

A-9 Absent and Missing Children

NQS

QA. 2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort.
QA. 2.2.1	Supervision.
QA. 4.1.1	Organisation of educators.
QA. 5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions.
QA. 5.2.2	Self-regulation
QA. 6.1	Supportive relationships with families.
QA. 6.1.1	Engagement with the service.
QA. 6.1.3	Families are supported.
QA. 7.1.2	Management systems.
QA. 7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities.

National Regulations

Reg. 76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
Reg. 86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma, and illness
Reg. 99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
Reg. 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
Reg. 123	Educator to child ratios—centre-based services
Reg. 158	Children’s attendance record to be kept by approved provider
Reg. 146	Nominated supervisor
Reg. 165	Record of visitors
Reg. 166	Children not to be alone with visitors
Reg. 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
Reg. 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
Reg. 174	Time to notify certain circumstances to Regulatory Authority
Reg. 176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

My Time, Our Place

LO. 1	Children and Young People feel safe, secure, and supported
LO. 2	Children and Young People develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary as active and informed citizens
LO. 3	Children and Young people become strong in their social and emotional and mental wellbeing

Policy Statement

We will ensure the safety and welfare of the children by ensuring clear communication and co-operation between the Centre, parents, and the school. Children who are missing or absent without notice will be treated with extreme seriousness until educators are assured of their wellbeing.

Related Policies

- ENOSHCP Policy A-1: Hours of Operation
- ENOSHCP Policy A-3: Philosophy
- ENOSHCP Policy A-4: Enrolment
- ENOSHCP Policy A-5: New Children Orientation
- ENOSHCP Policy A-6: Fees
- ENOSHCP Policy A-7: Bookings
- ENOSHCP Policy A-8: Dropping off and Picking Up
- ENOSHCP Policy A-11: Maintenance of Records
- ENOSHCP Policy A-14: Complaints
- ENOSHCP Policy A-15: Role of the Management Committee
- ENOSHCP Policy A-17: Privacy and Confidentiality
- ENOSHCP Policy C-3: Educator orientation and induction
- ENOSHCP Policy C-10: Volunteers/students/visitors
- ENOSHCP Policy C-11: Educator Child Ratios
- ENOSHCP Policy C-12: Communication
- ENOSHCP Policy C-14: Reportable Conduct
- ENOSHCP Policy D-9: Emergency Procedures
- ENOSHCP Policy D-11: Management of Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness
- ENOSHCP Policy D-22: Child Protection/Mandatory reporting Policy
- ENOSHCP Policy D-23: Child Management
- ENOSHCP Policy D-30: Supervision
- ENOSHCP Policy E-5: Excursions
- ENOSHCP Policy E-9: Out-of-Centre Activities

Procedure

Absent Children

Parents/guardians are to advise the Centre if their child will be absent for a session that they are booked into care, whether it be a before or after school care permanent or casual booking.

If parents are aware of a future absence prior to the cut-off time for online notifications (midday the working day prior to the absence), they must enter an 'away' notification through the portal for the session of the expected absence.

If parents do not know until the day, they must notify the Centre of their child's absence prior to the end of the morning session and the start of the afternoon session. Parents/guardians must indicate the expected end date of an absence and advise if this changes. Parents/guardians will be informed

of this requirement upon enrolment and through the Family Handbook detailing the imperative nature of the Centre knowing of a child's absence.

Absent Children – Morning Sessions

If a child is not present at the Centre by 9:00am, and the Centre has not been notified of their absence, the educator will telephone all parent/guardian contacts.

Upon making contact, the parents/guardians will be informed of their failure to advise the Centre of the child's absence and of any charges that may apply such as a Non-notification Fee (Policy A-6: Fees). Session fees will apply for all bookings, casual or permanent, where educators have not been informed of an absence. An educator will also ascertain the next expected session that the child will attend.

If parents/guardians are not available, an educator will continue to call and send emails to the family until contact is made.

If the educator is unable to contact the parent/guardian, the Educator is to contact the school to see if the child has arrived safely.

Absent Children – Afternoon Sessions

If a child is not present at the Centre by 3:30pm, and the Centre has not been notified of their absence, the educator will:

- Ask other children of their knowledge of where the child might be.
- Inspect school grounds, ensuring all other children are well supervised during this time.
- Contact the school office and/or class teacher to ask for information regarding the child's attendance at school and possible collection of the child from the school grounds.

If the child cannot be found on school grounds the educator will then telephone all parent/guardian contacts.

Upon making contact, if the child is absent that afternoon, the parents/guardians will be informed of their failure to advise the Centre of the child's absence and of any charges that may apply such as a Non-notification Fee (Policy A-6: Fees). Session fees will apply for all bookings, casual or permanent, where educators have not been informed of an absence. An educator will also ascertain the next expected session that the child will attend.

If contact cannot be made with the parents/guardians, or the parents/guardians believe the child should be at the centre then the educator will:

- Inform the school of the missing child.

- Continue to search the school grounds with school staff assistance, ensuring that all the other children are well supervised during this time.

If the child is found, the educator is to ensure that all persons attempting to locate the children are informed. In addition, the parents/guardians should be contacted to advise the child has been located and an Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness record is to be completed. This will require a signature by the parents/guardians on collection of the child.

If the child is still not found, then the educator will:

- Contact the families' authorised nominees.
- Continue to keep in contact with the school.
- Make contact with the Management Committee to inform them of the situation.

If the child's location cannot be confirmed by 4:10pm then the educator will:

- Contact the Police.
- Advise the parents/authorised persons that the police have been phoned.
- Advise the Management Committee that the Police have been phoned.

When the police are called, the Responsible Person on Duty will complete an Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness record and report this incident to the Department of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate) using the NQAITS.

In the event of repeat absences without notification, a formal letter from the Management Committee, detailing the failure to notify the Centre of absence, will be delivered to the parent/guardian. Further issues may result in a suspension of services.

The Director will ensure that all educators are aware of the policies and procedures relating to a missing child and will display the steps needing to be taken in their absence.

Absconding/Missing child

The Nominated Supervisor will ensure throughout each shift that educators are positioned to adequately supervise children in care as per Policy D-30 Supervision.

If a child absconds or is missing the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person on duty is to be notified immediately, who should contact the parents and inform them of the situation. The Centre should ensure they maintain constant communication with parents and update them on the situation.

Educators should never chase a child as this could encourage the child to panic and run without looking for dangers around them, such as traffic.

An educator should stand in a position where they are able to see the child is safe without following or leaving the premises (i.e., at the gate looking down the street where the child may go).

If the educator loses vision of the child, or believe they will lose vision, or the situation appear to be escalating the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person on Duty are to contact the local police and advise them of the situation immediately.

If not already aware, the Nominated Supervisor and Management Committee must be contacted.

An incident report is to be completed and submitted via NQAITS.

In the case of a reportable allegation against an educator a 7-Day notification form will need to be submitted to the Office of the Children's Guardian.

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- Family Law Act 1975
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- My Time, Our Place Framework for School Age Care in Australia – V2.0
- NSW Office of the Children's Guardian

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