

## RELAXATION AND SLEEP POLICY

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### Best Practice – Quality Area 2

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:

- providing a positive and nurturing environment for all children attending the service;
- recognising that children have different requirements for relaxation and sleep, and being responsive to those needs to ensure that children feel safe and secure at the service;
- consulting with parents about their child's individual relaxation and sleep requirements/practices, and ensuring practices at the service are responsive to the values and cultural beliefs of each family;
- its duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) to all children at the service;
- ensuring that adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*) is maintained while children are sleeping, resting or relaxing;
- complying with all legislative requirements, standards and current best practice, including recommendations by SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe

### Purpose:

This policy will provide clear guidelines for the implementation of safe relaxation and sleep practices that meet the individual needs of children attending the service.

### Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

Sleep/rest and relaxation needs of children at the service should always be considered, having regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs. Parents should be consulted in relation to appropriate relaxation and sleep practices for their child; parents in turn are responsible for informing the service about any specific sleep/rest requirements for their child.

Staff at the service must be familiar and comply with WorkSafe Victoria's *Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit*, as well as SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe information in relation to safe sleeping practices for children. Attachment 3 contains specific information about cots and the standards applying to them.

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*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.*

Staff should consider SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe information when developing relaxation and sleep practices. These should be responsive to:

- the individual needs of children at the service
- parenting beliefs, values, practices and requirements
- the length of time each child spends at the service
- circumstance or events occurring at a child's home
- consistency of practice between home and the service
- a child's general health and wellbeing
- the physical environment, including room temperature, lighting, airflow and noise levels

## Scope:

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

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

## Background and legislation:

“The early years of life are a peak period for growth and development, and quality sleep is essential during this period. Early childhood educators can support parents to establish and maintain good sleep habits in children through the environment provided for sleep and rest:

- Provide a separate, supervised area that is reserved for sleep and rest. This supports the distinction between awake time and sleep time and helps to minimise distractions.
- Direct children who do not want to sleep into quiet, restful activities instead.
- Maintain good levels of communication with parents and other caregivers to ensure that you know of anything that might have disturbed the sleep of children in your care.
- Let parents and caregivers know about the rest that their child has had that day at your setting” (from *Grow & Thrive* – refer to *Sources*).

The *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (VEYLDF) include a focus on social, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing and health. Development Outcome 3 in both framework documents refers to a child's ability to take increasing responsibility for their own wellbeing. One of the indicators for this capacity is that children “recognise and communicate their bodily needs (for example thirst, hunger, rest, comfort, physical activity)”. The EYLF suggests that to promote this, educators should:

- consider the pace of the day within the context of the community;
- provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day, and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation.

Employers have a responsibility under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to provide a safe and healthy working environment. This duty extends to others present in the workplace, including children and volunteers. Providing a safe environment for children at the service includes complying with current Australian/New Zealand standards in relation to equipment, such as cots and mattresses (refer to *Sources*).

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 the 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).

**Duty of care:** A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury.

**Relaxation/rest:** A period of inactivity, solitude, calmness or tranquillity.

**SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome):** The unexpected and unexplained death of an infant, usually occurring during sleep.

**SIDS and Kids:** The National SIDS Council of Australia, dedicated to eliminating SIDS and providing support for bereaved families. SIDS and Kids is considered to be the national authority on safe sleeping practices for infants and children. A branch of SIDS and Kids is located in each state and territory, and can provide resources and assistance (see Att. 2, *Sources*).

**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 the following:**

- *Child Safe Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*