

Infectious Diseases, Immunisation & Hygiene

Policy/Procedure Number: **QA2 - 7**

Policy/Procedure Requirement: National Quality Standards 2; Regulations 88, 109, 62 & 168

Policy Statement

The Service will take **reasonable steps to prevent the spread of infectious diseases** through clear hygiene practices, infection prevention measures, immunisation monitoring, exclusion requirements, and communication with families and public health authorities. Educators and Coordinators will act appropriately, sensitively, and in compliance with **ACECQA guidelines, NHMRC Staying Healthy recommendations**, and **ACT Health requirements**.

Rationale

Children in FDC settings are more susceptible to infectious diseases. Prevention requires consistent hygiene practices, accurate information for families, and a rapid response when illness occurs. This policy ensures the Service, Educators, and families have the guidance they need to keep all children safe and healthy.

Strategies and Practices

Preventing Infectious Diseases:

Many children transition from home environment to family day care as babies or toddlers. Their immune systems are still developing, and they have not been exposed to many common germs. Given the close physical contact children have with other children in FDC, they are susceptible to contract infectious diseases and illnesses spread through normal daily activities as germs can be picked up directly from an infected person or from the environment. It is important to understand that an infected person may not show any signs or symptoms of illness.

This policy provides key information on the prevention and management of infectious diseases. The Service **requires** the Nominated Supervisor, Coordinators and Educators to refer to the [Staying Healthy Guidelines, 6th Edition \(NHMRC\)](#) for more detailed information on understanding about infections, maintaining a healthy environment, and preventing and managing infectious diseases including periods of exclusion.

To prevent cross infections, Educators are required to implement the following measures:

- Regular cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces (e.g., toys, doorknobs, tables) using hospital-grade disinfectants
- Handwashing with soap, running water, and disposable paper towels, ensuring hand-washing occurs before and after eating, after toileting, after nose-wiping, and after handling bodily fluids
- Wear disposable gloves when handling urine, faeces, or blood, and use neutral detergent and water for cleaning
- Promoting respiratory hygiene, such as **wearing masks**, or covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing, and safely disposing of tissues
- Exclusion of children when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus
- Request parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer prior to using electronic sign-in and visitors record to sign
- Ensure adequate ventilation such as open windows and doors

- Children who are resting or sleeping are positioned a safe distance from each other to prevent any spread of illness or infection. A head to toe resting/sleeping arrangement is encouraged
- Children, Educator, or Educator family member to seek medical attention if they show symptoms of an infectious disease or virus

Hygiene Practices:

The Service will ensure good hygiene practices are implemented by all Educators in their FDC setting:

- Not providing care, if Educator is unwell
- Maintain healthy and clean habits, including clean nails and hair, and fastening back long hair
- Encourage children to follow appropriate handwashing practices
- Ensure equipment and toys are regularly cleaned and well maintained
- Keeping bathrooms, kitchens, sleep and rest areas, and play areas clean
- Use appropriate toileting and nappy change methods
- Use appropriate procedures for wiping children's noses, and for teaching children how to wipe their own noses
- Display signs and posters about hygiene procedures at child height in bathrooms and play areas
- Implement appropriate hygienic food handling, preparation and storage practices
- Provide information to families about the recommended immunisation schedule for children
- Develop clear procedures for handling and disposing of bodily fluids such as blood and any contaminated items used in first aid
- Wash bedding after each use, and if the surface is known to be contaminated with a potential infectious disease, disinfectant is also used to clean the surface
- Provide information to families on exclusion periods of illnesses and infectious diseases (e.g. refer to the [ACT Infectious Diseases - Outbreak Procedures and Exclusion Periods Procedures](#), Staying Healthy 6th Edition (NHMRC))

Immunisation Requirements

- Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent many childhood infectious diseases
- **Unvaccinated children** due to their parent's conscientious objection are **no longer able to be enrolled in approved early childcare services**
- 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
- Educators and Coordinators are encouraged 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)
- Vaccination is important as not only can Educators catch a potentially serious infection such as measles or whooping cough, but they could also then inadvertently pass it onto children in their care who are too young to have had their vaccinations or to parents who may be pregnant
- Exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases are guided by the Australian Government- Department of Health and local public health units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act.

Excluding Children from Care

Minimum periods for exclusion from childcare services

- When an infectious disease has been diagnosed, the Educator will display appropriate documentation and alerts for families including information on the illness/disease, symptoms, infectious period and the exclusion period
- Information on **exclusion periods** for common infectious diseases can be obtained from [Staying Healthy 6th Edition \(NHMRC\)](#)
- If a vaccine preventable disease (see next section for details) occurs in the FDC, children who have not been fully immunised will be excluded from care
- Management will check all children's **immunisation records** and alert parents as required
- A **medical clearance** from the child's General Practitioner stating that the child is cleared to return to the childcare setting will also be required before the child returns to care

Reporting Outbreaks to the Public Health Unit and Regulatory Authority

The Public Health Act 2010 requires and authorises early education and care service nominated supervisors to confidentially notify the local [Public Health Unit](#) (1300 066 055) of patients with certain conditions, and to provide the required information on the notification forms [Vaccine preventable disease notification form](#).

Notification is required if a child:

- has one of the following vaccine preventable diseases, or
- is reasonably suspected of having come into contact with a person who has one of these vaccine preventable diseases and the enrolled child has no evidence of immunisation lodged to show that the child is immunised against, or acquired immunity by infection from, that disease.

