

Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment

Assessment, Approval and Reassessment of Approved FDC Residences

Policy/Procedure Number: **QA3 - 1**

Policy/Procedure Requirement: National Quality Standards 2, 3 & 6; Regulations 116, 168, 169 & 170

Policy Statement

The Service acknowledges the importance of assessing and reassessing the suitability of Educators' environments. The Service conducts a thorough inspection of the Family day Care Residence prior to registering all new Educators, and also conducts ongoing compliance checks in line with the Educator Service Agreement. Educator registrations are renewed each year only after the completion of annual assessment of the FDC Residences.

Rationale

The Service is We are committed to ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending our service by assessing, reassessing and appropriately managing any risks or hazards that exist at each FDC residence or approved FDC venue.

The physical environment is critically important for:

- keeping children safe and reducing the risk of unintentional injuries;
- contributing to their wellbeing, happiness and creativity;
- developing independence; and
- determining the quality of children's learning

Assessment of FDC residence will consider matters relating to the precautions taken to protect children from harm or hazards, premises, furniture, equipment, fencing, lockable gates, glass doors and windows, laundry, toilet and hygiene facilities, ventilation and natural light, suitability of residence and nappy change arrangements, water hazards/ features/ swimming pool, space requirements indoor and outdoor, notifying the Regulatory Authority of relevant information, and pets/animals.

Strategies and Practices

Responsibilities of the Nominated Supervisor/ Coordinator:

The Nominated Supervisor/ Coordinator will:

Conduct a thorough inspection of the residences of all new Educators to ensure compliance with all regulatory standards prior to any child being placed in the Educator's care. The following assessment process will be followed:

Initial Information Visit

Meet the potential Educator at their home and conduct an initial home assessment of the areas that will be used for FDC, including but not limited to, areas such as outdoor environments, water hazards, play equipment, glass, cleanliness, pets and other animals. Discuss and recommend any safety modifications that may be required.

Approval

1st Home Safety Visit

- After the successful interview stage, a formal home safety check is conducted by the Coordinator
- The Coordinator will use the "Assessment of FDC Residence" form to undertake the formal safety check of the residence
- All hazards are identified and Home Safety Check Hazard Identification Form is completed and a copy given to the potential Educator

2nd Home Safety Visit

- Home Safety re-check is completed
- All identified hazards are checked to ensure compliance
- Annual Assessment of FDC Residence form is signed and dated by the Educator and Coordinator. A copy of the completed form is provided to the Educator

Once this process has been completed and the FDC residence is determined as a safe educational environment, the FDC Educator Service Agreement along with other Service registration requirements are signed for 12 months. New Educators will be visited weekly for the first month after registration.

Where an Educator transfers from another service, the Service Manager may initially approve the registration of the FDC residence based on a self-assessment by the Educator and a preliminary assessment of the Coordinator or Manager, with a follow up formal safety assessment by the Coordinator within three (3) months of commencement, if:

- the Educator's registration with the former service was current at the time of approving the Educator's application for registration; and
- the approval of the FDC Residence by the former service was granted less than 6 months prior; and
- the previous service is a reputed, quality provider with comparable robust processes for the assessment of FDC Residences and overall Quality Rating of "Meeting National Quality Standard" or better.

Coordinators will undertake routine visual inspections during regular support visits. Any compliance issues identified during the visits will be documented on the hazard identification form, raised with the Educator and a time frame for resolution agreed upon.

Reassessment

Annual Compliance Check

- Initial Compliance Audit completed, discussed and signed
- Educator Service Agreement is completed, signed and a copy provided to the Educator
- Regular support visit records

Responsibilities of the Educator:

The Educator will, on an ongoing basis, ensure that:

- They keep up-to-date with any changes to the **Assessment and reassessment of residences and venues for FDC policy and procedures**
- The indoor and outdoor areas and all furniture and equipment in the FDC residence are safe, clean and in good repair
- Ensure that the care environment and the FDC Educator/ any residents/ visitors at the FDC residence are free of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, as well as ensure that family members in the FDC residence are regularly reminded of the areas that have been assessed for use
- Any outdoor space used by children is 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? Also consider:
 - items which children might use to scale the fence, e.g. play equipment, low tree branches, pot plants
 - any significant fall height on the other side of a fence or barrier
 - age appropriate barriers at the top and bottom of stairs
 - that external gates are kept locked and keys are easily accessible in the event of an emergency.
- Each child has access to sufficient furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment that is suitable for the education and care of that child
- Ensure all equipment used meets safety requirements and Australian standards
- Laundry facilities or another arrangement available for dealing with soiled clothing, nappies and linen, including hygienic facilities for storage prior to their disposal or laundering
- Laundry facilities are located and maintained in a way that does not pose a risk to children
- Adequate, developmentally and age- appropriate toilet, washing and drying facilities are available for use by children
- The location and design of the toilet, washing and drying facilities enable safe use and convenient access by the children
- The indoor spaces used by children are well ventilated, have adequate natural light and are maintained at a temperature that ensures the safety and wellbeing of children
- Ensure that sleep/rest environment and sleep equipment are fit for purpose
- Ensure that there is sufficient protection from UV/sun in the outdoor areas

- For any glazed area that is accessible to children and situated at or below the height specified by Australian Standard 1288- 2006, the following is required:
 - safety glazing if required by the Building Code of Australia, or
 - treatment with a product that prevents glass from shattering if broken (such as safety film), or
 - guarding with barriers that prevent a child from hitting or falling against the glass
- Follow safety advice of recognised authorities and manufacturers
- **Inform** the Coordinators of **any changes to the residence** e.g. building alterations, damage, fences which will affect the education and care provided for children at the residence
- **Inform** the Coordinators of **any addition of pets, new equipment purchased, change of areas used for FDC**
- **Undertake a risk assessment**, for any significant risks present at the residence (e.g. water play/features/hazards, pets, high play equipment, swimming pool) prior to commencement, and at least annually
- Comply with the requirements of the Service at all times education and care is provided
- Be aware that not maintaining a safe education and care environment will be a breach of the regulations and may result in penalties
- Practice evacuation and lockdown procedures every three months
- Be aware of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Not be offered registration / re-registration with the Service if they cannot provide a safe environment that complies with the National Law and the Regulations

Educators will conduct daily checks to:

- Ensure that both the indoor and outdoor care environment is safe, clean & free of garbage/ rubbish for children at all times whilst children are in attendance
- Complete the Daily Safety checklist, regular risk assessments of the environment, visual safety checks, and monitor the condition of buildings and equipment used for FDC

Responsibilities of the Coordinator:

Coordinator will:

- Complete the Annual Assessment of FDC Residence Checklist of each family day care residence at least annually and ensure precautions are taken to protect children from harm or hazard
- Inform FDC educators of their responsibilities in relation to the assessment of FDC residences and approved FDC venues
- Review and sign the risk assessment of any significant risks identified at the FDC residence
- Inform FDC educators of their responsibilities in relation to the assessment of FDC residences and approved FDC venues
- Monitor, support and supervise FDC educators to ensure the FDC residence or approved FDC venue is safe and suitable for the children, including in between assessment periods

- Ensure that only specific areas of the FDC residence or approved FDC venue are being used for education and care purposes. Ensure any changes to the areas being used for education and care undergo a new assessment.
- Conduct announced and unannounced coordinator/educator visits to the FDC residence for appropriate assessment and monitoring.

Resources and Further Readings

- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Education and Care Services National Law
- ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit (www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)
- My Time, Our Place Framework
- Kidsafe – Kidsafe FDC safety guidelines
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Related FDC Policies, Procedures & Documents

- Annual Assessment of FDC Residence Form
- Daily Home Safety Checklist
- Registration Checklist
- Educator Service Agreement
- Support Visit Record
- Equipment Checklist
- Sleeping Arrangements Checklist
- Hazard Identification Form
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Procedures
- Providing a Child Safe Environment
- Child Enrolment and Parent Agreement Form
- Visitors Register
- Sleep and Rest
- Water Safety
- Sun Protection
- Emergency and Evacuation
- Transportation of Children

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