

Intereach Children's Services

Missing Child Procedure



Applies to	Intereach Family Day Care (FDC) and Intereach Out Of School Hours (OOSH)				
Definitions	Refer to Schedule of Definitions: <i>serious incident</i>				
Policy	NQF Two: Children's Health and Safety				
Version	2.1	Date approved	25/5/2022	Next review date	25/5/2025

1. Objective

The objective of this procedure is to ensure:

- that children at the service are supervised at all times, having regard to the child's age, their physical and intellectual development and to the activities in which they are engaged in; and,
- there are clear processes in the event that a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service.

2. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of managers and nominated supervisors to:

- ensure that staff and educators are provided with adequate support and training to identify, assess and minimise risks involving child supervision (including during regular outings and excursions);
- ensure that staff and educators always understand and maintain legislated and safe educator to child ratios; and,
- report any serious incident to the relevant authorities.

It is the responsibility of staff and educators to:

- maintain ratios and supervise children at all times regardless of where the education and care are taking place e.g. at a service, FDC residence, attending play session, during an excursion; and,
- understand the process to follow in the event that a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service.

3. Procedure

If a child/ren has not arrived at a session of care refer to the *Attendance and Absence Procedure* for instructions to follow.

3.1. Missing or unaccounted child

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

- Staff or educator to check the attendance record and confirm whether the child has already departed the service in the care of a parent/guardian, or authorised person:
 - if the child is not recorded as having left the service, the staff or educator will complete a head count in accordance with the attendance record.
 - where the child is unaccounted for after the head count:
 - if safe to do so without compromising the safety of others the staff or educator will begin a full search of the service;

- Contact the Nominated Supervisor, if the child remains unaccounted for after a thorough search of the service or a period of 10 minutes, whichever is the lesser and the Nominated Supervisor will contact emergency services (police), notify the families and General Manager or Chief Executive Officer.
- Follow the guidance given by the Nominated Supervisor and continue to look for the child if safe to do so.
- Write and submit a detailed incident report within 24 hours of the incident taking place.
- Participate in internal and/or external investigations, where relevant.

3.2. Nominated Supervisor tasks

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- for Family Day Care, immediately send a staff member to the location (e.g. residence, excursion venue);
- call the Police on 000;
- advise and brief the General Manager and the Chief Executive Officer within 24 hours of the incident occurring;
- submit a serious incident notification (including findings of the investigation) to the state Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the incident occurred via the National Quality Agenda (NQA) IT System on the ACECQA website;
- maintain sufficient levels of communication with the child's parents/guardians; after the event the child/ family will be offered counselling if deemed appropriate
- advise staff and educators to follow the direction of the Emergency Services personnel once they arrive and take control of the situation;
- provide immediate support to the staff or educators;
- after the incident, meet or speak with service staff or educator to discuss the situation;
- conduct an internal investigation of the incident including:
 - collecting and photographing information;
 - taking notes about events leading up to the incident and the incident itself;
 - reviewing the incident report;
 - interviewing the staff or educator and any other witnesses; and,
 - determining what, if any, changes need to be implemented to minimise risk of further incidents.
- facilitate a meeting with the parents/guardians and provide them with a letter outlining the details of the investigation;
- if there is a suspected or determined breach of Education and Care National Law and Regulation, policy or procedure; notify Human Resources and commence HR investigation;
- participate in any internal and/or external investigations as required; and,
- address any risks that have been identified as part of the internal/external investigation.

4. 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.

5. Procedure context: this procedure relates to:

5.1. Standards or other external requirements	Child Safe Standards (Vic) Child Safe Standards (NSW)
5.2. Legislation or other requirements	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)
5.3. Internal documents	Child Safety Policy Domestic and Family Violence Policy Privacy Policy Children's Services Health and Safety Policy Child Protection Procedure Attendance and Acceptance Procedure Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure

6. 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
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