

Immunisation Policy

BELLA GRACE EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

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 required to obtain approved documentation from parents about their children's immunisation status.

Policy statement

This Policy details the Service's practices regarding 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.

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

- 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:
 - 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 copy of the immunisation section of their child health book which has been signed/stamped by a General Practitioner.

Immunisation Policy

- Staff are required to complete a Staff Immunisation Form detailing their immunisation status before they commence at the Service. They are required to up-date the form whenever a change in status occurs.
- Staff are encouraged to keep up to date with their immunisations.
- The Service maintains a record of the immunisation status of each child and each staff member.
- The Service routinely minimises the spread of illness and disease by promoting correct handwashing and other hygiene practices, and maintaining clean and hygienic environments.
- 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. Parents of unimmunised children will be informed and provided with details about the specific period their child will be excluded from the Service. Signs will be displayed in the foyer informing families of the outbreak.
- 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.
- Parents are to inform the Service if a communicable disease occurs in the family because the child may become a carrier.
- 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.
- The Service maintains an Illness Register with the date, time, name and age of the child, symptoms, room/group, action taken, and diagnosis.
- 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).
- The National Immunisation Schedule is displayed in the foyer of the Service.
- Educators are informed of the symptoms of excludable illnesses and disease and infection control through staff meetings and professional development.
- 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)

Immunisation 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

QA	2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
	2.2.2	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

Sources

- Department of Social Services. (2017). *Immunisation and Health Check requirements for FTB*. <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/benefits-payments/strengthening-immunisation-for-young-children> accessed 26 December 2017
- 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 26 December 2017
- Department of Human Services (Australian Government). *Australian childhood immunisation register for health professionals*. <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/patients/acir/index.jsp> accessed 26 December 2017
- 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 26 December 2017
- Queensland Health. *Immunisation Records*. <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/immunisation/service-providers/records> accessed 26 December 2017

Further reading and useful websites

- Department of Health (Australian Government). *Immunise Australia Program*. <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/> accessed 26 December 2017
- National Health and Medical Research Council – <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/> accessed 26 December 2017
- 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 26 December 2017
- Queensland Health – <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/> accessed 26 February 2017

Immunisation Policy

- Service for Community Child Health – <http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/> accessed 26 December 2017
- 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 26 December 2017

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.

REVIEW DETAILS:

Review Date	Details of Changes
January 2018	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 Feb 2018
April 2018	Included "copy of Health Care Book immunisation section" for proof of immunisation.