

DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

To view the full version of this policy (including attachments); please speak to the staff at your early learning service.

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

Overarching Policy Statement:

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy statement:

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- providing a safe and healthy environment for all children, staff and any other persons attending the service;
- responding to the needs of the child or adult who presents with symptoms of an infectious disease or infestation while attending the service;
- complying with current exclusion schedules and guidelines set by the Department of Health;
- providing up-to-date information and resources for families and staff regarding protection of all children from infectious diseases and blood-borne viruses, management of infestations and immunisation programs.

Uniting Early Learning supports the Immunise Australia Program and National Immunisation Program (NIP – refer to *Sources*), which is currently recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and supported by the Commonwealth Government. The Victorian Government provides an immunisation schedule and vaccine eligibility criteria at:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/immunisation-schedule-vaccine-eligibility-criteria> All educators/staff at Uniting Early Learning are committed to preventing the spread of infectious diseases through simple hygiene practices such as hand washing, effective cleaning procedures, monitoring immunisation records and complying with minimum period of exclusion guidelines and timeframes for children and educators/staff.

Purpose:

This policy provides clear guidelines and procedures to follow when:

- a child attending the service shows symptoms of an infectious disease;
- a child at the service has been diagnosed with an infectious disease;
- managing and minimising the spread of infectious diseases, illnesses and infestations (including head lice);
- managing and minimising infections relating to blood-borne viruses.

This policy also includes information on child immunisation.

Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

It is important that the service has implemented good hygiene and infection control procedures, and ensures that they are adhered to by everyone at the service.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab No Play) Act 2015 (Vic) was introduced to increase immunisation rates for young children in the community. This means that the person in charge of an early childhood service must ensure that the enrolment of a child is not confirmed unless a parent of the child has provided an immunisation status certificate (refer to *Definitions*) indicating that, in relation to a date that is not more than 2 months immediately before the child attends the service the child is age appropriately immunised. For further information refer to the *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*.

Where an infectious disease has been identified, a parent, authorised nominee or emergency contact of each child at the service must be notified as soon as is practicable, and reasonable steps taken to prevent the spread of that infectious disease. The service must inform DET, DHHS Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control Unit and the relevant parents within 24 hours of becoming aware that a child is suffering or believed to be suffering from an infectious disease, or if a child not immunised against the disease has been in contact with an infected person at the service.

Information about the Department of Health and Human Services minimum exclusion periods (refer to *Definitions*) must be displayed at the service and strictly adhered to. Any exclusion of a child will be based on firm medical evidence following diagnosis of an infectious disease, or on recommendations from the DHHS Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control Unit.

Parents of children attending the service should be provided with information and resources to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations. They should be advised at enrolment of their responsibilities regarding advising the service if their child has an infectious disease or head lice. All families must have completed a *Consent form to conduct head lice inspections* on enrolment.

The following attachments are included with this policy:

- Attachment 3: *Consent form to conduct head lice inspections*
- Attachment 4: *Head lice action form*
- Attachment 5: *Head lice notification letter*
- Attachment 6: *Procedures for infection control relating to blood-borne viruses*

Scope:

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents, children and others attending the programs and activities of the service, including during offsite excursions and activities.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.

Background and legislation:

Infectious diseases are common in children. Children are at a greater risk of exposure to infections in a children's service than at home due to the amount of time spent with a large number of other children. Infectious diseases are divided into four categories (A, B, C, D) on the basis of the method of notification and the information required. The Department of Health has developed a document, *Minimum Period of Exclusion from Primary Schools and Children's Services Centres for Infectious Diseases Cases and Contacts*, to assist in protecting the public by preventing, or containing, outbreaks of infectious conditions common in schools and other children's services and is regulated by the *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001*.

An approved service must take reasonable steps to prevent the spread of infectious diseases at the service, and ensure that the parent, authorised nominee or emergency contact of each child enrolled at the service is notified of the occurrence of an infectious disease as soon as possible. The service must have policies and procedures in place for dealing with infectious diseases (Regulations 4, 88). The service has a duty of care to ensure that everyone attending the service is provided with a high level of protection during all hours that the service is in operation. Protection can include:

- notifying children, families and educators/staff when an excludable illness/disease is detected at the service
- complying with relevant health department exclusion guidelines
- increasing educator/staff awareness of cross-infection through physical contact with others.

The Victorian Government offers an immunisation program for children to assist in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Some vaccines are provided for free under the National Immunisation Program and some are funded by the Victorian Government. For the schedule and eligibility criteria visit: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/factsheets/schedule-victoria.htm. For information about how to obtain an Immunisation Status Certificate refer to *Definitions*.

Attachment 2 contains a list of the legislation and sources relevant to this policy, including Acts and Regulations.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents, children, management and all affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness;
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy;
- ensure that all information related to infectious diseases on display and supplied to parents is current;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required;
- notify parents at least 14 days before making any change to this policy or its procedures.

