

WATER SAFETY POLICY

Mandatory – 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 opportunities for children to explore their natural environment including through water play;
- ensuring that children are protected from the risks associated with drowning or non-fatal drowning experiences;
- ensuring that curriculum planning incorporates water safety awareness;
- providing information to educators, staff, parents, volunteers and others at the service about water safety.

Purpose:

This policy outlines the procedures that apply to managing water safety, including safety during any water-based activities at Uniting Early Learning.

Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

Water safety relates to access to water in the building, the playground or on excursions, and also to the availability of drinking water for children. All staff at the service have a responsibility to ensure the indoor and the outdoor learning environments are safe with regard to water related hazards (such as nappy buckets, pools, puddles), and that access to water hazards that are not able to be adequately supervised at all times are isolated from children by a child-resistant barrier or fence.

Adequate supervision of all children at the service must be ensured at all times and in keeping with duty of care responsibilities. An educator with a current approved first aid qualification should be in attendance and immediately available at all times children are attending the service

Parents should be informed about the *Water Safety Policy* on enrolment; they also have a responsibility to inform themselves about water safety, ensuring their children understand the risks associated with water.

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, including during offsite excursions and activities.

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

Background and legislation:

The supervision and safety of children with and around water is of paramount importance.

Learning spaces and environments should offer an array of possibilities and connect children with natural materials. Water is one experience that offers children sensory-rich, open-ended experiences that engage their curiosity and imagination. Children may encounter these resources in the service environment and/or when on excursions. These experiences, especially those conducted with and near water, will be carefully supervised ensuring the safety of children and adults. It is imperative that educators remain vigilant in their supervision of children in and around water, and are alert to potential risks in everyday practice in the learning environment.

Drowning is a leading cause of death for children in Victoria, with infants and toddlers the group most at risk. Non-fatal drowning incidents can result in permanent brain damage and disability. Knowledge of potential hazards associated with water will assist educators to provide a safe, stimulating environment for preschool children.

Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, including nappy buckets, water containers, pet water bowls and poor drainage which allows water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children. Children can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water.

Keep Watch is a public education program of Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, aimed at preventing the drowning deaths of children under 5 years of age in all aquatic locations. The program has four key actions:

- **supervise** children constantly around water
- **restrict access** to water hazards by using child-proof barriers and fences
- provide **water awareness** training to children
- **resuscitation** saves lives – ensure that staff have completed current first aid training.

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 educators, staff, parents, children, management and all 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 change 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).

Approved first aid qualification: A list of approved first aid qualifications, anaphylaxis management and emergency asthma management training is published on the ACECQA website: www.acecqa.gov.au

Hazard: A source or situation with a potential for harm in terms of human injury or ill health, damage to property, damage to the environment or a combination of these.

Notifiable incident: An incident involving workplace health and safety that is required by law to be reported to WorkSafe Victoria. Notification is required for incidents that result in death or serious injury/illness, or dangerous occurrences. For a complete list of incidents that must be reported to WorkSafe Victoria, refer to the *Guide to Incident Notification* on the WorkSafe Victoria website: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

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;
Examples Whooping cough, broken limb, anaphylaxis reaction.
- (ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital; or
- (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.

Water hazard: (in relation to this policy) can lead to drowning or non-fatal drowning incidences. Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, including nappy buckets, water containers, pet water bowls and poor drainage which allows water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children.

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## Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on: 1/7/2017

## Review date: August 2017

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*