



# Vacation Care Services

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## Vacation Care Programs

Out of school hours care services (OSHC) offer an education and care service predominately to school age children through one or more of three components, namely:

- before school care
- after school care, and
- vacation care programs.

The majority of OSHC services in South Australia operate on primary school sites.

This fact sheet provides information on a number of important factors that approved providers should consider when operating vacation care services, in particular on a school site, to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all children attending the service.

## Responsible person

The Education and Care Services National Law (South Australia) (the National Law) requires that a responsible person must be present whenever the service is educating and caring for children. The responsible person can be the approved provider, the nominated supervisor or a certified supervisor who is placed in day-to-day charge of the service. The nominated supervisor or certified supervisor must understand their legal responsibilities and obligations and provide written consent to being the responsible person for the service.

On a school site the nominated supervisor is often the Principal of the school. If the Principal is not available during any vacation care period, the approved provider and Principal, as the nominated supervisor, need to ensure that an appropriate person is designated to act as the responsible person and is able to effectively lead the service during this time.

The approved provider should consider the person's qualifications, experience, skills and capability to

ensure the person can meet the requirements. The responsible person must have a thorough understanding of the policies and procedures of the service and have adequate knowledge of the requirements of the National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations (the National Regulations) for exercising the supervisory, leadership and management responsibilities of the role.

In all instances, if the nominated supervisor is not present at the service, a responsible person must be able to manage the day-to-day operations of the service. It is recommended that the school Principal, as the designated nominated supervisor, is contactable during the vacation care period if necessary and in the event of an emergency.

It is important to note that while the nominated supervisor may not be on site during the vacation care program, they still hold the legal responsibilities for the OSHC service in accordance with the National Law.

Approved providers must identify and display information in relation to the nominated supervisor and the responsible persons at the education and care service at all times.

## Enrolment information

Services should have a comprehensive and thorough enrolment policy and procedures to ensure the needs of individual children can be planned for and strategies developed to meet their needs. Enrolment information must be accessible and available to the responsible person and educators during the vacation care period with essential information relating to the child such as:

- the contact details for the child's parents and any persons to be notified in an emergency
- any authorised person who has been given permission by a parent or family member to collect the child from the service
- details of any court orders, parenting orders or parenting plans

- current written authorisations signed by the parent such as consent to the medical treatment for the child from a doctor, hospital or ambulance service and transportation of the child by an ambulance service
- current information about the specific healthcare needs of the child
- current medical management plan
- details of any dietary restrictions for the child.

## Access to documents

Documents must be available in relation to individual educators such as:

- educator qualifications
- first aid qualifications
- asthma and anaphylaxis management qualifications
- relevant history assessments (working with children checks).

These documents must be accessible to the OSHC service at all times. In situations where these documents are stored in the school's office, the approved provider must ensure additional copies are also available in the OSHC service.

## Preschool age children attending vacation care

The National Law and the National Regulations make provision for OSHC services to educate and care for a small number of children aged 36 months to preschool age. If children under school age are enrolled, the service will need to plan for these children by:

- ensuring that the minimum ratios for preschool age children of 1 educator to 10 children are maintained
- ensuring there is adequate supervision at all times for the younger children, for example supervising access to the toilet facilities
- using the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) to develop a program to meet each child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the program
- ensuring that the need for sleep and rest of the younger children is considered
- ensuring the furniture and resources are age appropriate
- considering the age appropriateness of the indoor and outdoor environment provided for the younger children

## Notification of incidents

The responsible person must have a clear understanding of their reporting responsibilities regarding serious incidents and knowledge of when and in what circumstances they are required to notify the Board and the required timelines. It is important to note that serious incidents in particular must be notified to the Board within 24 hours of the incident while other non-serious incident notifications are required within 7 days.

During the vacation care program, with the absence of the approved provider or nominated supervisor at the premises, there must be a process in place to ensure that the appropriate notifications are made to the Board within the required timeframe. For further information about notifications please refer to our [Notifications fact sheet](#).

## Communication with the school

It is essential that strategies ensuring clear communication are in place between the service and the school prior to each school holiday period.

In situations such as site refurbishing or upgrades like asbestos removal, major outdoor works or gym resurfacing that would result in the temporary relocation of the service, the approved provider must ensure that any proposed alternative premises are approved in advance by the Board.

The approved provider must ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending the vacation care service at all times including:

- ensuring the approved facilities of the service are available to the vacation care service during the hours of operation
- ensuring there is no disruption to essential services such as site security, cleaning services, garbage collection, and internet access
- ensuring that any scheduled school maintenance or refurbishment projects occurring on the school site during the school holidays will not impact on or affect the day-to-day operation of the service.

Schools should ensure the OSHC service is familiar with and has all emergency contact details should any site safety issues or emergencies arise when the Principal and other school personnel are not on site during school holidays.

## Risk assessment: excursions and incursions

During vacation care periods many services have members of the community visit the site (incursions) as well as visiting locations in the local community with children (excursions).

Whether children remain on the school site or go on excursions, the approved provider and nominated supervisor have responsibility to ensure that children's safety, health and wellbeing is protected, children are adequately supervised at all times and the service complies with the National Law and Regulations.

Multiple factors and transition points have the potential to increase the nature and degree of risk to children and will vary depending on the particular circumstances such as:

- the number of children
- the length of time children are at the service
- children new to the service that are unfamiliar with

educators, other children, the environment and routines

- preschool age children in attendance
- children with additional needs
- children being exposed to people other than educators employed at the service
- unfamiliar environments, activities and resources
- various methods of transport
- use of public toilets and facilities.

Undertaking a risk assessment is part of planning an activity, incursion and excursion. The risk assessment must identify and assess factors that may pose a risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of any child, and detail strategies for minimising and managing those risks. As part of the risk assessment the environment should be considered in the context of the needs of children. For example, the zoo may require higher levels of supervision for some children than a movie theatre, whereas other children may require higher levels of supervision in a movie theatre than at the zoo. A thorough risk assessment should determine whether minimum ratios are sufficient to provide adequate supervision at all times. This applies to both incursions and excursions.

When conducting a risk assessment and risk management plan services should:

- consider if the venues or activities offered are suitable for the ages, stages, health conditions and abilities of all children
- assess the educator to child ratio and educator skills and strengths
- consider whether any specialised skills are required to ensure children's safety
- include consistent and regular head counts or allocating a group of children to a particular educator
- consider other laws and rules that might apply, such as road safety requirements.

All risk assessments should be endorsed by the approved provider and the nominated supervisor

## Emergencies: invacuation and evacuation

Emergency, invacuation and evacuation procedures and instructions may also vary slightly for the vacation care program.

For example, identifying processes about sounding the alarm when no school administration personnel are on site need to be considered. It is important for approved providers to develop emergency procedures to suit vacation care programs that operate during school holiday periods. Approved providers should:

- identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the service
- ensure the emergency, invacuation and evacuation procedures and instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency are reviewed prior to each school holiday period. For example, these may differ during bushfire season than at other times of the year
- ensure the emergency and evacuation procedures are rehearsed every three months and the rehearsals of the emergency, invacuation and evacuation procedures are documented.

## Further information

Education Standards Board fact sheets:

[Policies and procedures for ECS](#)

[OSHC Ratios](#)

[First aid qualifications](#)

[Relevant History Assessments](#)

[Risk assessments](#)

[Preschool age children attending OSHC Services](#)

## Contact details

Early Childhood Services

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