Definitions:

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Blood-borne virus (BBV): A virus that is spread when blood from an infected person enters another person's bloodstream. Examples of blood-borne viruses include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B, hepatitis C and viral haemorrhagic fevers. Where basic hygiene, safety, infection control and first aid procedures are followed, the risks of contracting a blood-borne virus are negligible.

Exclusion: Prohibiting attendance or participation in the program at the service.

Illness: Any sickness and/or associated symptoms that affect the child's normal participation in the program at the service.

Immunisation status: The extent to which a child has been immunised in relation to the immunisation schedule. The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab No Play) Act 2015 (Vic) was introduced to increase immunisation rates for young children in the community. This means that the person in charge of an early childhood service must ensure that the **enrolment of a child is not confirmed unless** a parent of the child has provided an **immunisation status certificate** (see below) indicating that, in relation to a date that is not more than 2 months immediately before the child attends the service the child is age appropriately immunised. There are some exemptions under the Act. For further information refer to the *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*.

Immunisation status certificate: To be considered acceptable as an Immunisation Status Certificate for the purposes of enrolment at an early childhood education and care service the document/s need to:

- include the child's full name, date of birth and address
- list vaccines the child has received and when the vaccine was given (can be an attachment)
- show the date of the child's next due vaccine OR include a statement saying the child has completed all their childhood vaccinations
- if relevant, list any vaccines the child cannot receive for medical reasons
- include the immunisation provider's name, organisation name and Medicare provider number or Australian Childhood Immunisation Register number
- be signed and dated by the immunisation provider

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children-adolescents/no-jab-no-play/early-childhood-professionals>

Parents can get a copy of their child's Immunisation History Statement:

- through [Medicare online accounts](#) or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app
- at a [local Medicare service centre](#)
- by requesting a statement be posted to them in the mail:
 - phone 1800 653 809
 - email acir@medicareaustralia.gov.au

Alternatively, parents can get an immunisation status certificate from an immunisation provider such as a GP or local council immunisation service.

Infection: The invasion and multiplication of micro-organisms in bodily tissue.

Infestation: The lodgement, development and reproduction of arthropods (such as head lice), either on the surface of the body of humans or animals, or in clothing.

Infectious disease: A disease that can be spread, for example, by air, water or interpersonal contact. An infectious disease is designated under Victorian Law or by a health authority (however described) as a disease that would require the infected person to be excluded from an education and care service.

Medication: Any substance, as defined in the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* (Cth), that is administered for the treatment of an illness or medical condition.

Notifiable complaint/incident: The Approved Provider is required to notify the Regulatory Authority of certain circumstances and information in the required timeframe. Notification must occur within 24 hours if it relates to:

- complaints (either written or verbal) alleging the health, safety or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached;
- an incident that requires the approved provider to close, or reduce the number of children attending, the education and care service for a period;
- additional children being educated and cared for in an emergency (e.g. flood or fire)

Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the appropriate forms, which can be found on the ACECQA website. Further information about notifications can be found in Section 173 and 174 of the National Law and in National Regulations 174 and 175.

Pediculosis: Infestation of head lice that is transmitted by having head-to-head contact with another person who has head lice. Pediculosis does not contribute to the spread of any infectious diseases, and outbreaks of this condition are common in schools and childcare facilities.

Minimum period of exclusion: The period advised by the Department of Health for excluding any person from attending a children's service to prevent the spread of infectious diseases through interpersonal contact. The exclusion table (Schedule 7) published by the Department of Health can be accessed at <http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Minimum-Period-of-Exclusion-from-Primary-Schools-and-Childrens-Services-Centres-for-Infectious-Diseases-Cases-and-Contacts>

Serious incident: For the purposes of section 174(5) of the Law, the following are prescribed as serious incidents—

- (a) the death of a child—
 - (i) while being educated and cared for by an education and care service; or
 - (ii) following an incident while being educated and cared for by an education and care service;
- (b) any incident involving serious injury or trauma to, or illness of, a child while being educated and cared for by an education and care service—
 - (i) which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
Examples Whooping cough, broken limb, anaphylaxis reaction.
 - (ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital;
- (c) any incident where the attendance of emergency services at the education and care service premises was sought, or ought reasonably to have been sought;
- (d) any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service—
 - (i) appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for; or
 - (ii) appears to have been taken or removed from the education and care service premises in a manner that contravenes these Regulations; or
 - (iii) is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the education and care service premises or any part of the premises.

The Approved Provider must notify the Regulatory Authority (DET) in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Regulation 176(2)(a)). The Notification of serious incident form (available on the ACECQA website) is to be completed and submitted online using the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS). Records are required to be retained for the period specified in Regulation 183.

Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by Uniting Victoria Tasmania on: 1/7/2017

Review date: July 2017

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Administration of Medication Policy*
- *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*