

# Disease Prevention and Immunisation Policy

<b>Document Title</b>	NQS2.70 Disease Prevention and Immunisation Policy	<b>Version</b>	3b
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<b>Warning - Ensure you are using the latest version of this policy.</b>			
DCC Network/All Organisation Information/Policies/Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety			

## 1. Policy Statement

River Region Early Education is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all children, staff and other persons attending the service by

- 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 and the NSW Department of Health
- Providing up to date information for families and staff regarding protection of all children from infectious diseases and blood borne viruses, management of infestations and immunisations programs.

## 2. Rationale

Ensuring the health and safety of children, staff and educators, and supporting children's ongoing wellbeing, is a core focus of the delivery of our services.

Whilst it is not possible to prevent the spread of all infections and diseases, River Region Early Education is committed to minimizing this risk. This is enhanced through

- Effective hygiene
- Exclusion of ill children, educators and other staff
- Immunisation which is a simple, safe and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases/infection before they come into contact with them in the community. Immunisation not only protects individuals, but also others in the community, by reducing the spread of disease/infection.

This policy is to read and be used in conjunction with the 5th edition of Staying Healthy– Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Child Services. This document is to be referred to for further information relating to infectious diseases.

[http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55\\_staying\\_healthy\\_childcare\\_5th\\_edition.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55_staying_healthy_childcare_5th_edition.pdf)

## 3. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the approved provider to:

- Ensure that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of that infectious disease (Regulation 88(1)).

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- Ensure that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact of each child at the service is notified of the occurrence as soon as is practicable (Regulation 88(2)).
- Ensure that information from the Public Health Unit about the recommended minimum exclusion periods is displayed at the service, is available to all stakeholders and is adhered to in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease (as designated by the Department of Health).
- Ensure that the parent/ guardian and Public Health Unit are notified as soon as possible (within 24 hours) , after being made aware that an enrolled child: has one of the following vaccine preventable diseases, or is reasonably suspected of having come into contact with a person who has one of these vaccine preventable diseases and the enrolled child has no evidence of immunisation lodged to show that the child is immunised against, or acquired immunity by infection from, that disease.
  - Gastroenteritis (2 or more cases in 2 days)
  - Pertussis, or
  - Poliomyelitis,
  - Measles, or
  - Mumps, or
  - Rubella, or
  - Meningococcal C, or
  - Diphtheria, or
  - Haemophilus influenza Type b (Hib), or
  - Tetanus
- Ensure that any directions provided by Public Health Unit are followed regarding the possible exclusion of a child or educator who is not immunised against a vaccine preventable disease.
- Notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of a serious incident including when a child becomes ill at the service or medical attention is sought while the child is attending the service.
- Ensure that appropriate and current information and resources are provided to staff and parents/guardians regarding the identification and management of infectious diseases, blood-borne viruses and infestations.
- Keep informed about current legislation, information, research and best practice.
- Ensure that any changes to the exclusion table or immunisation schedule are communicated to staff and parents /guardians in a timely manner.
- Ask new employees to confirm in writing that we have provided this information during their induction.
- Strongly encourage all non-immune staff to be vaccinated against pertussis, measles-mumps-rubella, varicella, hepatitis A. River Region Early Education will refund the cost of annual flu vaccines and applicable disease
- Request a medical certificate from educators who have been ill stating they are not contagious and are okay to return to work if necessary (See Personal Leave Policy)
- Keep up to date records on the immunisation status of the educators in their service with assistance from administration staff (via an annual Employee update form)
- Regularly provide educators and staff with information about diseases that can be prevented by immunisation through in-service training sessions, fact sheets and the Staying Healthy in Childcare publication (p 67)

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- Regularly advise educators and staff that some infectious diseases may injure an unborn child if the mother is infected while pregnant through in-service training sessions, fact sheets and the Staying Healthy in Childcare publication (p 69). Advise female educators / staff who are not fully immunised to consider doing so before getting pregnant. These infections include chickenpox, cytomegalovirus and rubella (German measles)
- Advise pregnant educators and staff to review the Staying Healthy in Childcare publication and consult their medical practitioner to consider the risks of continuing to work at the service and ensure that pregnant educators and staff follow good infection control and hygiene procedures
- Consider restricting pregnant educators and staff to working only with toilet trained children,
- Exclude all non-immune (unvaccinated) educators and staff for the periods outlined under Exclusion Periods during an outbreak of an infectious disease on unpaid stand down until the Public Health unit determines it is safe for the unimmunised educator to return.

