

Dealing with COVID-19 Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Learning Links is committed to the safety and wellbeing of staff and clients.

Learning Links has established infection control protocols and ways of working to reduce the risk of any outbreaks of respiratory infections including the COVID-19 infection in our work environment.

This policy provides staff and families with information on our infection control strategies including:

- Environment Cleaning and disinfection principles
 - Physical distancing measures
 - Ensuring proper signage and communication to ensure compliance with established infection control practices
 - Establishing protocols for the management of an outbreak of COVID-19 infection.
 - Establishing measures that support contact tracing at all workplaces. This will include signing in and signing out logs.
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Policy

- Our Education and Care Services are committed to providing safe and healthy environments that reduce the risk of individuals being infected or spreading COVID-19 and other respiratory infections.
- Learning Links monitors and reviews the release of information from authorities on an ongoing basis and responds swiftly to advice from Health and Regulatory authorities and incorporates this advice and directives into our way of working.
- Staff, families and the community will receive informed advice, direction, guidance and resources via various communication channels on an ongoing basis and when circumstances change. This will include effective signage in the workplace.
- Individuals considered as being at high risk, including those with medical conditions, will be supported.
- Anyone who is unwell with a respiratory illness or communicable disease will be excluded from attending our workplace and encouraged to seek medical attention. They will be required to have a clearance from their doctor to return to work or our service.
- Staff and families will be asked to advise Learning Links when they are either diagnosed with COVID-19 and/or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Learning Links will manage notifications of infection in accordance with established best practice and Health authority protocols while being considerate of confidentiality and privacy.
- Learning Links will restrict excursions during heightened risk periods and conduct risk assessments for all excursions.
- Learning Links will at all times implement vigilant and effective hand washing and general hygiene practices. These will include
 - Washing or sanitising hands on arrival to the education and care setting
 - Washing hands before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.
 - Coughing and sneezing into a bent elbow or tissue and disposing of the used tissue immediately into a lidded bin.
- Learning Links will promote and implement physical distancing requirements between staff and families, and in the planning and set-up of the educational programs and the physical environment.
- Learning Links will ensure effective and safe environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for the physical environment. This will include regular cleaning of frequent contact surfaces.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Coronaviruses (CoV)	Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. The novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and the Covid-19 disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. (World Health Organisation).
Close contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having more than 15 minutes of face to face contact over the course of a week, with someone who has a confirmed or probably case of COV19 including 48 hours before the onset of symptoms. • Sharing a close space for more than 2 hours with someone who has a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19.
Recovered COVID-19	Confirmed by two negative respiratory specimens collected at least 24 hours apart at least 7 days after systems onset.

Eligibility

This Policy and Procedure applies to all staff employed in Learning Links Education and Care Services.

Responsible

Responsibilities for the policy are:

Person	Responsible for
Approved Provider/ General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining oversight of the implementation of the COVID-19 policy and procedures to ensure the wellbeing of all staff, children and families. • Working with Health and/or other regulatory bodies in response to any diagnosed cases of COVID-19.
Nominated Supervisor/ Manager Early Childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following recommended practices to reduce the risk of staff, children or families being infected or spreading COVID-19. • Checking updates on a regular basis from reliable sources and communicating these as required to the Approved Provider, staff and families. • Implementing best practice hygiene and environmental cleaning practices. • Ensuring adequate stock of PPE and hygiene supplies and managing staff, family and child access to these as relevant. • Ensuring staff and families who are sick with respiratory illness are encouraged to seek medical advice and if directed by their medical practitioner a COVID-19 test, and remain isolated at home until recovered • Responding to and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19, in accordance with health authorities and privacy laws. • Ensuring that required notifications are made within identified timeframes as advised by all regulatory authorities. • Managing the services of the contract cleaners to ensure they are implementing best practice cleaning procedures.

Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the Approved Provider to ensure that current and reliable information is communicated to families and staff about infection control practices. • Overseeing the implementation of daily cleaning and hygiene procedures and protocols. • Limiting the number of visitors to the education and care service in accordance with physical distancing restrictions and advice. • Implement practices to limit the gathering/grouping of adults (staff, parents and carers) and siblings in shared spaces at the education and care setting.
All Staff (Early Childhood Educators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying home when sick with a respiratory illness, having a COVID-19 test, and only returning to work after you receive a medical clearance to do so. • Notifying you manager immediately if you need to self-isolate, have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. • Promoting and modelling good hygiene (handwashing and respiratory hygiene) and social distancing practices using visuals, posters, intentional teaching with children and information shared with families. • Keeping the education and care service clean and hygienic through the implementation of daily cleaning schedules. • Ensuring children who become sick while at the service are isolated, and the families are contacted immediately. • Advising families of sick children to seek medical advice. • Calling emergency services in the event an ambulance is required. • Maintaining confidentiality of all confirmed cases of COVID-19
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon entering the centre, doing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cleaning hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser or with soap and water ○ Following recommended respiratory hygiene practices when coughing or sneezing ○ Maintaining physical distancing from staff and other families when delivering and collecting your child from the service as per service guidelines. • Following drop off and pick up routines as communicated by the Education and Care Service for children with preferably only one adult only entering the service with their child and if older siblings must attend to remain in the playground (outside). • Not entering the service if you are unwell. • Keeping your child at home if unwell and seeking medical attention for your child should they be unwell. • Collecting your child from the service immediately if requested to do so by staff due to concerns for their health. • Informing the centre Manager if you or your child has been diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus or been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. • Ensuring COVID-19 quarantine measures are adhered to.

Related Legislation

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
 - Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 78-80
 - Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 - Public Health Regulation 2012
 - Public Health Act 2010
 - Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Bill 2013
 - Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code (FSANZ)
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Related National Guidelines

Related Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety- Standards 2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2
 - National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities – Standard 6.1, 6.2
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Related Learning Links Policies, Procedures and forms

- Frequent contact surfaces COVID-19 Daily Cleaning Schedule
 - Infectious Diseases Policy and Procedure
 - Cleaning and Maintaining the Environment Policy and Procedure
 - Incident, Illness, Trauma and Injury Policy & Procedure
 - Medical Conditions Policy and Procedure
 - Nutrition, Food, Beverage and Dietary Requirements Policy and Procedure
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Resources/ Useful Links

- Environmental Cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19 <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>
 - Spotlight on Quality Issue 5 – Unpacking reporting responsibilities: education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/whats-happening-in-the-early-childhood-sector/news-and-events/spotlight-on-quality/issue-5-unpacking-reporting-responsibilities
 - World Health Organisation – Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Outbreak: www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
 - Fairwork Australia: <https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/>
 - Australian Government Department of Health: www.health.gov.au
 - Coronavirus information for school and early childhood centres, students and parents: www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-childcare-school-exclusions-faqs
 - Corona Health Information Line: 1800 020 080
 - Public Health Unit: 1300 066 055 (NSW)
 - The Regulatory Authority
 - Australian Health Protection Principle Committee (AHPPC): www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc
 - Worksafe Australia <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>
 - NSW Department of Education: Prevent the spread of COVID-19: A guide for early childhood education and care service <https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/coronavirus/prevent-covid19-guide-for-nsw-early-childhood-education-and-care-services.pdf>
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Procedure for supporting children in care settings to learn and participate in hygiene practices

Follow the steps below to support children's learning and participation in hygiene practices.

Step	Action
1	Remind and support children (where needed) to regularly and thoroughly clean their hands with soap and water through intentional teaching by Educators during routines, group times, transitions and the use of songs and rhymes that practice this skill. For example, the Baby Shark Handwashing song.
2	Discourage children from touching their eyes, nose and mouth as much as possible
3	Model and teach good respiratory hygiene practices, when coughing or sneezing using visuals and posters that demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covering the mouth and nose with bent elbow or tissue Disposing of the used tissue immediately in a bin with a lid; and Washing hands with soap and water or, if water is not available, hand sanitizer.

