

Transportation of Children

Policy/Procedure Number: **QA2 - 14**

Policy/Procedure Requirement: National Quality Standards 4, 6 & 7; Regulations 4, 99, 100-102 & 168

Policy Statement

This policy applies to the safe transportation of children by FDC Educators.

Rationale

The FDC Educator has responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children while being educated and cared for by the FDC Educator – i.e. from the time the child is signed in to the care of the Educator (dropped off by the parent/ authorised person) until the time the child is signed out (picked up by the parent/ authorised person).

FDC Educators should take steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children during transportation as it may present additional risks to children depending on how it occurs and how transition between a vehicle and an education and care service premises or other location is managed.

Any arrangement by parents/ carers for the transportation of a child/ children **to and from an FDC Educator's Residence** other than by the FDC Educator or an Educator Assistant approved by the Service **is not transportation provided by the FDC Educator or the Service, even if the transportation is provided by a household member/ relative of the FDC Educator** under an arrangement with the parent/ carer.

Definitions

The policy applies to **transportation that may or may not be part of an excursion** where transportation is provided by an FDC Educator, an approved Educator Assistant or a person approved by the Service.

An **excursion** means **an outing** organised by an FDC Educator and means a walk, drive or trip to and from a destination **as part of its educational program**. Examples of an excursion are as follows:

- To a specific destination, for example the library, museum or park
- As part of the educational program, for example playgroup, music

Examples of transportation that is not part of an excursion are:

- Transport to and from school or preschool, or another location from/to the FDC residence
- Transport to and from children's homes to the FDC residence (in rare circumstances)
- Under school age children accompany the Educator when school age children are transported from/ to the FDC residence to/from school

- Multiple stops on the journey, where different school age children are dropped at multiple different schools
- Children are transported on public transport with FDC Educator to school

Regular transportation means the transportation by an FDC Educator of a child being in care, where the circumstances relevant to a risk assessment are substantially the same for each occasion on which the child is transported.

Strategies and Practices

Responsibilities of the Educators/ Educator Assistants:

FDC Educators are responsible for ensuring that all children are adequately supervised at all times, and all reasonable precautions are taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury.

Children may be transported by FDC Educators or FDC Educator Assistants as part of an excursion or for other purposes (e.g. school drop off), and the respective FDC Educators/ Educator Assistants have responsibility for the children during that period of transportation.

- Children aged from **4 years old but under 7 years old cannot travel in the front seat** of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats, unless all other back seats are occupied by children younger than 7 years in an approved child restraint or booster seat. In this case, the oldest or largest child should sit in the front seat and they must use a booster seat and a seatbelt. **Written consent of parents/ guardians** required prior to placing any child under 7 years old in the front seat
- Children aged from 7 years old but under 16 years old who are too small to be restrained by a seat belt properly adjusted and fastened should use an approved booster seat
- Children in booster seats must be restrained by a suitable lap and sash type approved seat belt that is properly adjusted and fastened, or by a suitable approved child safety harness that is properly adjusted and fastened

Children are not to travel in any vehicle other than that driven by the Educator, an approved Educator Assistant or a driver approved by the service. If a fully licensed adult member of the Educator's family is to be the driver of the vehicle nominated in the 'Assessment of Residence', the following conditions apply:

- The **driver is approved by the manager** of the Service
- The driver's license details must be documented on a permission form signed by each parent of any child who is to be transported
- The permission form must detail the reasons for the driver to be providing the transport and the times when the transport will be provided
- The **Educator is to be present with the children and supervising all children whilst being transported**
- The permission form is to be completed on an annual basis as part of the annual assessment

The Educators/ Educator Assistants will:

- Ensure that **every child in care is digitally (ESI) signed in and out** through online platform Hubhello **at the time of arrival** and **on departure** by the parent or authorised nominee
- If the **ESI is not working** or the **parent forgot to sign in/out** or has not saved the times, get the parent to **manually** sign in the attendance record with the correct date and drop off/ pick up times
- Ensure **no child is ever signed in** at the FDC residence or other location **before they actually arrive** at the location and are sighted as being there
- Ensure that no child is transported in a vehicle without being **accompanied by the Educator or the approved Educator Assistant**
- Ensure vehicles are kept locked and are not accessible to children when not in use