It is the responsibility of nominated supervisors to:

- Contact the parents/guardians of a child suspected of suffering from an infectious or vaccine- preventable disease, and requesting the child be collected as soon as possible.
- Notify a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact person when a symptom of an excludable infectious illness or disease has been observed.
- Ensure that a minimum of one staff with current approved first aid qualifications is in attendance and immediately available at all times the service is in operation.
- Establish good hygiene and infection control procedures and ensuring that they are adhered to by everyone at the service.
- Ensure the exclusion requirements for infectious diseases are adhered to as per the recommended minimum exclusion periods, notifying the Approved Provider and parents/guardians of any outbreak of infectious disease at the service, and displaying this information in a prominent position.
- Advise parents/guardians on enrolment that the recommended minimum exclusion periods will be observed in regard to the outbreak of any infectious diseases or infestations.
- Advise the parents/guardians of a child who is not fully immunised on enrolment that they may be required to keep their child at home when an infectious disease is diagnosed at the service, dependent on directions from the Public Health Unit.
- Request that parents/guardians notify the service if their child has, or is suspected of having, an infectious disease or infestation.
- Display an infectious disease notification for families within 24 hours and keep a log as required.
- Advise educators of infectious disease outbreak via Story park.
- Provide information and resources to families to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations, e.g gastroenteritis poster
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Provide relevant sourced materials to families.
- Ensure that an "Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness" record is completed as soon as practicable or no later than 24 hours of the illness occurring.

It is the responsibility of educators to:

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- Ensure that any children that are suspected of having an infectious illness are responded to and their health and emotional needs supported at all times.. This may involve endeavouring to isolate the child from other children and ensure the child is comfortable and appropriately supervised.
- Contact the child's parents or nominated emergency contact (if the child's parents are unavailable we will contact authorised nominees) and ask them to pick the child up as quickly as possible (and within one hour). Educators will provide information in the child's home language if possible
- Complete an incident, injury, illness and trauma record (QA2 attachments)
- Any person picking the child up from the service must be able to show identification if unknown to the educator
- Ensure all bedding, towels and clothing which has been used by the child are washed separately and if possible air dried in the sun
- Follow the hygiene and infection control policy regarding cleaning procedures (Note- any vomit spillage requires use of bleach)
- Ensure all toys used by the child are disinfected
- Ensure all eating utensils used by the child are separated and sterilised.
- Inform all families of the presence of an infectious disease using Story Park and by placing a notice using Infectious Disease Notification sign up within 24 hours ); (the child's name will not be revealed). Refer to QA2
- Educators will also advise the Nominated Supervisor as soon as they believe they have an infectious disease and are unable to care for children. Exclusion period will depend on the infectious disease./ illness. It may be 24-48 hours after symptoms have resolved/ or NO symptoms. Please refer to Staying Healthy Guidelines
- Maintain their own immunisation status and advising the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor of any updates to their immunisation status.
- Provide varied opportunities for children to engage in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities, and intentional practice.
- Observe signs and symptoms of children who may appear unwell and informing the Nominated Supervisor.
- Provide access to information and resources for parents/guardians to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations.
- Monitor any symptoms in children that may indicate the presence of an infectious disease.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.

It is the responsibility of families to:

- Providing Immunisation documentation upon enrolment and as administered.
- Keep their child away from the service if they are unwell and/or:
  - If they have symptoms of an excludable infectious disease,
  - If they have ear, eye or discoloured nasal discharge or a severe cough,
  - If they have a fever over 38°C or have been treated for a fever with paracetamol or ibuprofen within the previous 12 hours,
  - For 24 hours from the commencement of antibiotics, and/or
  - Until they are symptom-free for 24 hours or 48 hours for gastro-like symptoms (vomiting and/or diarrhoea),
- Advise educators if the child requires medication. Medication must be prescribed by a doctor and authorised in writing by a parent or another authorised person, See our

Administration of Medication policy. Our service does not administer over the counter medication unless it has been prescribed by a medical practitioner.

