

Early Learning Water Safety Policy

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- providing opportunities for children to explore their natural environment including through water play;
- ensuring that children are protected from the risks associated with drowning or non-fatal drowning experiences;
- ensuring that curriculum planning incorporates water safety awareness;
- providing information to educators, staff, parents, volunteers and others at the service about water safety.

Executive Summary

Water safety relates to access to water in a building, a playground or when on excursions, and also to the availability of drinking water for children. All staff at the service have a responsibility to ensure the indoor and the outdoor learning environments are safe with regard to water related hazards (such as nappy buckets, pools, outdoor equipment, puddles). Water hazards that are not able to be adequately supervised at all times must be isolated from children by a child-resistant barrier or fence, or if a receptacle then emptied of water.

Adequate supervision of all children at the service must be ensured at all times and in keeping with duty of care responsibilities. An educator with a current approved first aid qualification will be in attendance and immediately available at all times children are attending the service.

Current Environmental Context

The supervision and safety of children with and around water is of paramount importance.

Learning spaces and environments should offer an array of possibilities and connect children with natural materials. Water is one experience that offers children sensory-rich, open-ended experiences that engage their curiosity and imagination. Children may encounter these resources in the service environment and/or when on excursions. These experiences, especially those conducted with and near water, will be carefully supervised ensuring the safety of children and adults. It is imperative that educators remain vigilant in their supervision of children in and around water, and are alert to potential risks in everyday practice in the learning environment.

Drowning is a leading cause of death for children in Victoria, with infants and toddlers the group most at risk. Non-fatal drowning incidents can result in permanent brain damage and disability. Knowledge of potential hazards associated with water will assist educators to provide a safe, stimulating environment for preschool children.

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Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, including nappy buckets, water containers, outdoor equipment, pet water bowls and poor drainage which allows water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children. Children can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water.

Keep Watch is a public education program of Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, aimed at preventing the drowning deaths of children under 5 years of age in all aquatic locations. The program has four key actions:

- supervise children constantly around water
- restrict access to water hazards by using child-proof barriers and fences
- provide water awareness training to children
- resuscitation saves lives – ensure that staff have completed current first aid training.

Parents should be informed about the *Water Safety Policy* on enrolment; they also have a responsibility to inform themselves about water safety, ensuring their children understand the risks associated with water.

Attachment 37a – Responsibilities relating to the water Safety Policy

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Reference/Sources

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved May 2017

- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Emergency and Evacuation Policy
- Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events Policy
- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy-L2
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Children's Services Act 1996, s26, 27, 29
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 101(2), 168(2)(a)(iii)
- Kidsafe – Water Safety Fact Sheet: www.kidsafevic.com.au
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- Royal Life Saving Society – Australia: www.royallifesaving.com.au
- Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care (2014) Standard 10
- Water Safety Victoria – Water Safety Guide: Play it Safe by the Water www.watersafety.vic.gov.au

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on: 12/03/2019

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by: 17/12/2020

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