

# INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

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## PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure:

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

## POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. VALUES

Kinderlea is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service
- promoting fairness, respect and equity
- 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 (refer to *Definitions*) 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, families and educators/staff at the service.

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to Educators, Committee of Management, and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child/ren at Kinderlea.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

**Adequate 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 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 plan:** A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with diagnosed behavioural difficulties or challenging behaviours to self-manage his/her behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the educators, parents/guardians 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 complaints:** The Department of Education and Training is required to be notified of a complaint that alleges:

- a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service
- the Children's Services Act and/or Regulations have been contravened.

Complaints of this nature must be reported within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b) ECSNR). If the Approved Provider is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact DET for confirmation.

**Mental health:** In early childhood, a child's mental health is understood as a child's ability to 'experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children. Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development. <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/>

**Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program:** The role of the PSFO Program is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in preschool: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>

**Serious incident:** A serious incident (regulation 12 ECSNR) is defined as any of the following:

- the death of a child while being educated and cared for at the service or following an incident at the service
- any incident involving serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which
  - a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
  - the child attended or ought reasonably to have attended a hospital e.g. a broken limb\*
- any incident involving serious illness of a child while that child is being educated and cared for by a service for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis\*.
  - \*NOTE: In some cases (for example rural and remote locations) a General Practitioner conducts consultation from the hospital site. Only treatment related to serious injury or illness or trauma are required to be notified, not other health matters.
- any emergency for which emergency services attended. NOTE: This means an incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a

person/s at an education and care service. It does not mean an incident where emergency services attended as a precaution.

- a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service
- a child appears to have been taken or removed from the service in a manner that contravenes regulations
- a child was mistakenly locked in or out of the service premises or any part of the premises.

Examples of serious incidents include amputation (e.g. removal of fingers), anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation, asthma requiring hospitalisation, broken bone/fractures, bronchiolitis, burns, diarrhoea requiring hospitalisation, epileptic seizures, head injuries, measles, meningococcal infection, sexual assault, witnessing violence or a frightening event.

If the Educators are not aware that the incident was serious until sometime after the incident, they must notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of becoming aware that the incident was serious.

### **Service policies**

- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Curriculum Policy*

## **PROCEDURES**

**All educators supported by the committee of management are responsible for:**

- developing and implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy* and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service
- ensuring all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*)
- ensuring children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*) and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times
- ensuring the size and composition of groups is considered to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service
- ensuring educational programs are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child
- ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children to have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and to be connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators
- ensuring that the service provides 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
- 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

- ensuring clear documentation and evaluation of each child's:
  - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
  - progress against the outcomes of the educational program
- accessing resources and gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy, including promoting social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing
- ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children and promotes the active participation of every child
- ensuring all staff members at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances
- promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and educators, staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences
- referring notifiable complaints (refer to *Definitions*), grievances (refer to *Definitions*) or complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner (refer to *Complaints and Grievances Policy*)
- informing DET, in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*) (Section 174(4), Regulation 176(2)(b) ECSNR)
- notifying DET, in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident (refer to *Definitions*) occurring at the service (Section 174(4), Regulation 176 ECSNR)
- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- developing links with and referral pathways to services and/or professionals to support children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families
- ensuring that there are strategies developed to support a child if educators are concerned that the child's behaviour may put the child themselves, other children, educators/staff and/or others at risk
- ensuring that parents/guardians and other professionals and support agencies (as appropriate) are consulted if strategies have not resolved the challenging behaviour
- ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required
- ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of a child/children with challenging behaviour
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- reading and complying with the *Interactions with Children Policy*
- engaging in open communication with educators about their child
- informing educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)
- informing educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour
- working collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

**EVALUATION**

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, all educators supported by the committee of management 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/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

## **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Committee of Management of Kinderlea on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018

**REVIEW DATE: JULY 2021 (OR PRIOR IF REQUIRED TO MEET CHANGES TO REGULATIONS)**