- Collect their child from the service should their child become unwell within one hour or make arrangements for someone else to do so.

## 4. Definitions

**Gastro-like symptoms** – nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea including loose or watery stools, stomach pain and cramps, fever, head and body aches, loss of appetite, fatigue and weakness.

## 5. Guidelines

### a) Immunisation

Under the Public Health Act 2010, education and care services cannot enrol a child unless approved documentation has been provided that shows the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age or
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated or
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if the child has fallen behind with their vaccinations.

### Immunisation Records

To enrol in our services, families must provide a copy of one or more of the following documents:

- a current Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement which shows that the child is up to date with their scheduled immunisations in line with the NSW Immunisation Schedule
- a current AIR Immunisation History Form on which the immunisation provider has certified that the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule in line with the NSW Immunisation Schedule
- an AIR Immunisation Exemption – Medical Contraindication Form which has been certified by an immunisation provider for a child who cannot receive one or more vaccine(s) for medical reasons

The following groups of children have 12 weeks from the date of enrolment to provide immunisation documentation as it's recognised they may need extra time to source records:

- Children subject to a guardianship order under the Children and Young persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Children placed in out of home care
- Children being cared for by an adult who's not their parent due to exceptional circumstances like illness or incapacity
- Children who've been evacuated following a state of emergency
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

The AIR maintains immunisation records for children up until their 20th birthday and can be contacted on 1800 653 809. AIR Immunisation History and Exemption forms are available on the Department of Human Services website <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/>

Parents/guardians must provide the Service with an updated copy of their child's immunisation record when the child receives a vaccine which is on the National or State immunisation schedule. We will regularly remind parents to do this via newsletters, emails or letters. Failure to

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provide these updated records within three months of being due to receive the immunisation, will result in the enrolment of the child being cancelled.

### **Immunisation Register**

Our service will keep an Immunisation Register which:

- records the immunisation status of each child enrolled at the Service and
- contains immunisation certificates and other certificates provided by parents.

Administration will request copies of up to date immunisation statements and provide copies to all relevant Nominated Supervisors for the child's file.

If requested, our Service will provide a copy of the record and certificates kept for a child in the Immunisation Register to the parent of the child so they can enrol the child at another education and care Service.

Information about each child will be kept for three years from the date a child last attends the service. (see River Region Early Education Privacy and Confidentiality Policy)

### **Catering for Children with Overseas Immunisation Records**

Overseas immunisation records are not to be accepted. They often differ from the schedule recommended in Australia and a child may require extra vaccinations to be up to date with the Australian schedule. Parents are responsible for having their child's overseas immunisation record transcribed onto the AIR.

Children vaccinated overseas must attend an immunisation provider (e.g., doctor) to have their overseas record assessed and be offered appropriate immunisations. The Provider will complete an Immunisation History Form which should be provided to the Service. A copy of the AIR Immunisation History Statement should also be provided to the service when it is received by families.

### **Immunisation Related Payments for Parents - Child Care Benefit**

The benefit applies to children who are fully immunised or have an approved exemption from immunisation. This initiative ensures parents are reminded of the importance of immunising their children at each of the milestones. For parents to receive CCB without their child being fully immunised their doctor or immunisation provider needs to certify that the child:

- is on a catch-up immunisation schedule or
- has an approved exemption from the immunisation requirements. Approved exemptions include medical contraindications and existing natural immunity but do not include conscientious objection.

Information on how a child's immunisation status affects payments made to a family is available on the Department <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/>

### **Immunisations for Educators and Staff**

It is important that educators remain up to date with their vaccinations in order to protect themselves as well as children in their care. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend that educators should be immunised against -

- Hepatitis A
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)

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- Educators born during or since 1966 who do not have vaccination records of two doses of MMR, or do not have antibodies for rubella, require vaccination
- Varicella if they have not previously been infected with chickenpox
- Pertussis (whooping cough). An adult booster dose is especially important for those educators caring for the youngest children who are not fully vaccinated
- Influenza (annually)
- Hepatitis B if caring for unimmunised children with intellectual disabilities (although the risk is low).

