

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The physical environment can contribute to children's wellbeing, happiness, and creativity as well as promoting the development of independence. It can contribute to and make visible the quality of children's learning and involvement in experiences. The choices made in a Family Day Care service about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air, and light in combination with access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor areas, have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy Lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1.1	Fit for Purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
73	Educational programs
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
75	Information about the educational program to be kept available
76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
80	Weekly menu
81	Sleep and Rest
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol -free environment
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
102	Authorisation for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing and security
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
107	Space requirements—indoor
108	Space requirements—outdoor space
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
110	Ventilation and natural light
111	Administrative space
112	Nappy change facilities
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
116	Assessments of family day care residences and approved family day care venues
117	Glass (additional requirement for family day care)
156	Relationships in groups
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
274	Swimming pools

73	Educational programs
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Victorian Child Safe Standards	
Standard 1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 4	Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
Standard 11	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

RELATED POLICIES

Animal and Pet Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Environmentally Responsible Policy Programming Policy Work Health and Safety Policy Health and Safety Policy	Safe Transportation Policy Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy Excursion Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Sun Safety Policy Water Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Dalas family day care Service will ensure the environment is safe, clean, and well maintained for children, families, educators, and visitors. Children's awareness of the environment and sustainable practice will be supported through daily practices, resources and interactions. The physical environment will support children's participation and engagement, development, learning, and safety, and will provide supervised access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships. Our Family Day Care Service ensures all educators provide an environment free from the use of tobacco and alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Coordinator, Educators, Educator Assistants, children, families, and visitors of the Family Day Care Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Dalas Family Day Care Service is committed to ensuring all approved educators provide a physical environment that promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and provides effective and adequate supervision of children at all times. All approved Family Day Care residences and/or venues are assessed, including a risk assessment, at least annually by the approved provider to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children who are educated and cared for by the service are protected.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/COORDINATOR AND FAMILY DAY CARE EDUCATOR RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

Suitability of the residence or venue (reg.116)

The educator will ensure:

- the physical environment provides adequate supervision at all times
- natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air is incorporated in the residence or venue
- appropriate areas for food preparation are provided
- all required fencing will be maintained in good condition and is compliant with current regulations
- power points not in use have safety caps, all double adaptors and power-boards are out of reach of children, and all electrical cords are secured and not dangling
- sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating, and sleeping facilities are available
- adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety
- the *Sun Safety Policy* and procedures are adhered to at all times
- adequate shade is provided and maintained for outdoor play. Shade options can include a combination of portable, natural and built shade.
- regular shade assessments are conducted to monitor existing shade structures and assist in planning for additional shade

Choosing appropriate resources and equipment

The educator will ensure:

- appropriately sized furniture and equipment will be provided in both the indoor and outdoor environment according to the number, ages and abilities of children attending, or likely to attend the service at the residence or venue
- resources and equipment will be chosen to reflect the cultural diversity of the FDC Service's community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- children will be provided with resources and equipment that encourages appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with their individual developmental level
- specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment
- a maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained
- all purchases, including equipment and consumables for the daily running of their service will be the responsibility of the educator
- all equipment, including cots, highchairs, car seats, booster seats, strollers/prams etc meet relevant Australian Safety Standards and are assembled and maintained in accordance with safety guidelines
- families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, car seats, etc.
- climbing equipment will be set up in a safe way and compliant with Australian Safety Standards incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up
- playground surfaces are compliant to specific Australian standards
- a natural environment for children to explore and experience will be provided which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water
- they will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment
- the environment will incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity
- a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences will be provided, catering for children's interests and abilities

Laundering of soiled items

The educator will:

- ensure soiled clothing is returned to a child's home for laundering

- remove soiled content and place into a plastic bag. Items will be stored securely in a sealed container or double-bagged before being placed in the child's bag.

Sleep/rest environment

The educator will:

- strictly adhere to the *Sleep and Rest Policy* and procedures
- position cots and beds to encourage a calm and relaxing environment. There will be a minimum space of 300mm between each cot to reduce the possibility of cross infection.
- regularly check cots and beds to ensure all bolts and fittings are secure and safe
- ensure all cots meet the mandatory Australian Standard for Cots- (AS/NZS 2172)
- ensure that mattresses are in good condition- clean, firm and flat and fit the cot base with no more than 20mm gap between the mattress sides and ends
- store beds in a dry area and in a location that is easy to access
- use correct manual handling techniques when moving the beds
- use light bedding materials for cots and beds
- ensure a safe environment by making regular safety checks to identify any possible hazards such as hanging cords, strings from blinds, curtains or electrical devices

Ongoing Maintenance

The approved provider and educator will:

- continuously reflect on the physical environment to ensure they provide an environment that is safe, stimulating and engaging for all who interact with it
- conduct risk assessments of each residence or venue at least annually
- ensure that the approved residence or venue and its grounds comply with National Regulations
- ensure each residence/venue has regular pest inspections carried out by an accredited pest control company. Documentation of these inspections will be kept and any further recommended treatments as a result of the findings from the pest control check will be carried out in a timely manner.
- ensure playground surfacing and soft fall is checked regularly.

