

EMERGENCY INFECTION and PANDEMIC RESPONSE POLICY

Date: 07/08/2009, revised 20/04/12, revised 12/05/17, revised 17/06/2020

Signed By Management Committee _____ **Date** _____

AIM

To minimise the risk of infection of children and educators during a threatened or established pandemic.
To effectively manage an outbreak of serious infectious disease in the centre by appropriate exclusion of sick children and educators, and where appropriate, the temporary closure of the Centre.
To notify the ACT Health of suspected cases of a serious infectious disease, such as pandemic influenza, COVID-19 or other emergent infection, and seek their guidance on appropriate action.

BACKGROUND

This policy has been developed with reference to the 2009 outbreak of H1N1 (swine) influenza and reviewed following the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. It is intended to be flexible to respond to the rapidly changing circumstances and pandemic threat levels associated with such outbreaks, including any other newly emerging disease threats.

Viruses are readily transmissible through droplets (e.g. coughing, sneezing) and through touching contaminated objects and surfaces. Given the nature of children's close contact with one another and with educators, viruses would be readily transmitted within the Centre. Infants, young children and persons over the age of 60 and those with chronic medical conditions are especially vulnerable to particular viruses. At certain times the exclusion of children and educators who may have been exposed to a serious infection or disease, reduces the risk of infections to other children and adults. Exclusion periods are based on the time a person may be infectious to others, and can include the incubation period of an infection (i.e. the duration between exposure and the appearance of symptoms).

Exclusion periods are enforced and apply to all people in contact with the Centre. Exclusion periods are based on the Australian Government and ACT Health guidelines. ACT Health will provide support and advice on management of threatened or established pandemics. All notifications will remain confidential. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of children and educators is protected.

RELATED POLICY

Medication Policy
Confidentiality Policy
Management of Illness Policy
Emergency Closure Policy
Infectious Diseases, Outbreaks & Exclusion Policy

IMPLEMENTATION

1. During a threatened or actual pandemic, staff are prepared to respond quickly to emerging information. In the event a child, family member or staff member has been in close contact with a person/s confirmed with a notifiable illness, UPCCC will be guided by ACT Health and the UPCCC Management Committee. The Director will be guided by ACT Health as to whether to tell parents and educators if there is a suspected case.
2. In the event of a confirmed case/s, Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA) will be immediately informed.
3. During an Emergency Infection or Pandemic, the exclusion periods may be changed at the discretion of the Director, in consultation with the Committee, as information on the incubation period and the severity of the illness becomes clearer. Children displaying any minor symptoms, will be sent home until the symptoms cease. (Attached Exclusion table for COVID-19– Appendix A).

4. Exclusion Periods for pandemic influenza or other emerging disease threat are based on the likely number of days that a person may be infectious. This period may include the likely incubation period of the virus if there is a risk that a person/s may have been exposed, (even if the person shows no symptoms) and the time to recovery if symptoms have developed.
5. Under normal circumstances, i.e. where there is no threatened or established pandemic (as defined by the World Health Organization) the usual exclusion period following return from international travel applies (see Outbreaks and Exclusion Policy).
6. However, the Director, in consultation with the Committee, has the right to extend this exclusion period at any time if the region, the child or educator has been travelling in (or through in transit) is experiencing an outbreak of a serious or potentially serious and highly transmissible infectious disease. The exclusion period is set at the maximum incubation period plus one day. For example, for H1N1 pandemic influenza this exclusion period is 6 days following the return to Australia (maximum incubation period is 5 days), if there are no symptoms. For COVID-19, the exclusion period is 14 days following any international travel; UPCCC exclusion would total 15 days. If a child or educator develops symptoms during this time the exclusion period is extended until symptoms have resolved and medical clearance (by medical certificate) has been obtained and provided to the Centre.
7. During a threatened or established pandemic, any child or educator who suspects that they have been in contact with a person with a virus must notify the Centre and are to be excluded until there are no symptoms or have obtained medical clearance (which is to be provided to the Centre).
8. A risk assessment in relation to the pandemic will be conducted and measures to minimise the risks will be established. See Appendix B for COVID-19 Risk Assessment.
9. While the Centre will be guided by advice from ACT Health, the Centre Director, in consultation with the Committee, will take action to minimise the risk of infection to children and educators. This could extend to the temporary closure of the Centre in the absence of any suspected or confirmed cases, for example if a potentially serious infectious disease becomes established in the University or wider community.
10. UPCCC will close if directed to close by the ANU or Government authority.
11. All stakeholders are to comply with Pandemic Risk Minimisation Practices, as follows:

University Preschool & Child Care Centre Responsibilities

- To communicate Pandemic Risk Minimisation Practices to all stakeholders;
- Ensure relevant updates provided by the Australian Government are communicated with families and staff;
- Monitor and ensure all staff and families follow hygiene and infectious disease control procedures including social distancing measures following Australian Government guidelines;
- UPCCC will ensure Relief Agency Management and their staff are informed of and follow Centre policies and procedures;
- Reduce the number of non-essential visitors to the Centre where possible. E.g. cancel incursions, such as Dance Kids and Goodwin Aged Care. Centre tours and new family orientations will be postponed;
- All extra-curricular activities and excursions, will be cancelled;
- Ensure Cleaning Contractor is informed, and follows Infectious Diseases Cleaning procedure. This includes disinfecting commonly touched surfaces such as tables, taps and door handles;
- Ensure adequate supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) e.g. disposable gloves and aprons (subject to availability);

- Ensure all PPE is worn to minimise exposure to the hazards;
- Ensure adequate supplies of hand sanitiser, hand pump soap, paper towels, and cleaning supplies are available (subject to availability);
- Where possible, educators will not be in contact with external visitors, such as supply and delivery personnel;
- Face to face staff meetings and professional development will follow physical distancing guidelines or will be cancelled where this is not possible;
- Ensure continued tracking of illnesses throughout the Centre using the UPCCC Illness Register. Request that families continue to call and inform the Centre of the reason for their child's absence;
- The Director or Centre delegate will communicate with affected families on a regular basis to ensure effective information flow;
- Ensure staff know they are able to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Advise staff of other sources of support. E.g. Beyond blue, ACT Health.

Staff Responsibilities

- Educators to continue to follow current UPCCC Health and Safety Policies and Procedures;
- Non-contact temperature screening of all staff, children, families and visitors entering the Centre;
- Implement infectious disease control procedures. Increase frequency of cleaning, ventilate sleep rooms and play spaces regularly;
- Ensure high contact surfaces such as tables, low shelves and doors are cleaned throughout the day;
- Ensure the implementation of the Indoor/Outdoor program. The outdoor sleep program will minimise time in an enclosed space;
- Nursery/Toddler and Preschool children are to play in their own outdoor play spaces to minimise mixed groupings;
- Actively teach hand washing and hygiene practices to children;
- Actively supervise and support children in handwashing prior to meals, following toileting and outdoor play. Also, when children are observed to have contact with bodily fluids;
- Remove mouthed toys promptly for cleaning;
- Attend to runny noses immediately;
- Minimise the use of soft furnishings and resources such as soft toys and dress-ups. Use easy to clean resources where possible;
- Reduce use of sensory resources such as playdough, sensory troughs and cooking experiences where possible;
- Send bedding home weekly for washing;
- Ensure safe food handling practices are implemented to prevent cross infection. Educators to serve children during progressive morning teas;
- Progressive meals will be implemented where possible to ensure small group gatherings;

- Ensure recommended outdoor time and physical movement guidelines are met;
- Ensure families follow illness and hygiene practices. Following illness, child to return only when fully recovered; no coughs, sneezing or with a medical certificate providing clearance;
- Observe children closely for signs of being unwell and act promptly to ensure children are supported when isolated from their peers and are removed from the centre in a timely manner;
- Educators adhere to exclusion periods and ensure they are completely well or have medical clearance before returning to work;
- Educators will inform the Centre of any potential or actual infectious illness and relevant health conditions that may impact on the care provided to children and/or the health and safety of staff;
- Where possible, educators will not be in contact with external visitors, such as supply or delivery personnel.

Family Responsibilities

- Wash and/or sanitise hands on arrival;
- To support their child to wash their hands on arrival to the Centre. The most effective hand washing technique is with soap and water for 20 seconds;
- Families to ensure Centre Management of Illness and Exclusion Policy is strictly adhered to. If in doubt please contact the centre for advice;
- To collect children within 30 mins if children are showing signs of being unwell;
- To keep children home until fully recovered before returning to Centre i.e. no coughing, sneezing or with a Medical Certificate providing clearance;
- Children with temperatures or gastroenteritis symptoms (vomiting/diarrhea) are to be excluded for a minimum 48hours, returning without any symptoms;
- If parents or carers show signs of being unwell, please do not attend the Centre and arrange for alternate person to collect your child;
- Parents will inform the Centre of any potential or actual infectious illness and relevant health conditions that may impact on the care provided to children and/or the health and safety of staff;
- Inform the Centre immediately if child or an immediate family member is travelling overseas;
- Families must not return to the Centre during the exclusion period following any overseas travel;
- Failure to follow Centre policies and procedures will result in your placement at UPCCC being terminated.