River Region Early Education will follow a risk-based assessment approach for their workforce in regard to COVID-19.

### **b) Effective hygiene**

Our service will maintain and promote effective hygiene practices including

- Correct handwashing technique.
- Safe and hygienic storage, handling and preparation of all food and drinks
- The provision of fresh linen and sheeting for cots and mattresses
- Using standard precautions when handling blood, all body fluids, secretions and excretions, dried blood and other body substances
- Toileting, nappy changing and cleaning equipment
- Cleaning toys and other items that children are likely to put in their mouths, after use
- Raking sandpits often and/or securely covering them when not in use
- Disposing of soiled items in a container that is inaccessible to children
- Washing rubbish bins and nappy buckets regularly; and
- Actively promoting handwashing and other hygiene practices with children and families.

### **c) Exclusion of children, educators and other staff**

The aim of exclusion is to reduce the spread of infectious disease. The less contact there is between people who have an infectious disease and others, the less chance the disease has of spreading.

In order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases through interpersonal contact, our services follow the advice about exclusion periods from the National Health and Medical Research Council as shown in the NHMRC Exclusion for Common or Concerning Conditions poster (displayed in services) and Staying Healthy Guidelines.

Due to the highly infectious nature of gastroenteritis, the difficulty in diagnosing the type of infection and the impact for children, families and workers of an outbreak in services:

- Children with gastro-like symptoms should be kept at home until they have not vomited or had diarrhoea for at least 48 hours, and
- Staff members with gastro-like symptoms should not handle food until they have not vomited or had diarrhoea for at least 48 hours (they can be assigned to other duties after at least 24 hours or stay away from the service for at least 48 hours).

The Public Health Unit will be advised as soon as the service is aware that a child or educator has contracted a vaccine-preventable disease, and any directions will be followed accordingly.

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- NSW local Public Health unit 1300 066 055 (directory and contact details are available on the following NSW Health website)  
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/pages/notification.aspx>

Any child or educator that is not fully immunised may be excluded for a period of time if there is a case of a vaccine preventable disease at the service, or if the child or educator has been in contact with someone outside the Service who has a vaccine preventable disease.

Families are asked to keep their child away from the service if they are unwell and/or:

- If they have symptoms of an excludable infectious disease,
- If they have ear, eye or discoloured nasal discharge or a severe cough,
- If they have a fever over 38°C or have been treated for a fever with paracetamol or ibuprofen within the previous 12 hours,
- For 24 hours from the commencement of antibiotics, and/or
- Until they are symptom-free for 24 hours or 48 hours for gastro-like symptoms (vomiting and/or diarrhoea).

Some behaviours which indicate that the child is unwell include:

- irritable, agitated, fretful, crying, behaving abnormally
- lethargy, quiet, decreased activity
- noticeable reduction in appetite or fluid intake
- an unusual colour, smell or consistency of urine or faeces
- rash
- breathing difficulty- including coughing
- poor colour- pale
- pain
- sensitivity to light

### **d) Child illness**

#### **Fever**

In children, a temperature over 38°C indicates a fever.

In order to prevent the spread of infection and ensure wellbeing, children with a temperature above 38°C will be excluded from the service.

A fever is usually caused by an infection somewhere in the body. Some types of infections that lead to fever include:

- viral (caused by a virus) – around nine out of ten children with a fever will have a viral illness, such as cold, flu or gastroenteritis
- bacterial (caused by bacteria) – such as some ear infections, pneumonia or urine infections. [www.health.vic.gov.au/edfactsheets/downloads/fever-in-children.pdf](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/edfactsheets/downloads/fever-in-children.pdf)  
[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/fever\\_a.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/fever_a.html)

When children develop a fever at the service, educators and staff will:

- Contact parents and ask them to collect the child unless we have written advice from a medical practitioner that the fever is not caused by an infectious disease (e.g. teething). Babies less than 3 months old with fevers must always be collected by parents /authorised nominees who will be advised to take the child to a doctor



