

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 5

To view the full version of this policy (including attachments); please speak to the staff at your early learning service.

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

Overarching Policy Statement:

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service;
- encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions, and to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem;
- considering the health, safety and wellbeing of each child, and providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which they can develop and learn;
- maintaining a duty of care towards all children at the service;
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family and cultural values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child;
- building collaborative relationships with families to improve learning and development outcomes for children;
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children and educators/staff at the service.

Purpose:

This policy provides guidelines to ensure:

- the development of positive and respectful relationships with each child at the service;
- each child is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

In developing an *Interactions with Children Policy*, early childhood education and care services must review and reflect on the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service, particularly with regard to the relationships with children. The Policy should ideally be developed and implemented jointly with all service management and staff and parents and be informed by the Code of Conduct Policy (particularly Attachment 2 – Professional standards for staff).

Each Founding Agency Policy, Procedure, Practice Manual or Form continues to have effect on and after the Date of Establishment as Uniting to the extent that it is not inconsistent with a Uniting Level 1 & 2 Policy and until such time as Uniting replaces it.

Everyone at the service needs to be aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families. Educational programs must be delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, be based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child. The service should provide education and care to children in a way that:

- encourages children to express themselves and their opinions;
- allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem;
- maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times;
- offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour;
- has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.

Scope:

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents, children and others attending the programs and activities of Uniting Early Learning.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.

Background and legislation:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, wealth, birth status or ability. Developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security. Positive interactions between educators/adults and children can empower children to feel valued, competent and capable.

Actively engaging in children's learning and decision-making during play, daily routines and ongoing activities can stimulate children's thinking, enrich their learning and encourage them to explore and manage their feelings and behaviour.

"Having supportive relationships with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members enables children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves, work through differences, learn new things and take calculated risks" (*Guide to the National Quality Standard – refer to Sources, Attachment 2*).

National Regulation 155 requires an Approved Provider of children's services to take reasonable steps to ensure that the service provides education and care to children in a way that encourages them to express themselves, and develop self-reliance and self-esteem, maintains their dignity and rights, provides positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour, and respects their cultural and family values.

Regulation 156 requires the Approved Provider to ensure that the service provides children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service. To meet these requirements, the Approved Provider is expected to consider the size and composition of the groups in which the children are educated and cared for.

Attachment 2 contains a list of the legislation and sources relevant to this policy, including Acts and Regulations.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals and purposes of this policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness;
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required;
- notify parents at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Definitions:

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) **supervision** entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Behaviour guidance: A means of assisting children to self-manage their behaviour. It differs from traditional 'behaviour management' or 'discipline' which generally implies that an adult is 'managing' children's behaviour or using punishment to control children. Behaviour guidance applies to all forms of behaviour, not just behaviours labelled as 'negative'.

Behaviour guidance plan: A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with diagnosed behavioural difficulties to self-manage his/her behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents and families, and other professional support agencies as applicable.

Challenging behaviour: Behaviour that:

- disrupts others or causes disputes between children, but which is part of normal social development
- infringes on the rights of others
- causes harm or risk to the child, other children, adults or living things
- is destructive to the environment and/or equipment
- inhibits the child's learning and relationship with others
- is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.

Notifiable complaint/incident: The Approved Provider is required to notify the Regulatory Authority of certain circumstances and information in the required timeframe. Notification must occur within 24 hours if it relates to:

- complaints (either written or verbal) alleging the health, safety or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached;
- an incident that requires the approved provider to close, or reduce the number of children attending, the education and care service for a period;
- additional children being educated and cared for in an emergency (e.g. flood or fire)

Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the appropriate forms, which can be found on the ACECQA website. Further information about notifications can be found in Section 173 and 174 of the National Law and in National Regulations 174 and 175.

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program: Early intervention outreach services that are universally available within state-funded preschools for any child with developmental concerns. The primary role of the PSFO Program is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in preschool.

Serious incident: For the purposes of section 174(5) of the Law, the following are prescribed as serious incidents—

- (a) the death of a child—
 - (i) while being educated and cared for by an education and care service; or
 - (ii) following an incident while being educated and cared for by an education and care service;
 - (b) any incident involving serious injury or trauma to, or illness of, a child while being educated and cared for by an education and care service—
 - (i) which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
Examples Whooping cough, broken limb, anaphylaxis reaction.
 - (ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital;
 - (c) any incident where the attendance of emergency services at the education and care service premises was sought, or ought reasonably to have been sought;
 - (d) any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service—
 - (i) appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for; or
 - (ii) appears to have been taken or removed from the education and care service premises in a manner that contravenes these Regulations; or
- (iii) is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the education and care service premises or any part of the premises.

The Approved Provider must notify the Regulatory Authority (DET) in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Regulation 176(2)(a)). The Notification of serious incident form (available on the ACECQA website) is to be completed and submitted online using the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS). Records are required to be retained for the period specified in Regulation 183.

Supervision: see **adequate supervision** in *Definitions* above.

Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited on: 1/7/2017

Review Date: August 2017

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- *Child Safe Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Educational Program and Practice Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*