References:

ACT Government, Department of Health. *Latest Information about Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Retrieved from <https://health.act.gov.au/public-health-alert/updated-information-about-covid-19> on 16/03/20

Australian Government Department of Health. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Alert*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert> on 16/03/20

Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). *Advice to National Cabinet on 30 March 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-advice-to-national-cabinet-on-30-march-2020> accessed on 17/6/2020

NSW Health Website, *Pandemic influenza preparedness* - <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pandemic/Pages/default.aspx> accessed on 17/06/2020

World Health Organisation Website, *Influenza Public Health Preparedness*, <http://www.who.int/influenza/preparedness/en/>, Accessed on 17/06/2020

World Health Organization. *Getting your Workplace Ready for COVID-19*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6 on 03/03/20

UNICEF & World Health Organization. *Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4 on 17/03/20

[University Preschool & Child Care Centre Inc Health & Safety Policies and Procedures](#)

Date for Review – December 2020

Dear Parents,

Please note the changes to some exclusion periods in response to the COVID-19 virus.

Symptom/ health concern	Exclusion period
Fretful and listless behaviour	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Persistent cough	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Thick, yellowish/green discharge from nose	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Breathing difficulties	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Unusual spots or rash	A medical certificate will be required to return to the centre
High temperatures	48 hours
Sore throat	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Aches and pains	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Headaches	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Tired and flushed appearance	Return to centre when symptoms cease
Vomiting and diarrhoea/loose stools	48 hours after last episode

Sources

- ACT Government Health Department <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>
- National Health and Medical Research Council. *Staying healthy: preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th edition)*.
- University Preschool and Child Care Centre *Management of Illness Policy*. Review July, 2020
- University Preschool and Child Care Centre *Infectious Disease Outbreaks & Exclusion Policy*. Review August, 2020
- University Preschool and Child Care Centre *Emergency Infection & Pandemic Response Policy*. Review February, 2019

Appendix B – COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment for Potential Emergencies - COVID-19 -		
Nature of emergency/hazard	Health risk for all children and educators due to worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the most recent coronavirus. The disease spreads from person to person who are in close contact through droplets from the nose and mouth when the infected person coughs or sneezes. The most common symptoms are fever, tiredness and dry cough. Approximately 1 out of 6 people become seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Most people (approximately 80%) experience mild symptoms and recover without needing special treatment. The incubation period ranges from 1-14 days. The virus affects all people with those 65years and over and/or with underlying medical conditions at increased risk.	
Context	<p>The ACT has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak which originated in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Australia's infection rate has remained considerably low in comparison to countries such as the Italy, China and the United States of America.</p> <p>The ACT infection rates remain very low compared to other states, such as NSW and VIC. The Australian Government has implemented social distancing restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. International and domestic travel has ceased, all students and employees were directed to work/study from home where possible. Other social distancing restrictions include staying 1.5m apart and social gatherings are restricted to a limited number.</p> <p>Early Childhood Education and Care services remain open as this is deemed an 'Essential service'. On the 2nd of April 2020 the Australian Federal Government announced The Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package. Under this plan childcare is free (for a period of time) for families and services were to prioritise essential workers, disadvantaged and vulnerable families.</p> <p>There are 6 educators who fall into the 'At risk' category employed at the Centre. It is recommended under ACT Health guidelines and WorkSafe that educators falling into this category work from home where possible.</p> <p>As at 15th May 2020 according to ACT Health, there have been a total of 107 cases of COVID-19 in ACT, with 104 of these recovering and 3 resulting in death.</p> <p>The National data shows that confirmed cases by age and sex indicate that the most cases occurred in females between 20-29yrs followed by females in the 50-59yrs and 60-69 age group. A total of 83 cases across Australia were in children under 9yrs. Deaths by age show that the age at most risk 80-89 followed by 70-79yrs.</p>	
Risk associated with hazard	Risk	Risk minimisation measures
High number of people entering and using the service	Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce attendance, therefore reducing number of parents/carers entering the service • Families working from home are strongly encouraged to keep their children at home • A criteria to support essential workers is in place to prioritise children's attendance • Only essential staff and stakeholders to attend centre • All incursions and excursions to be cancelled/postponed • All centre tours postponed until further notice • Orientations for new families is postponed • Unexpected visitors directed to enquire via email or phone Centre and make an appointment

