

Intereach Family Day Care

Missing Child Procedure



Applies to	Intereach Family Day Care (FDC)				
Definitions	Refer to Schedule of Definitions: <i>serious incident</i>				
Policy	NQF Two: Children's Health and Safety				
Version	1.0	Date approved	17/10/2025	Next review date	17/10/2025

Objective

To ensure a swift, coordinated, and effective response in the event that a child is identified as missing or unaccounted for from a Family Day Care service or associated event, with the primary goal of ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing. This procedure outlines the steps to be taken by educators and coordination unit staff to locate the child, notify relevant authorities and families, and prevent future occurrences.

Background

Family Day Care educators and services have a duty of care to provide a safe and secure environment for all children. Despite robust supervision and Risk Minimisation practices, there may be rare instances where a child is unaccounted for. In such cases, immediate action is critical.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Nominated Supervisors and Coordination unit staff to:

- Ensure educators are aware of and understand the procedures to follow if a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for
- Ensure that staff and educators are provided with adequate support and training to identify, assess, and minimise risks related to child supervision including during regular outings and excursions
- Ensure that staff and educators understand and consistently maintain legislated educator to child ratios
- Report any serious incidents involving a missing or unaccounted for child to the relevant authorities in accordance with regulatory requirements
- Review incidents and support continuous improvement in supervision and safety practices across the service

It is the responsibility of educators to:

- Always maintain required educator to child ratios, in accordance with regulatory requirements
- Actively supervise children regardless of where education and care are taking place including at the Family Day Care residence, arrival and departure times, regular outings, and excursions
- Understand and follow the approved process in the event that a child appears to be missing or unaccounted for
- Remain calm, act swiftly, and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all children
- Communicate clearly with families, the Coordination Unit, and emergency services as required
- Participate in incident reviews

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to:

- Notify educators about any planned or known absences
- Be aware of and understand the procedures undertaken if a child is deemed missing or unaccounted for
- Cooperate and communicate with educators, Intereach staff, and emergency services throughout the process
- Ensure that all contact details and emergency information are kept up to date
- Support the service in reviewing and improving safety practices where appropriate

Procedure

- If a child/ren has not arrived at a scheduled session of care and there has been no prior notification from the family, educators must refer to the Attendance and Absence Procedure for instructions to follow.
- This includes steps for contacting families, documenting absences, and assessing any potential concerns regarding the child's wellbeing.

Missing or unaccounted child

In the event where, for any length of time, a child appears to be missing or otherwise unaccounted for:

- The educator will complete a head count where the child is unaccounted for after the head count:
- If safe to do so without compromising the safety of other children, the educator will begin a full search of the service, including:
 - Indoor and outdoor spaces
 - Fixed structures such as cubby houses
 - Unlocked cupboards and storage areas
 - Areas generally inaccessible to children, if locking devices have not been properly secured
- Note at no time will an educator leave the service residence to conduct a search if the child is missing from the service

If a child appears to be missing or unaccounted for during an outing or excursion, the educator will:

- Conduct a full search of the immediate vicinity, ensuring the safety and supervision of all other children
- If at a specific venue, alert venue management to assist with the search

If appropriate, the educator will ask the other children in care if they are aware of the whereabouts of the potentially missing child.

If the child remains unaccounted for after a thorough search or a period of 10minutes, whichever is sooner, the educator will:

- Contact police immediately and report the child as missing
- Contact the Nominated Supervisor, who will:
 - Dispatch a staff member to the location to provide support
 - Notify the child's family
 - Notify the General Manager or CEO
- Follow guidance from emergency services and the Nominated Supervisor
- Continue to safely search for the child

Once the child is found:

- The Nominated Supervisor will notify the child's parents/guardians, venue staff (if required), and the General Manager or CEO immediately

Post-Incident Actions

When safe to do so, the Nominated Supervisor will:

- Meet or speak with the educator to discuss the situation
- Request a detailed incident report
- Submit a Serious Incident Notification to the Regulatory Authority via the NQA IT System within 24 hours (this may occur prior to a complete investigation)
- Maintain communication with the child's family and offer counselling if appropriate the service will conduct an internal investigation, including:
 - Collecting and photographing (if appropriate) relevant information
 - Taking notes about events leading up to and during the incident
 - Reviewing the incident report
 - Interviewing the educator and any witnesses
 - Identifying and implementing changes to minimise future risk

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- Facilitate a meeting with the parents/guardians and provide a written summary of the investigation
- If a breach of law, regulation, or policy is suspected or confirmed, notify Human Resources and commence an HR investigation
- Participate in any external investigations
- Address any identified risks

Disciplinary action,

Disciplinary action including suspension and/ or termination of registration, may result due to having to enact the missing children's procedure

Monitoring, evaluation and review

This procedure will be reviewed every three years and incorporate feedback and suggestions from children, families, educators, coordinators, volunteers and students or when there is a legislative change or incident involving a missing child

National Quality Framework

Element	Description
2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
2.2.2	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.

4.1.1	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that of child safe.

Compliance and Reference

Legislation	Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) clauses 84 Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012 (Vic) Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011(Cth) Failure to Disclose 2014 (Vic) NSW Crimes Act 1900 Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
Standards or other external requirements	Child Safe Standards (Vic) Child Safe Standards (NSW)
Internal documents	Child Safety Policy Domestic and Family Violence Policy Privacy Policy Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy Children's Services Health and Safety Policy Child Protection Procedure Attendance and Acceptance Procedure Notification of Serious Incident Procedure Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure Issues of Noncompliance in FDC Procedure Supervision Procedure Excursions including regular outings Procedure

Document Control

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Next review date
1.0	11/10/2019	R. Phillips – Acting Senior Manager Children and Family Services	11/10/2022
2.0	16/12/2021	M. Tai – General Manager Operations	16/12/2024
2.1	25/5/2022	T Mercer, PM Quality	25/5/2025
1.0	17/10/2025	The Children's Services procedures separated to be a standalone procedure for FDC and approved by: Kerri-Anne Hyde – General Manager, Operations	17/10/2028