Before the Journey

- Plan ahead to minimise risks and avoid accidents and injuries during transportation
- Ensure the **child restraint check certificate** is current
- Ensure they hold a full Australian Drivers Licence
- Ensure the vehicle has comprehensive motor vehicle insurance to cover FDC children
- Ensure the vehicle registration is current
- Ensure **transportation risk assessments** or **excursion risk assessments** have been completed as appropriate, and parent authorisation received for each child transported
- Ensure that only the right number of children that can be safely transported in the car are transported
- Conduct a head count and roll call as the children enter the vehicle
- Check the FDC residence prior to departure to ensure that no children are left behind
- Ensure all children are secured into their seats with child restraints, booster seats or seatbelts as appropriate
- Ensure that the child safety restraints/ seat belts are properly adjusted and fastened
- Ensure that any goods carried in the vehicle (especially if it is a hatch back or station wagon) are stored safely below the level of the rear seat
- Ensure no articles are placed on the rear parcel shelf or front dashboard
- Give children clear guidelines in regard to expected behaviour during the journey, including the need to stay in the group and follow instructions at all times
- Commence the journey after confirming that all children are secured and it is safe to leave

Drop off to or Collection from School or Other Location

- If the Educator/ Educator Assistant has to take/pick the child to/from the classroom or have to leave the vehicle and escort the child, then all children must accompany the FDC Educator or FDC

Educator Assistant

- Vehicle must be parked in a safe location
- If the Educator and Educator Assistant are both present on the journey and one of them remains in the vehicle with the children to supervise them, then the children do not need to accompany the Educator/ Educator Assistant who is leaving the vehicle (e.g. to collect a school child from classroom)
- Conduct a visual check of the vehicle after removing all children
- Ensure the child collected from or dropped off at school or another location is safely delivered to this location and where applicable, **into the care of a specific person** (such as the kindergarten teacher) as authorised by the parent
- Ensure the child is **signed off in the ESI** immediately after the child is dropped off and while the vehicle remains safely parked
- Conduct a roll check and head count to ensure all children are accounted for, before recommencing the journey
- Repeat the above process for each subsequent stop

While on an Excursion or Regular Outing to a specific destination (e.g. park, library)

- Follow the steps outlined under 'Before the Journey' when using transport to attend an excursion or regular outing to a specific destination
- Park the vehicle in a safe location close to the entry of the excursion site/ destination
- Conduct a head count and roll call when **exiting** the vehicle at the destination
- Conduct a visual check of the vehicle after removing all children
- Secure the children into their seats prior to departing
- Conduct a head count and roll call as the children **enter** the vehicle
- If a child is unaccounted for, the FDC Educator/ Educator Assistant must immediately make all necessary enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts including physical searches of the vehicle and destination and, if necessary, contact the child's family and/or the police

Drop off to or Collection from Home (Only In Special Circumstances)

- Park the vehicle safely and turn off the vehicle's ignition
- Must not leave the vicinity of the vehicle (children must not be left unsupervised at any time) when collecting or dropping off a child at home
 - There should be a process arranged with the parent for Educator/Educator Assistant to collect/ drop the child without the need to leave other children unsupervised in the vehicle
- Ensure the parent/guardian sign the child onto or off the vehicle in the ESI
- Ensure the child is secured into their seat. If a parent secures their own child on the vehicle, the Educator / Educator Assistant must check to confirm prior to recommence the journey
- Repeat the above process for each subsequent stop

Duration of the excursion and on return to FDC residence

- Upon reaching the FDC residence:
 - Park the vehicle in a safe location close to the entry of the FDC residence and switch off the ignition
 - Remove the children from the vehicle and escorts them inside the residence
 - Conduct a head count and roll call once inside
- Conduct a thorough search of the vehicle once the children have been removed from the vehicle

Vehicle safety/crash or transport related injury

- Ensure vehicle/s are suitably maintained, roadworthy, safe for children, registered and adequately insured
- Adhere to national and state/territory laws and safety standards regarding motor vehicle safety
- Ensure appropriate procedures are followed in the event of a vehicle crash or transport related injury involving FDC Educator or children (refer to **Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy**).
- Ensure that emergency procedures are followed in the event of a vehicle crash or transport-related injury involving any children
- Ensure that any child restraint or seat that is involved in a crash will not be used for transporting children and will be disposed of

Responsibilities of the Service/ Coordinators:

The Service and Coordinators are responsible for:

- Establish and disseminate this policy, and risk assessment and authorisation templates to FDC Educators/ Educator Assistants
- Provide/ facilitate as appropriate, information and support for Educators on road safety topics, including vehicle and driveway safety, current legislation and regulations

Resources and Further Readings

- Education and Care Services National Law & Regulations
- ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit
- ACECQA Information Sheets

Related FDC Policies, Procedures & Documents

- Excursions and Regular Outings Policy (QA2-13)
- Transportation Risk Assessment & Authorisations
- Child ID Cards
- Medical Management Plans

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Next Review: January 2023