

# UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A CHILD AT A SERVICE

## POLICY

The unexpected death of a child at a Family Day Care Service is a traumatic event and the impact on Family Day Care educators, children and families can cause emotional turmoil, which can overwhelm usual coping skills. A policy providing comprehensive procedures is therefore crucial to ensure a coordinated response and ensure the mandatory reporting requirements to the regulatory authorities are followed.

As a result of the suddenness of such an event, well-trained and experienced staff can experience strong emotions and traumatic stress responses. The role of our FDC Service is to help restore a sense of safety for all children, educators, and families as soon as possible following a traumatic event.

### NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

| QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY |                                   |                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP    |                                   |                                                                                                                                           |
| 7.2                                          | Leadership                        | Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.                           |

| EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12                                               | Meaning of serious incident                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 85                                               | Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 176                                              | Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 183<br>(c)                                       | Storage of records and other documents<br>The records must be kept- (c) if the record relates to the death of a child while being educated and cared for by the education and care service or that may have occurred as result of an incident while being educated and cared for, until the end of 7 years after the death. |

| 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

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Administration of First Aid Policy<br>Administration of Medication Policy<br>Anaphylaxis Management Policy<br>Asthma Management Policy<br>Child Protection Policy<br>Epilepsy Policy<br>Health and Safety Policy<br>Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy | Medical Conditions Policy<br>Road Safety Policy<br>Safe Storage of Hazardous Substances Policy<br>Sick Children Policy<br>Unexpected Death of a Staff Member at a Service Policy<br>Water Safety Policy |
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## PURPOSE

Dalas Family Day Care Family Day Care Service will ensure that the Approved Provider, Coordinator and educators and educator assistants follow the procedures and principles within this policy and that immediate and appropriate action is taken to notify relevant authorities in the event of the death of a child whilst at the Service. There are a number of legal requirements to adhere to in the tragic event of the death of a child at a Service as outlined below.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Coordinator, educators and educator assistants of the Family Day Care Service.

### **SERIOUS INCIDENTS**

Regulation 12 defines a serious incident involving the death of a child as:

- (a) The death of a child –
  - I. while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service, or
  - II. following an incident occurring while that child was being educated and cared for by an education and care service.

### **NOTIFICATION OF A SERIOUS INCIDENT**

Under the National Law and Regulations [Section 174(2) (a) and Regulation 176 (2) (a)], the Approved Provider must notify the regulatory authorities within 24 hours of any serious incidents. This must be completed by logging into the [National Quality Agenda IT System \(NQA IT System\)](#).

### **KEEPING CHILDREN'S RECORDS**

In the event of the death of a child whilst being cared for at the Service, records must be kept for 7 years from the date of the child's death. [Regulation 183 (c)]

### **INITIAL ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY**

#### **THE FAMILY DAY CARE EDUCATOR OR EDUCATOR ASSISTANT WILL:**

Ensure that immediate and appropriate action is taken in the event of the death of a child whilst at the Family Day Care Service by following and implementing the following procedures:

- assess the situation as per service and First Aid procedures for any immediate danger to other children and/or staff or visitors
- provide immediate First Aid and/or CPR in accordance with current First Aid training
- call Emergency Services immediately requesting an ambulance
- call the parents/guardian of the child and arrange to meet at the hospital
- the Service must not advise parents of the death of their child: Medical staff will advise families of the situation
- notify the Approved Provider
- notify Regulatory Authorities including the Police Department

- complete in detail the Service's *Incident, injury, trauma and illness* form (in addition to notifying ACECQA via the NQA IT System within 24 hours with assistance from Approved Provider).
- contact their insurance company
- ensure all evidence is preserved
- maintain accurate and detailed record keeping
- provide professional and sensitive communication with families of the Service.

**THE APPROVED PROVIDER/COORDINATOR WILL:**

- attend the Family Day Carer's residence to provide assistance and support
- log the incident on the NQA TI System, attaching incident form and evidence  
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system>
- ensure that parents, families, children and educators will receive adequate and appropriate post-incident support
- demonstrate sensitivity, open mindedness and a balanced approach
- recognise and support cultural needs
- ensure all evidence is preserved
- maintain accurate and detailed record keeping
- contact their legal representative for support and direction
- establish protocols for Family Day Care Educators and their family members to discuss the traumatic event
- advise all staff associated with all staff of the Family Day Care Service of social media protocol for the event
- provide professional and sensitive communication with families of the Service
- engage the services of health care professionals (counselling and support for staff).
- cooperate on an ongoing basis with inter-agencies involved in the investigation.