The diseases are:

- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Haemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella ("German measles")
- Measles
- Pertussis ("whooping cough")
- Tetanus

Notification is also required for an outbreak of 2 or more people with **gastrointestinal or respiratory illness** in a 48-hour period.

Management will closely monitor health alerts and guidelines from Public Health Units and the Australian Government- Department of Health for any advice and emergency health management in the event of a contagious illness outbreak.

The Service is required to notify the Regulatory Authority of any incidence of a **notifiable infectious disease or illness**.

Responsibilities of the Service:

The Service will:

- Ensure a child is enrolled only if they are fully immunised for their age, or are on a catch-up schedule, or have a medical reason not to be immunised
- Exclusion periods for people with infectious diseases recommended by ACT Health are implemented for all staff, children, parents, families and visitors
- Notify the Public Health Unit (1300 066 055) as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled has a vaccine preventable disease
- Notify the Public Health Unit is notified in the event of an outbreak of viral gastroenteritis. Management must document the number of cases, dates of onset, duration of symptoms. An outbreak is when two or more children or staff have a sudden onset of diarrhoea or vomiting in a 48-hour period
- Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of the infectious disease
- Ensure that **parents, or an authorised emergency contact**, of all children at the FDC residence are **notified of the occurrence** as soon as practicable.
- Ensure that a notice is displayed stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the FDC residence
- Ensure that notification requirements to the regulatory authority are met in relation to an outbreak of an infectious disease that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children
- Ensure that all children, educators and coordinators have current relevant vaccinations
- Ensure that educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to deal with infectious diseases and to role model hygiene practices.
- Monitor the immunisation status of each child, which is recorded on the Enrolment Form, and flag non-immunised children in the system to be able to respond to any advice by the ACT Health of the spread of communicable diseases

Responsibilities of the Coordinators:

The Coordinators will:

- Provide information and resources to Educators on how to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases
- Model safe hygienic practices to Educators and children where possible - e.g. hand washing
- If a child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, refer to the *ACT Health factsheets on infectious diseases* and/ or to the *Staying Healthy 6th Edition* (NHMRC) publication for details on **exclusion periods**

Responsibilities of the Educators:

The Educators will:

- Provide a safe and healthy environment for children, including maintaining a clean FDC residence, and support children to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.
- Model health and personal hygiene practices with children and reinforce these messages with families.
- Be aware of each child's immunisation status as recorded on their Enrolment Form
- Maintain hygiene practices including washing hands before and after handling food, changing nappies and administering first aid; and after outdoor play, and handling blood and bodily fluids

- **Notify the Coordinators of any outbreak of an infectious disease**
- Advise parents/guardians to refer to the Staying Healthy 6th Edition (NHMRC) publication available at www.genesisfdc.com.au/resources page for any infectious disease event, and when necessary, exclude a child or other person with an infectious disease in line with the recommended exclusion period
- **Notify all parents/guardians of any outbreak of an infectious disease.**
- **A Notice on the occurrence of an infectious disease is to be displayed in a prominent position.** The notice **should not include** any names of child/ren and should be done in a manner that ensures the confidentiality of any child, family, Educator and their family and Coordinators
- Minimise the risk of infection to others by following strict personal and environmental hygiene practices
 - Educators are to wear disposable gloves when dealing with urine, faeces and blood. It is recommended that urine, faeces and blood should be cleaned up with neutral detergent and water. Any significant cuts to the Educator or child's skin should be covered
 - Bathing shall only occur during standard hours of a service where necessary for the comfort or personal hygiene of a child. Parent / Guardians must be informed if this does occur. A child may also be bathed if a child is to stay for extended hours of care
- Respond to, and support the health and emotional needs of any child who becomes ill and/or is suspected of having an infectious illness
- Ensure that the unwell child is **separated from other children**. The Educator must setup quiet play (e.g. drawing, colouring) for the other children in care and remain with the unwell child to provide comfort until the child recovers or is collected by their family or other emergency contact person. Educator must have **line of sight** for the other children and provide supervision while remaining with the unwell child
- Appropriate health and safety procedures are implemented when treating ill children; wear disposable gloves, face mask or other PPE if needed.
- All resources or items touched by a child with a suspected illness are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected (cushions, pillows, toys)
- Have knowledge of illnesses and infections prevalent in the local area.
- Provide up-to-date information for families and Educators on immunisation and the protection of all children from infectious diseases

Responsibilities of Parents:

The Parents will:

- Notify the Service and Educator of their child's immunisation status. This will include if they choose not to immunise their child (conscientious objector)
- **Notify the Service if their child has an infectious disease**
- Keep infectious or sick children away from the care environment
- Promptly pick up a sick or infectious child that becomes ill whilst in care
- Provide accurate and current information regarding the immunisation status of their child/ children when they enrol and any subsequent changes to this whilst they are attending FDC
- Comply with the exclusion periods listed in the Staying Healthy 6th Edition (NHMRC) publication
- Communicate with the Educator about the child's health and wellbeing
- Notify the Educator if the child is being tested for an infectious disease

Resources and Further Readings

- ACECQA (2023) Guide to the National Quality Framework
- ACECQA (2023) Policies and procedures guidelines: *Dealing with infectious diseases policy and procedure guidelines*
- ACECQA (2023) Information Sheets
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Amended 2023)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (Amended 2023)
- ACECQA National; Quality Framework Resource Kit www.acecqa.gov.au
- Staying Healthy in Childcare (NHMRC)

Related FDC Policies, Procedures & Documents

- Parent Agreement Form
- Home Safety Checklist
- National Immunisation Program Schedule

Last Reviewed: October 2025

Next Review: October 2026