<p>Contact with visitors and people in the community</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All incursions and excursions to be cancelled/postponed • Local walks suspended during this time • All centre tours postponed until further notice • Notices at front gate, unexpected visitors directed to enquire via email or phone Centre and make an appointment • Hand sanitiser available at front gate for visitors and parents to use • Parents, children and visitors are directed to wash hands and/or sanitise hands on arrival • Temperature checks on arrival into rooms • Deliveries are to be received by office staff to limit exposure to staff • Staff to follow social distancing guidelines outside of work • Meetings and trainings held outside of the Centre are postponed
<p>Adults in close contact with one another</p>	<p>High - Extreme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage to remain 1.5m apart • Centre to ensure capacity following 4sqm guide- Shared offices and staff room • Staff lunches continue to be staggered • No more than 5 adults in a classroom at any one time • Communication to families and staff via emails and signs • Use alternate means to hold meetings- Management Committee meetings have been held on Zoom, staff meetings via email, Level 4/5 meetings via email/following social distancing guidelines only as required • Face to face training days cancelled. Utilise webinars and online trainings • Staff, parents and visitors experiencing any symptoms, even mild directed to stay at home
<p>Children, infants and educators are in close contact throughout the day.</p> <p>Children are known to carry the virus with asymptomatic or mild symptoms which may not be recognised; this poses a risk to children, educators and families</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature checks for all staff, families and children on arrival • Ensure hand sanitiser is available and PPE for staff • Maintain strict hygiene practices and exclusions as per ACT Health guidelines. Children/staff who show symptoms of being unwell are asked to remain at home until symptoms cease • Social distancing as per health guidelines. Reduce children attending, capping maximum number of people in a room at any one time • Children to spend more time outdoors. E.g. outdoor meals, indoor/outdoor play, outdoor sleep • Social distancing in teaching approaches E.g. Limit number of children at a table activity, reduce sensory play, encouraging children to spread out in their play, Educators to encourage children to independently do self-care tasks to reduce contact where possible • To communicate procedures to all stakeholders

<p>Educators are in the 'at risk' category (70yrs + and 65yrs + with a chronic health condition)</p>	<p>Extreme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure these restrictions and procedures are enforced and practices are followed by all • Facilitate educators to work from home or take leave • Reduce contact with children and adults by conducting duties with limited contact to others. E.g. Yard checks • Conduct outdoor duties whenever possible to minimise time indoors • Minimise face to face contact with families at pick up, drop off times. Call or email families to pass on messages • Children showing symptoms and awaiting pickup are not to be cared for by at risk staff • Staff arrangements to minimise where two 'at risk' staff are in the same room to balance additional load on educators • Strict exclusion of children/staff who show symptoms of being unwell. Educators are instructed to stay home when experiencing even mild cold symptoms, headaches and temperatures • Following hand hygiene practices and ensure PPE (gloves, aprons, hand sanitiser) is available.
<p>Ineffective cleaning practices</p> <p>As the COVID-19 virus may persist on surfaces for a few hours up to several days therefore hand hygiene and thorough cleaning of high touch surfaces is required</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand sanitiser is accessible in all rooms and at the front gate • Establish COVID-19 cleaning procedures for staff and Centre cleaner based on infectious diseases prevention. Include regular cleaning schedules, specific surfaces to be cleaned and frequency. Educators to sanitise high touch surfaces such as door handles, keyboards, tables, chairs, toys etc throughout the day • Ensure adequate supplies of cleaning products are available • Educators demonstrate, inform and teach children effective hygiene practices to follow during this period • Educators limit soft materials such as dress ups, soft toys in the room • Reduce use of sensory resources such as playdough, sensory troughs and cooking experiences where possible
<p>The mental wellbeing of educators is a concern during this unprecedented time</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff know they are able to access Employee Assistance Program- Relationships Australia. Advise of other sources of support. E.g. Beyond blue, ACT health • Monitor staff closely and checking in regularly • Offer opportunities to de-brief • The Management Committee have approved 1 day wellbeing leave for full time educators who remain working on Centre premises • Educators are invited to attend webinars to remain informed of the ongoing COVID- 19 pandemic and tips to look after their mental wellbeing

Key response measures	<p>In the event of a confirmed case/s at the Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACT Health Department will be notified and the Centre will be guided by their directions • The Centre may be directed to immediately close • Notify families, staff, contractors and visitors • A 14 day self-isolation period may be required following close contact tracing • Deep cleaning of Centre
Recovery measures	<p>In the event of a confirmed case/s at the Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident forms will be completed and ACECQA to be notified within 24 hrs • Evaluate and review procedures and incident. Review risk assessments/policies • All educators will be invited back to recommence work under the direction of ACT Health and CECA • A staff meeting will be held to advise all staff on how the Centre will resume normal operations • Families will be informed of changes via email and newsletters • Educators will continue to be supported through access to Relationships Australia

		Consequence				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Likelihood	Almost certain	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High