Daily Safety Checks

The educator and educator assistants (if relevant) will conduct daily inspections of the premises and environment before children arrive. *The Opening Checklist and Outdoor Cleaning/Safety Checklist will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks.*

This inspection will include:

- residence perimeters
- fences/fence line
- gates
- paths
- buildings
- all rooms accessible by children
- fixed equipment
- sand pit/ mud pit (if applicable)
- water features/spa/swimming pools

This must be done in order to identify any dangerous objects in the grounds ranging from sharps to poisonous or dangerous plants and animals. In the event of a sharp object being found (for example a syringe) the educator will wear gloves and use tongs to pick up the object and place it in the 'sharp object box'. This box will be disposed of as per the recommendations of our local council.

Similarly, trees in the grounds must be checked regularly for overhanging, dead, or dangerous looking branches as well as checked for any infestations.

Indoor and Outdoor Daily Safety Checklists will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks. A record of these will be kept by the service. (see Resource section for checklists)

General Cleaning

The educator will:

- use structured cleaning schedules to ensure that all cleaning is carried out regularly and thoroughly
- clean the residence or venue at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed
- ensure accidents and spills are cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the FDC service always maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.
- Educator will adhere to our HEALTHY AND safety Policy

Storage and use of dangerous chemicals, substances, medicines or equipment

The educator will:

- ensure all procedures are followed to maintain a safe environment
- adhere to the Service's Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy

Bathroom

The educator will:

- provide clear supervision to children when in use (having regard to the need to maintain the rights and dignity of children)
- encourage children to follow hygiene practices- for example: hand washing, toileting
- maintain clean bathroom facilities, including using appropriate signage when the bathroom floor is wet.

Maintenance of Fire Equipment

The educator will:

- ensure all fire equipment at the residence or venue is maintained as per the legal standards
- employ external agencies to assist with this maintenance
- ensure batteries in smoke alarms are replaced annually

SUN PROTECTION

The educator will:

- adhere to our FDC Service *Sun Safety Policy* and procedures at all times
- implement a combination of sun protection measures whenever UV Index levels reach 3 and above
- educators will continue to check the UV rating prior to going outdoors and as the heat increases throughout the day (see *Sun Safety Policy* for further information)
- monitor the temperature of outdoor equipment and surfaces during the day to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children to play (see: Daily Playground Surface Temperature Check)

The Family Day Care Service implements the **NSW SunSmart Program** to ensure children's health and safety is maintained at all times whilst at the service. We will use the SunSmart UV Index tool to ensure we are protecting children and staff from UV radiation. Educators will document the UV rating each day to ensure the safety of children, staff, and Educators. The UV Index will be used when:

- Planning or participating in outdoor activities
- Undertaking recreational activities – for example **Munch and Move**.

Outdoor Activities

The Service will use a combination of sun protection measures whenever **UV Index levels reach 3 and above**. This will include:

- From October to March sun protection is required at all times. Extra sun protection is needed between 11am and 3pm and during this period outdoor activities should be minimised. Minimising outdoor activities includes reducing both the number of times (frequency) and the length of time (duration) children are outside.
- From April to September (excluding June and July) outdoor activity can take place at any time. However, from 10am – 2pm sun protection is required.
- In June and July when the UV index is mostly below 3, sun protection is not required. Extra care is needed for services in the far west and north of NSW and for all children who have very fair skin.
- All sun protection measures (including recommended outdoor times, shade, hat, clothing and sunscreen) will be considered when planning excursions.
- Educators will continue to check the UV rating prior to going outdoors and as the heat increases throughout the day.

Shade

The Service will provide and maintain adequate shade for outdoor play. Shade options can include a combination of portable, natural and built shade. Regular shade assessments will be conducted to monitor existing shade structures and assist in planning for additional shade.

Hats

Educators and children are required to wear sun safe hats that protect their face, neck and ears. A sun safe hat is a:

- Legionnaire hat
- Bucket hat with a deep crown and brim size of at least 5cm (adults 6cm)
- Broad brimmed hat with a brim size of at least 6cm (adults 7.5cm)

Please note: baseball caps or visors do not provide enough sun protection and therefore are not to be worn in this service. Children without a sun safe hat will be asked to play in an area protected from the sun (e.g. under shade, veranda or indoors) or can be provided with a spare hat.

Clothing

When outdoors, educators and children will wear sun safe clothing that covers as much of the skin (especially the shoulders, back and stomach) as possible. This includes wearing:

- Loose fitting shirts and dresses with sleeves and collars or covered neckline.
- Longer style skirts, shorts and trousers.
- Enclosed shoes and socks to protect children's feet

Children who are not wearing sun safe clothing can be provided with spare clothing.

Please note: midriff, crop or singlet tops do not provide enough sun protection and therefore are not to be worn by children nor staff.

