

# Immunisation for Children and Staff

## SWISH Education

### Background

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Children who attend education and care services are in close contact with a large number of other children for lengthy periods and are at increased risk of catching and transmitting illnesses and diseases. Some of these are preventable through immunisation. Educators are also at risk, particularly when pregnant.

Vaccination is recognised as the most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In Australia, immunisation is optional. However, from 1 January 2016, parents must ensure their child's immunisations are up to date in order to be eligible for Child Care Benefit or Child Care Rebate. Exceptions are made for children with medical contraindications or natural immunity or certain diseases, and for those on a recognised catch-up schedule. Objections on the basis of personal, philosophical or religious beliefs (i.e. vaccination objections) are no longer accepted for exemption (i.e. do not provide eligibility for Child Care Benefit or Child Care Rebate).

Prior to enrolling children, early education and care services are now required to obtain approved documentation from parents about their children's immunisation status.

### Policy statement

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This Policy details the Service's practices regarding the enrolment and continued attendance of children based on their immunisation status. It also details the actions the Service will take in the event of an outbreak of a disease which can be prevented by immunisation. The Service supports the protection of children and educators through immunisation, and provides families and staff with information about immunisation and vaccine preventable illnesses and diseases.

The spread of vaccine preventable diseases within the Service is minimised through: monitoring immunisation records; complying with recommended exclusion guidelines and timeframes for children and staff; and, routine personal and environmental health and hygiene practices.

### Strategies and practices

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- The *Immunisation for Children and Staff Policy* is explained to parents when they enrol their child in the Service, and their attention is specifically drawn to their responsibilities under the Policy. Excerpts from this Policy are included on the website.
- Parents are required to provide the approved documentation of their child's immunisation status before their child commences at the Service, and evidence of each vaccination thereafter. For young children this will usually occur at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months, and 4 years. The approved documentation required is one of the following:
  - an official immunisation history statement issued by the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) which evidences that the child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations
  - a letter from a recognised immunisation provider (e.g. General Practitioner or immunisation nurse) which states the child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations

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- an ACIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form (IM001) which has been signed by a General Practitioner.
- If a child's immunisation status is not up to date, the Service may:
  - Refuse to enrol the child;
  - Conditionally accept enrolment and/or attendance of the child with conditions (e.g. attendance may be limited for a specific period of time, or attendance may be limited to particular days or sessions); or,
  - Cancel enrolment or refuse attendance of the child.
- Staff are required to complete a Staff Immunisation Form detailing their immunisation status before they commence at the Service. They are required to up-date it whenever a change in status occurs.
- Staff are encouraged to keep up to date with their immunisations.
- The Service maintains a record of the immunisation status of each child and each staff member. It also maintains a Non-Immunised Children – Register and Non-Immunised Staff – Register so that this information can be readily retrieved in the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease.
- The Service routinely minimises the spread of illness and disease by promoting correct handwashing and other hygiene practices, and maintaining clean and hygienic environments.
- In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, the Service will notify the relevant health authority, and will follow its recommended guidelines and directives. Children who are not immunised may be excluded from the Service for the duration of the outbreak. In addition, staff who are not immunised may be excluded from work.
- As soon as practicable after the outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease at the Service, staff will notify parents or authorised emergency contacts when they collect their children, and send a note home with the child. Information sheets will be distributed to families. Parents of unimmunised children will be contacted directly and also provided with written notice detailing the specific period their child will be excluded from the Service. Signs will be displayed prominently throughout the Service informing families of the outbreak.
- If a child becomes unwell or is suspected of symptoms of an excludable infectious illness, the child's parents or authorised emergency contact are contacted immediately to collect their child. Wherever possible, the child is separated from the main group of children and one educator nominated to care for the child to reduce the risk of cross infection.
- In the case of serious ill health or hospitalisation, the child or staff member is to provide a medical certificate from their doctor verifying that they are sufficiently recovered to return to the Service. However, the Nominated Supervisor has the final say on whether the child or a staff member may return to the Service.
- The Service encourages staff to discuss with their doctor the topic of immunisation and the additional risks of contracting a vaccine preventable illness or disease inherent in their close, regular contact with the children. The Service also recommends that staff who may be considering

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pregnancy apply for screening for immunity for infections which carry risks of miscarriage or damage to the foetus (e.g. rubella, chicken pox, cytomegalovirus).

- Risk assessments are conducted for unimmunised educators and pregnant staff to determine if any alteration to their work is necessary.

## Responsibilities of parents

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- To provide documentation of their child's immunisation status before the child commences at the Service, and update this as changes occur.
- To inform the Service if a communicable disease occurs in the family because the child may become a carrier.

## Procedure and forms

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- Non-Immunised Children – Register
- Non-Immunised Staff – Register
- Staff Immunisation Form

## Links to other policies

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- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Interactions with Families Policy

## Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

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Regs	88	Infectious diseases
	90	Medical conditions policy
	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

QA	2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
	2.2.2	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
	3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained

## Sources

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- Department of Social Services. (2017). *Immunisation and Health Check requirements for FTB*. <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/benefits-payments/strengthening-immunisation-for-young-children> accessed 26 December 2017
- Department of Health (Australian Government). *The Australian Immunisation Handbook*. (2015). 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook10-home> accessed 26 December 2017

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- Department of Human Services (Australian Government). *Australian childhood immunisation register for health professionals*.  
<http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/patients/acir/index.jsp> accessed 26 December 2017
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services. 5th edition*  
[http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55\\_staying\\_healthy\\_child\\_care\\_5th\\_edition\\_0.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55_staying_healthy_child_care_5th_edition_0.pdf) accessed 26 December 2017

## Further reading and useful websites

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- Centre for Community Child Health – <http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/> accessed 26 December 2017
- Department of Health (Australian Government). *Immunise Australia Program*.  
<http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/> accessed 26 December 2017
- National Health and Medical Research Council – <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/> accessed 26 December 2017
- NSW Health. *New immunisation requirements in child care from 1 January 2016*.  
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/child-care-enrolment-changes-2016.aspx> accessed 26 December 2017

## Policy review

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The Service encourages staff and parents to be involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

## Version Control

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Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	
2	1 May 2018	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated to support SWISH procedures.	1 May 2019