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- Offer water to the child and ensure they are not overdressed and their clothing is comfortable
- Administer first aid if required in line with *NQS 2.11 Incident Injury Illness and trauma policy*. This may include calling an ambulance. Educators and staff will be especially vigilant caring for babies less than 3 months old with fevers
- Monitor the child's behaviour, alertness and any other symptoms that could indicate serious infection including rash, stiffness, vomiting, coughing or convulsions

### Illness

Children might be brought to care with symptoms or signs of illness or while in care suddenly develop an illness that has not been diagnosed by a doctor, and that might be potentially infectious or potentially life-threatening for the child. Symptoms may not clearly fit those listed in exclusion diseases making it difficult for educators to decide whether to accept or exclude the child. If educators suspect a child may have an infectious disease, they will exclude the child until they receive a medical certificate stating the child is not contagious and is well/ healthy to attend the Service.

Many illnesses, while not fitting exclusion criteria, can transmit disease to other children in care, and can make a child too ill to participate in normal activities. All children who are unwell should not attend the Service. Educators will request parents of children who are unwell to collect the child within **one** hour. If the primary parent/ carer doesn't arrive within one hour, emergency contacts will be contacted to collect the child.

Educators and the Nominated Supervisor will:

- Minimise the spread of potential infectious diseases between children by excluding children who may have an infectious disease or are too ill to attend the service and facilitating the prevention and effective management of acute illness in children, and
- Use the Staying Healthy Guidelines to exclude children with infectious diseases and inform parents of exclusion and non-exclusion periods.

## 6. Procedure

### a) Gastroenteritis outbreak

A gastro outbreak occurs when 2 or more children or staff have sudden onset of vomiting or diarrhoea in a 2-day period. Follow these steps should this occur in service.

1. Contact the Albury Public health unit on (02) 6053 4800 for advice on managing the outbreak (if required). **It is quite likely they will provide a procedure on managing the outbreak.**
2. Inform all staff in the centre that there is a gastro outbreak.
3. Put up an infectious disease notification within **24 hours**.
4. Implement infection control measures in accordance with the *NQS 2.10 Hygiene and infection control policy*.
5. Display gastro outbreak signage (see attachments)
6. Provide information to parents via Storypark- (gastro letter to parents)
7. Complete illness register of sick children and staff (email the register to the public health unit within 24 hours of contacting them). *Refer to the NSW Health Gastro Pack for childcare services.*
8. Exclude children from services until free of gastro-like symptoms for 48 hours and staff for 24 hours or 48 hours if handling food.

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9. Inform public health unit if 3 days have passed since a child/staff had vomiting and diarrhoea (email the final register to the public health unit)
10. Remove the gastro outbreak signage once the outbreak is declared over by the public health unit.
11. Notify the Department of a serious illness affecting the service within 7 days.

## 7. Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- National Quality Standard
- Department of Human Resources: National Immunisation Program Schedule
- NHMRC. Staying Healthy Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services 5th edition
- Medicare Australia
- Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for ECEC Services NSW Health
- NSW Health, Gastro Pack for childcare centres
- COVID safety in early childhood education and care services: Guidance. NSW Department of Education.
- NSW health Gastroenteritis pack for childcare centres

## 8. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards

Legislation	
	Public Health Act 2010
	Public Health Regulation 2012
	Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Regulation 2013
Education and Care Services National Regulation	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
National Quality Standards	
2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
Child Safe Standards	
Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes	

<b>Early Years Learning Framework Principles</b>	
<b>Early Years Learning Framework Practices</b>	

## 9. Related Documents

<b>Doc #</b>	<b>Attachments</b>
NQS2.70 A1	National Immunisation Program Schedule
NQS2.70 A2	Infectious Disease Notification Template
NQS2.70 A4	Recommended Minimum Exclusion Period
NQS2.70	NHMRC Exclusion for Common or Concerning Conditions Poster
NQS2.70	Staying Healthy Guidelines

<b>Doc #</b>	<b>Intersections with other key documents</b>
NQS2.11	Incident, Injury, Illness and Trauma Policy

## 10. Document Control

<b>Doc #</b>	<b>Doc Title</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Next Review</b>
NQS2.70	Disease Prevention and Immunisation Policy	1	September 2019	September 2021
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