Sunscreen

FDC Educators and children will apply SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every 2 hours. Sunscreen is stored in a cool, dry place and the use-by-date monitored.

Babies

Babies under 12 months will not be exposed to direct sunlight and are to remain in dense shade when outside. They will wear sun safe hats and clothing and small amounts of SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen specifically manufactured for infants may be applied to their exposed skin.

The Australasian College of Dermatologists does not recommend the widespread regular use of chemical sunscreens in very young babies (less than six months of age), as they absorb more of any chemical applied to the skin than adults. Suncscreens should be applied to areas of the skin not protected by clothing. The American Academy of Paediatrics has stated that sunscreens may be used on infants younger than six months on small areas of skin if adequate clothing and shade are not available.

Source: Cancer Council Australia.

Role Modelling

Educators will act as role models and demonstrate sun safe behaviour by:

- Wearing a sun safe hat (see Hats).
- Wearing sun safe clothing (see Clothing).
- Applying SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors.
- Setting up experiences in shaded areas.
- Wearing sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (optional).

Families and visitors are encouraged to role model positive sun safe behaviour.

Education and Information

Sun protection will be incorporated regularly into learning programs. Sun protection information will be promoted to educators, families and visitors. Further information, support and free resources are

available from the Cancer Council website www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart or call the SunSmart Information Line on 02 9334 1761.

Policy Availability

The sun protection policy, updates and requirements (including hat, clothing and sunscreen) will be made available to educators and staff, families and visitors.

Review

Our service will monitor and review the effectiveness of our sun protection policy regularly, at least once every 12 months.

 SunSmart Agreement	
Service name: _____	
This service agrees to enforce the above sun protection policy in line with the SunSmart Early Childcare Program recommendations and to inform the Cancer Council NSW of any changes to the service's policy and practices. The service will take part in a review every 2 years.	
Name: _____	Position: _____
Signature: _____	Date: _____

WATER SAFETY

Legal requirements for pools, spas, paddling pools and inflatable pools vary across Australia. Local conditions or requirements may also apply, so it is very important to check with your local council.

National safety standards include the following recommendations:

- a) Enclose swimming pools and spas, with a barrier that complies with the current Australian Standard, and that completely separates them from the house and other parts of the yard.
- b) Enclose paddling pools and inflatable pools that can be filled to more than 300mm of water with a barrier that complies with the current Australian Standard, and that completely separates them from the house and other parts of the yard.
- c) Make spas inaccessible with a locked pool cover or an isolation barrier that conforms to the above Standard.
- d) Isolation barriers should be at least 1.2m high and without footholds that would allow a young child to climb over.
- e) Ensure that gates are self-closing, self-latching and have a child-resistant lock.

- f) Do not allow direct access from the house to the pool.
- g) If a door allows access to the pool, ensure that it has a self-closing, child-resistant lock.
- h) Windows that allow direct access to a pool or spa should not open more than 100mm.
- i) Remove objects that could help a child to climb over a fence or open a gate, door or window, including furniture and climbable plants or shrubs growing on the pool fence.
- j) Remove the ladder from above-ground pools and store safely when not in use.
- k) Display a permanent notice within the pool area detailing resuscitation procedures.
- l) Make pool filters inaccessible to children.
- m) Swimming pools at a Family Day Care residence or approved Family Day Care venue of the Service in Victoria is fenced in accordance with the requirements for fencing a new swimming pool under the Building (Swimming Pool Fences) Regulations 2001
- Make sure no child swims in any water without:
 - Written permission from family member to learn water safety and swimming.
 - Appropriate educators/child ratios in place.
 - Having sufficient numbers of educators present who have first aid or recognised water safety and rescue procedures.
- At all times children near water are closely supervised. A child will never be left unattended near any water.
- Ensure that all water containers are made inaccessible to children and also make sure children's play areas are safely fenced off from water hazards such as rivers, dams, creeks, lakes, irrigation channels, wells etc.
- Immediately empty all wading pools/water troughs etc. after every use, storage should prevent the collection of water e.g. upright/inverted, also check grounds after rain or watering and empty water that has collected in holes or containers.
- Ensure wading/water trough are hygienically cleaned, disinfected and chlorinated appropriately:
 - On a daily basis remove leaves and debris, hose away surface dirt and scrub inside with disinfectant.
 - Wash away disinfectant before filling trough.

SOURCE:

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
- Cancer Council Victoria: https://www.cancervic.org.au/about/contact_us
- Cancer Council Australia: <https://www.cancer.org.au>
- Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

- *Guide to the National Quality Standard.*(2020)
- *Kidsafe Family Day Care Guidelines. 7th edition. (2020).*
- *National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.*
- *Red nose Safe environment* <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>
- *Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).*
- *Building (Swimming Pool Fences) Regulations 2001*
- *The Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act)*

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	03/08/2022	NEXT REVIEW DATE	August, 2023
MODIFICATIONS	Reviewed roles and responsibilities Add relevant regulation for Swimming pool for Victorian services		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
December, 2020	New policies purchased from Childcare Desktop		2021