

Policy introduction

The spread of infections in the early years and school-aged program environments is facilitated by microbial contamination of the environment, as well as the greater exposure to young children who are still developing hygienic behaviours and habits. Weldon will minimise children's exposure to infectious diseases by;

- adhering to all recommended guidelines from relevant government authorities regarding the prevention of infectious diseases,
- promoting practices that reduce the transmission of infection,
- ensuring the exclusion of sick children and educators,
- supporting child immunisation, and
- implementing effective hygiene practices.

Weldon will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and state Ministry of Health about infectious diseases as required. Recommendations from the Health Department will be strictly adhered to at all times.

Our policy in action

Weldon is committed to minimising the spread of infectious diseases and viruses by implementing recommendations as stated in the " (Fifth Edition) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council and advice provided from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

We are guided by decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases by the Australian Government- Department of Health and local Public Health Units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act.

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded from the Program depends on:

- how easily the infection can spread
- how long the person is likely to be infectious and
- the severity of the infectious disease or illness.

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Quality Area 2 policies:

- Immunisation Policy
- Sick Children Policy
- Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy and
- Medical Conditions Policy and
- Handwashing Policy
- COVID -19 Policy

Preventing Infectious Diseases

Given the close physical contact, children have with other children in our programs, it is very easy for infectious diseases and illnesses to spread through normal daily activities.

Our Program implements rigorous hygienic practices to limit the spread of illness and infectious diseases including:

- effective hand washing hygiene
- cough and sneeze etiquette
- appropriate use of gloves
- exclusion of children, educators or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus
- effective environmental cleaning including toys and resources (including bedding)
- requesting parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure at the Program
- physical distancing (if recommended)

Immunisation requirements

As of January 2018, unvaccinated children due to their parent's conscientious objection are no longer able to be enrolled in childcare. Children who cannot be fully vaccinated due to a medical condition or who are on a recognised catch-up schedule may still be enrolled upon presentation of the appropriate form signed by a medical practitioner who meets the criteria stated by the Australian Government. *Note* homeopathic immunisation is not recognised.

Only parents of children (less than 20 years of age) who are fully immunised or are on a recognised catch-up schedule can receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement.

The relevant vaccinations are those under the *National Immunisation Program (NIP)*, which covers the vaccines usually administered before age five. These vaccinations must be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

Educators and other staff at our Program are highly recommended to keep up to date with all immunisations including yearly influenza vaccinations. These include vaccinations recommended by the [National Health and Medical Research Council \(NHMRC\)](#).

Refer to Immunisation Policy for more information

Weldon supports and recommends that all staff working in our programs are up to date with their immunisation, and they are aware of their responsibilities to disclose their immunisation status in the event of an outbreak of a contagious disease.

During an outbreak of a contagious illness, Weldon may need to make decisions around the allocation of staff to protect individual staff member's based on immunisation status and/or medical conditions.

Reporting Outbreaks to the Public Health Unit

Outbreaks of communicable diseases and contagious viruses represent a threat to public health. To help prevent outbreaks, the Department of Health monitors the number of people who contract certain infectious diseases and their characteristics, the recent travel or attendance of infected people

in a public place or on public transport, and works with health specialists and doctors to help prevent the transmission of diseases to other people.

The Public Health Act 2010 lawfully requires and authorises doctors, hospitals, laboratories, school principals and childcare centre directors to confidentially notify NSW Health of patients with certain conditions and to provide the required information on the notification forms. Specialist trained public health staff review this information and if necessary, contact the patient's doctor, and sometimes the patient, to provide advice about disease control and to complete the collection of information.

All information is held confidentially to protect the patient's privacy. Both the NSW and Commonwealth Privacy Acts only release/disclose patient information where it is lawfully required or authorised.

Management is required to notify the local Public Health Unit (PHU) by phone (call 1300 066 055) as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled in the Program is suffering from one of the following diseases:

- A confirmed case of COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Haemophilus influenza Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella ('German measles')
- Measles
- Pertussis ('whooping cough')
- Tetanus
- An outbreak of 2 or more people with gastroenteritis* A gastro outbreak occurs when 2 or more children or staff have a sudden onset of vomiting or diarrhoea in 2 days*.
- Chicken Pox (varicella)

For all other contagious illnesses and or outbreaks, Management will closely monitor health alerts and follow guidelines from Public Health Units and the Australian Government- Department of Health for any advice and emergency health management.

Approved Provider responsibilities:

- all information regarding the prevention and transmission of infectious diseases is sourced from a recognised Government Health authority such as Australian Government Department of Health and Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services replaces the 5th edition
- exclusion periods for people with infectious diseases recommended by Government Authorities are implemented for all staff, children, parents, families and visitors
- the Program implements recommendations from Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services to maintain a healthy environment
- advice and recommendations from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and Safe Work Australia will be implemented where reasonably possible

- children are protected from harm by ensuring relevant policies and procedures are followed regarding health and safety within the Program
- required enrolment information, including health and immunisation records of enrolled children, is collected, maintained and appropriately and securely stored
- families are provided with relevant sourced materials and information on infectious diseases, health, and hygiene including:
 - the current NSW Immunisation Schedule
 - exclusion guidelines in the event of a vaccine-preventable illness at the Program for children that are not immunised or have not yet received all their immunisations
 - advice and information regarding any infectious diseases in general and information regarding any specific infectious illnesses that are suspected/present in the Program
- the Public Health Unit is notified in the event of an outbreak of. Management must document the number of cases, dates of onset, duration of symptoms.

