

PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

POLICY

Building Futures Care is committed to ensuring children are cared for in a physically and psychologically safe environment. Environments will be designed and organised in such a way that ensures the health, safety and wellbeing of children in care, as this is of paramount importance.

With the cooperation of Educators, the Coordination Unit will ensure, through regular safety checks, that each family day care service is safe and suitable for the care of children.

PROCEDURE

An initial safety and risk assessment of the family day care residence and/or venue is completed by the Coordination Unit prior to the commencement of family day care and reviewed annually by the Coordination Unit.

All equipment and furniture used in providing education and care at the family day care service must be safe, clean and in good repair; must be age and developmentally appropriate; and meet the relevant Australian Safety Standards.

The assessment of the family day care residence and/or venue will consider matters relating to premises, furniture and equipment, fencing, lockable gates, furniture and materials, laundry, toilet and hygiene facilities, ventilation and natural light, suitability of residence and nappy change arrangements, water hazards/features/swimming pool, and animals.

The Coordination Unit will provide information, training and support through regular visits to the family day care residence/venue to ensure Educators are providing a physically and psychologically safe environment for children in care. It is important that Educators and everyone within the Scheme understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. It is our aim that all staff (as well as families and children) feel confident and comfortable to discuss any allegations of abuse or child safety concerns. Through training, the Coordination Unit support educators to identify potential signs of child abuse or neglect and report these to the relevant authority.

The family day care Educator will consistently maintain the environment, to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children being educated and cared for are protected. The Educator will arrange play areas to ensure children can be effectively supervised.

Family day care Educators may choose to complete their own individual, daily home safety checklist, prior to each child care session commencing.

Educators continually assess the level of hazard in the care environment, both indoors and outdoors, and take steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children when a hazard is identified.

Educators must ensure their residence or venue is a smoke, alcohol and drug free environment; is safe from animal attacks; and is safe from electrical, fire and heat hazards.

Family day care Educators must advise the approved provider of any proposed renovations to the residence and/or venue, changes relating to physical environment of the residence (inside or outside) and any changes that may affect the education and care provided to children.

Children must be supervised by Educators at all times. The Educator must be in close proximity to the children at all times; such proximity would allow the Educator to see and/or hear the activities of the children in care, and return eye contact to a child within a few seconds.

Any vehicles in which children are transported must be safe and fitted with appropriate safety restraints suitable for the age and size of the child. Children must never be left unattended in a vehicle.

Educators must notify the Coordination Unit of any current animals/pets at the family day care residence/venue during their initial interview, and then must notify the Coordination unit of any animals/pets obtained thereafter.

Prior to enrolling a child in care, a parent must be made aware by the family day care Educator of any animals/pets kept on the family day care Educator's property. Parents must also be made aware of any new animal/pet introduced following the child's enrolment.

The family day care educator who has an animal/pet on the premises must ensure that they have an area where the animal/pet can be kept that is separate and apart from any area used by the children unless the pet is involved in a specific activity that is directly supervised by the family day care educator.

Interactions between children and animals/pets must be directly supervised.

Children and family day care Educators must wash their hands immediately after handling any animals/pets.

All animals/pets kept on the family day care property must be maintained in a clean and healthy condition, and in such a way that children will not be in danger of injury or infection.

A cage or a hutch within the children's play area is acceptable as long as special precautions are taken to protect children. (e.g.: Closed mesh to prevent children's finger access – such as fly wire, shade cloth).

When any animal/pet is introduced to children, the Educator will be sensitive to the fears and anxieties of the children and parents.

The Educator must ensure that cats are NOT present, nor have access to the same area in which a child is sleeping.

No animals should be present at meal times or when children are eating for hygiene purposes, and to reduce the risk of the animal 'snatching' food from the child.

All high chairs should have safety belts that are used when a child is using the chair. Adequate, developmentally and age-appropriate toilet, washing and drying facilities must be provided at the family day care service for use by children being educated and cared for; and the location and design of the toilet, washing and drying facilities must enable safe use and convenient access by the children.

Indoor spaces used by children at the family day care service premises must be well ventilated; and have adequate natural light; and are maintained at a temperature that ensures the safety and wellbeing of children.

With regard to glass at the family day care service, any glazed area of the residence/venue that is accessible to children and is of or below the height above floor level must be glazed with safety glass; or be treated with a product that prevents glass from shattering if broken; or guarded by barriers that prevent a child from striking or falling against the glass.

Staircases at the residence/venue should be inaccessible to children and must have safety gates at the top and bottom.

Any outdoor space used by children at the family day care residence/venue must be enclosed by a fence or barrier that is of a height and design that children preschool age or under cannot go through, over or under it.

Hazardous substances are contained in secure and/or elevated storage areas, preferably with 'child locks' installed. These include, but are not limited to, chemicals, poisons, insecticides, detergents, bleaches, pressure packs, pills and medications, toiletries, cigarettes, lighter, matches, etc.

The family day care service must have laundry facilities or access to laundry facilities; or other arrangements for dealing with soiled clothing, nappies and linen. This must include appropriate hygienic facilities for storage prior to their disposal or laundering. The laundry and hygienic facilities must be located and maintained in a way at the family day care service that does not pose a risk to children.

All hot water outlets accessible to children and those used for children's personal hygiene (e.g. washing hands) must deliver hot water in a safe manner. This includes the water being regulated to a lower temperature and/or removal of hot water taps and/or childproof covers on hot water taps, etc.

A telephone must be readily accessible to Educators to send and receive calls at times when care is being provided. A comprehensive list of emergency phone numbers is to be kept at the family day care residence/venue readily accessible to the Educator. These phone numbers should include the parents, the Coordination Unit, doctors, emergency services, poisons information, and emergency educators.

A household first-aid kit must be kept at the residence/venue out of reach of children, but readily accessible to Educators. A first-aid kit should also be carried in any vehicle transporting children, and on excursions and outings.

All equipment, both indoors and outdoors must be in good working condition and be free from rust and sharp/rough edges.

The outdoor environment must meet the following minimum safety standards:

- The grounds must be free of poisonous or harmful vegetation; plants and shrubs should be sensibly pruned; grass should be kept short and mowed/maintained at a suitable time when children are not present at the service or are far away from this area and activity;
- Fences gates and staircase gates must always be kept closed and in good working order;
- Cars must be stored in a safe manner, outside the play area, and be inaccessible to children (unless being supervised by the Educator to utilise the car);
- Cars, garden sheds, caravans and other equipment/areas where children may 'hide' must be locked and boats or trailers should be covered and securely fastened so they are inaccessible to children;
- Swings should be located in a sensible place, away from other play equipment to take into account the arc of the swing;
- All swimming pools, spas or bodies of water must be secure and inaccessible to children; any water play containers are to be emptied and turned upside down after each use;
- Any shoes or items to be used that are kept outdoors should be checked for spiders and other dangerous insects/animals before being utilised.

RELEVANT LAWS, SOURCES AND OTHER PROVISIONS

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (103 to 117)

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