

CECS- MANAGING IMMUNISATIONS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Cowra Early Childhood Services (CECS) supports the health and wellbeing of all our staff and the children within our care.

When groups of children are together, illness and disease can spread rapidly. Diseases that can be immunised against, such as measles and whooping cough can have serious health consequences for children, especially young children. Educators and staff who work in a childcare setting are also at increased risk of certain infectious illnesses.

The purpose of this policy is to manage and prevent the spread of infectious illnesses and diseases. CECS has a duty of care to ensure that all children, families, and educators are provided with a high level of protection during the hours of operation. This includes notifying families and educators when an excludable illness or disease is present in the service, maintaining a record of children's immunisation status, complying with relevant health department exclusion guidelines, and promoting awareness of the important role good hygiene plays in preventing the spread of disease.

Immunisation

Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent some infections. Immunisation works by giving a person a vaccine-often a dead or modified version of the germ-against a particular disease. This makes the person's immune system respond in a similar way to how it would respond if they actually had the disease, but with less severe symptoms. If the person comes in contact with that germ in the future, their immune system can rapidly respond and prevent the person from becoming ill.

Immunisation can also protect other people who are not immunised, such as children who are too young to be immunised, or people whose immune systems did not respond to the vaccine. This is because the more people who are immunised against a disease, the lower the chance that a person will ever come into contact with someone who has the disease. The chance of an infection spreading in a community therefore decreases if a large proportion of people are immunised, because the immune people will not become infected and can protect the vulnerable people. This is known as 'herd immunity'.

Child Immunisations

Children who have not been vaccinated or whose parents cannot provide an up-to-date Immunisation History Statement at enrolment cannot be enrolled in an early childhood service, excepting children who have an authorised exemption due to a medical condition or previous reaction OR children who are on a recognised catch-up schedule issued by a medical practitioner.

Staff immunisations

Whilst it is not a legal requirement, CECS encourages all staff to maintain vaccinations against transmissible illnesses such as influenza and Covid-19.

This supports our aim to prevent infectious diseases entering and spreading in our services. It also helps to ensure the general health of our workforce as well as ensuring our services can remain open to provide education and care to the children and families in the communities with which we work.

PRACTICES:

The services will

- Provide information from Health authorities to families.
- Ensure that non-school aged children are not enrolled in the services unless approved documentation has been provided by the family which confirms that the child is fully immunised for their age or has a medical reason not to be immunised.
- Maintain an immunisation register which lists the immunisation status and what immunisation documents are held for all enrolled children.
- Develop and maintain a procedure for reviewing children's immunisation status each month, updating the child's records, and sending reminder emails to families.
- Encourage all staff and educators to complete the *Educator/ Staff Immunisation Record* at commencement of employment, and update if further immunisations are added.
- Provide educators and staff with information about vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Notify families and educators when an outbreak of a disease occurs that can be immunised against.
- Inform the local Public Health Unit, under the Public Health Act, if any child or educator contracts a vaccine preventable disease and ask for advice.
- Exclude from the service any child who is not immunised if an outbreak of an infectious disease that can be immunised against occurs to protect that child and to prevent further spread of infection. If a child is immunised but has not provided an immunisation history statement to the service, then that child is considered as not immunised.
- Be aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may be at higher risk of many infectious diseases, especially respiratory and ear infections, and have a different immunisation schedule to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Families will

On enrollment and before accessing care

Provide the service with a copy of one or more of the following documents.

- An Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) History Statement which shows that their child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations; this can be obtained from Medicare through the MyGov website, or
- An AIR Immunisation History Form on which the immunisation provider has certified that the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule, or
- An AIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form which has been certified by a GP

Each time their child has an additional vaccination

- Provide the service with an updated copy of their child's immunisation history statement.
- Be aware that homeopathic immunisation is no longer recognised.
- Understand that fees will still be applicable if their child is excluded from the service due to their non-immunisation at the time of a breakout of a disease that can be immunised against.
- Inform the service if their child contracts a communicable disease and keep them home until well.

Risk Management Practices

CECS implements a range of practices to mitigate the risk of infectious diseases entering and spreading in our services.

- Ensuring children engage in outdoor play as much as possible.
- Staff maintain rigorous daily cleaning routines at all venues.
- Professional cleaners are contracted to complete daily cleaning at our centre-based services.
- Implementing and demonstrating hygienic handwashing, toileting, nappy changing and food handling procedures and ensuring children and staff are supported to learn and practice these.
- Hand sanitizer is readily available to children, staff, and visitors.
- Regular communication with families highlighting their responsibility to keep sick children home. This is done via a range of media, including Facebook, newsletters and posters.
- Inform families and staff of cases of infectious diseases which occur in a particular service or services, to encourage them to be alert to symptoms, while respecting the privacy of the individual patient.
- In the case of covid-19, any staff testing positive to this virus is to remain at home until their key symptoms have subsided or for 7 days, whichever occurs first.
- Developing a workplace culture which supports staff to take personal leave when unwell, to prevent illness spreading and to minimize cases of communicable disease.

REFER TO:

- Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Regulation 2012
- Education and Care Services Regulations 2011
- Public Health Act 2010
- Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Bill 2013 No. 46
- National Immunisation Program Schedule
<http://immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/national-immunisation-program-schedule>
- Staying Healthy in Childcare 5th Edition NHMRC 2012
- Public Health Unit
- NSW Health Phone number 1800 671 811
- Local NSW Public Health Unit Contact Details – 1300 066055
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Pages/default.aspx>
- Immunise Australia National Hotline 1800 671 811