Nominated Supervisor responsibilities

- a hygienic environment is promoted and maintained
- children are supported in their understanding of health and hygiene practices throughout the daily program and routine (handwashing, hand drying, cough and sneeze etiquette)
- educators and staff are aware of relevant immunisation guidelines for children and themselves
- an Immunisation History Statement for each child is collected on enrolment and maintained/updated regarding the child's immunisation status (AIR) and any medical conditions
- families are provided with relevant sourced materials and information on infectious diseases, health, and hygiene including:
 - the current NSW Immunisation Schedule
 - exclusion guidelines in the event of a vaccine-preventable illness at the Program for children that are not immunised or have not yet received all their immunisations
 - advice and information regarding any infectious diseases in general and information regarding any specific infectious illnesses that are suspected/present in the Program.
- families are provided with information about an infectious disease by displaying and emailing information when an infectious disease is present in the Program
- families are advised that they must alert Weldon if their child is diagnosed with an infectious illness
- all educators are mindful and maintain the confidentiality of individual children's medical circumstances
- that opportunities for educators to source pertinent up to date information from trusted sources on the prevention of infectious diseases and maintaining health and hygiene are provided
- that opportunities for staff, children, and families to have access to health professionals by organising visits/guest speakers to attend the Program to confirm best practice are provided
- families are advised to keep children at home if they are unwell. If a child has been sick, they must be well for 24hrs before returning. For example, if a child is absent due to illness or is sent home due to illness, they will be unable to attend the next day as a minimum. The

Nominated Supervisor may approve the child's return if families provide a doctor's certificate/clearance certifying that the child is no longer contagious and is in good health. Please note; it is not always possible to obtain a doctor's certificate or clearance for suspected cases of an illness. The decision to approve a child's return is up to the Approved Provider/Nominated supervisor

- to complete the register of Illness, Accident or Trauma and/or document incidents of infectious diseases no later than 24 hours of an illness or infectious disease occurring
- educators or staff who have diarrhoea or an infectious disease do not handle food for others and are not to return to work until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours
- any risk to a child or adult with complex medical needs is minimised in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus. This may require a risk assessment and decision-making regarding the suitability of attendance of the child or staff member during this time

Educator responsibilities

- respond to any child suspected of having an infectious illness and support their health and emotional needs
- isolate any child suspected of having an infectious illness from other children and supervise whilst waiting for collection by parents or guardian
- ensure that appropriate health and safety procedures are implemented when treating ill children
- ensure families are aware of the need to collect their unwell child/ children as soon as practicable from the Program
- ensure all resources or items touched by a child with a suspected illness are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected- (cushions, pillows, toys)
- be responsible for their immunisation and inform the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor if they are not immunised during an outbreak of contagious illness.
- ensure opportunities are provided for children to participate in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities, and intentional practice such as hand washing, sneezing and cough etiquette
- consider the combination of children to decrease the risk of attaining an infectious illness when planning the routines/program of the day
- adhere to the health and hygiene policy including:
 - hand washing
 - daily cleaning of the Program
 - wearing gloves (particularly when in direct contact with bodily fluids- nappy changing and toileting)
 - appropriate and hygienic handling and preparation of food
- maintain up-to-date knowledge concerning Health and Safety through on-going professional development opportunities
- set up beds so that children rest 'head to toe' to avoid cross-infection while resting or sleeping
- set up cots or mattresses at least 1.5m away from each other if physical distancing measures are required to be implemented

- children do not share beds at the same time
- Cots and beds are sanitised between each child's use
- ensure that all play dough is freshly made every week.
If there is an outbreak of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, or any other contagious communicable disease, play dough is to be discarded at the end of each day and a new batch made each day for the duration of the outbreak.
- children wash their hands before and after using play dough.

Families responsibilities

- adhere to the Weldon's Infectious Diseases policy exclusion requirements
- adhere to any restrictions of entry into the Program in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus
- exclude their child from care if they display symptoms of an infectious illness or disease or in the event of a vaccine-preventable disease occurs in the Program and their child is not immunised fully
- advise Weldon of their child's immunisation status, by providing a current Immunisation History Statement recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) for the Program to copy and place in the child's file.
- provide sufficient spare clothing, particularly if the child is toilet training
- adhere to the risk minimisation strategies if their child has complex medical needs in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus

Sources

- Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services 5th Edition (2013)
- The Department of Health
- National Health and Medical Research Council – www.nhmrc.gov.au/
- NSW Ministry of Health
- NSW Government Department of Health. Vaccination requirements for childcare
- Public Health Amendment Act 2017
- Department of Human Resources: National Immunisation Program Schedule
- Immunisation Handbook - Australian Government – Department of Health and Ageing – National Health and Medical Research Council