**CARING FOR THE WELLBEING OF EDUCATORS, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES**

Our Family Day Care Service will engage health professionals who may include child and family counsellors and psychologists to support our FDC educators and educator assistants during this profoundly difficult time. Health professionals will assist FDC educators to be sensitive and mindful of the impact such an event has had on all stakeholders. With professional guidance and support, we will encourage children to express their emotions and feelings and implement strategies to assist and guide children's process of grieving and re-engage children in learning.

Our Service will provide ongoing monitoring and assistance to the Family Day Care Educator over the following months and provide support as required.

Educators will support children's understanding of grief and loss by:

- answering questions simply and honestly
- allowing children to express their emotions and feelings
- provide appropriate comfort
- implement a range of learning experiences to express their thoughts- drawing, movement, play
- create a safe space for time alone when needed
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Dalas Family Day Care Service will seek advice and support from health professionals to provide appropriate materials to send home to families to assist in understanding the effects of trauma on children and possible changes in behaviour following the unexpected death of a child in our Service.

### SUPPORT SERVICES

|                                   |              |                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| bayou                             | 1300 224 636 | <a href="http://www.beyou.edu.au">www.beyou.edu.au</a>                                                 |
| Beyond Blue                       | 1300 224 636 | <a href="http://www.beyondblue.org.au">www.beyondblue.org.au</a>                                       |
| Headspace                         | 1800 650 890 | <a href="http://www.headspace.org.au">www.headspace.org.au</a>                                         |
| Lifeline                          | 13 11 14     | <a href="http://www.lifeline.org.au">www.lifeline.org.au</a>                                           |
| Kid's Help Line                   | 1800 551 800 | <a href="https://kidshelpline.com.au">https://kidshelpline.com.au</a>                                  |
| Compassionate Friends of Victoria | 1300 064 068 | <a href="http://www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au/">www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au/</a> |

### SOURCE

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement: <http://www.grief.org.au>  
Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma, Loss & Grief Network:  
[http://earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/files/ACATLGN\\_grief\\_and\\_loss.pdf](http://earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/files/ACATLGN_grief_and_loss.pdf)  
Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations. (2017).  
Education and Care National Regulations. (2011).  
Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2017).  
*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.  
What Do We Tell the Children When Someone Dies?  
[http://www.adac.org.au/siteF/resources/l\\_children\\_gt.pdf](http://www.adac.org.au/siteF/resources/l_children_gt.pdf)  
*Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

### REVIEW

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                  |                  |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| POLICY REVIEWED BY | [NAME]                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | [POSITION]       | [DATE]           |
| POLICY REVIEWED    | OCTOBER 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | NEXT REVIEW DATE | OCTOBER 2023     |
| MODIFICATIONS      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policy maintenance - no major changes to policy</li> <li>• hyperlinks checked and repaired as required</li> <li>• continuous improvement/reflection section added</li> <li>• minor formatting edits within text</li> <li>• link to Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations added in 'Sources'</li> <li>• clarification regarding notification to Regulatory Authority via NQAITS within 24 hours</li> </ul> |                  |                  |
| POLICY REVIEWED    | PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                  | NEXT REVIEW DATE |
| OCTOBER 2021       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policy reviewed as part of annual cycle</li> <li>• minor edits (inclusion of FDC reference)</li> <li>• additional support services added</li> <li>• sources checked for currency</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                  | OCTOBER 2022     |
| DECEMBER 2020      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor editing and formatting</li> <li>• Sources checked for currency</li> <li>• Page numbers inserted</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                  | DECEMBER 2021    |
| DECEMBER 2019      | Related policies added<br>Relevant standards and regulations added<br>Additions to some subsections<br>Support services added<br>Sources checked for currency                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                  | DECEMBER 2020    |
| DECEMBER 2018      | New policy drafted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                  | DECEMBER 2019    |

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|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| POLICY REVIEWED | August 2021                                                                                                              | NEXT REVIEW DATE | August 2022      |
| MODIFICATIONS   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor editing and formatting</li> <li>• Sources checked for currency</li> </ul> |                  |                  |
| POLICY REVIEWED | PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS                                                                                                   |                  | NEXT REVIEW DATE |
| August 2020     | New policy drafted<br>Policies purchased from Child care desktop                                                         |                  | August 2021      |