the service
- affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Contact details

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