Procedure for the Safe Handling and Service of Food and Drinks

Follow the steps below to support the Safe Handling and Service of food and drinks.

Step	Action
1	Conduct food-handling training for staff; and
2	Provide food and drinks to children that have been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices.
3	Ensure gloves are worn or food tongs are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
4	Ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
5	Ensure food is stored and served at safe temperatures i.e. below 5°C or above 60°C.
6	Separate cutting boards used for raw meat and chicken and utensils; Wash hands a before touching other foods.
7	Discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils.
8	Ensure Children are supervised during all mealtimes.

Procedure for maintaining a clean and hygienic environment during COVID-19 Outbreak

Follow the steps below to maintain a clean and hygienic environment during the COVID-19 Outbreak.

Step	Action
1	Increase the cleaning of the children's bathroom and contact surfaces to twice a day during opening hours (refer to Additional Cleaning Schedule – Frequent contact surfaces).
2	Deep clean is conducted by professional cleaners after hours.
3	Clean toys and resources that have been frequently used by children in warm soapy water or wipe down.
4	Remove and clean toys and resources that have been mouthed, in contact with bodily fluids in warm soapy water

5	Follow standard precautions when handling blood, all body fluids, secretions, excretions, dried blood and other body substances.
6	Rake sandpits regularly and securely cover them when not in use;
7	Dispose of soiled items in a container that is inaccessible to children;
8	Wash rubbish bins and nappy bins regularly
9	Promote regular and ongoing handwashing and other hygiene practices with children and families.

Procedure for the Notification of a case of COVID-19 at the service.

Follow the steps below to notify regulatory authorities of a case of COVID-19 at the service.

Step	Action
1	Notify regulatory authorities within 24 hours if a child or staff member at our education and care service is diagnosed with COVID-19 (this is a serious incident) report to NSW Department of Health; Early Childhood Education Directorate and Local Public Health Unit: 1300 066 055 and follow their instructions.
2	Notify the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) or through direct contact via phone or email and follow any related instructions.
3	Advise families and staff of any responsibilities or directions provided by the Ministry of Health.

Procedure for managing physical distancing and the delivery and collection of children at the service

Follow the steps below to practice physical distancing in the education and care setting.

Step	Action
1	<p>Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encourage children to play and interact following physical distancing recommendations. This may include: Setting up play spaces with visual tools to show children where to sit and how many children can play at certain activities. Limiting how many children can play in specific play spaces, e.g. by limiting the number of chairs, spacing chairs and by using carpet mats that show children where they can sit. Referring to physical distancing visuals and posters during play and group times and practicing what this looks like during play. Using outdoor space as much as possible for play as weather permits.
2	<p>Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only parents or caregivers dropping their child to and from the program are allowed on site. Wherever possible, parents are requested to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep a distance of 1.5m between people. Not shake hands to greet others Not congregate in the Education and care service foyer, classrooms or playgrounds and to make sure drop off and pick up routines are as prompt as possible. Use hand sanitiser on arrival and departure when signing children in/out. If siblings must attend for drop off and pick up times with parents/ carers, siblings are required to stay with the parent and limit their movement around the education and care setting.

	Where possible, older siblings are to wait seated in the playground outside.
3	<p>Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash hands when arriving at the centre. • Community tours of the Preschool will occur only as approved by the Manager Early Childhood. • Conduct Pre-enrolment meetings by phone/remotely. • Maintain a distance of 1.5m between other adults where possible • Don't shake hands to greet others • Stagger staff lunch breaks to support physically distancing • Eat lunch at a desk, empty classroom or outside rather than in the lunchroom. • Open windows and doors, where possible to increase ventilation and to reduce the use of door handles (where children's safety is not jeopardised) • Hold parent or external meetings via video conferencing or phone calls or only in spaces where participants can physically distance.

Document control

This table outlines the control details for this document.

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