

## IMMUNISATION AND HEALTH RELATED EXCLUSIONS VICTORIA

### NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS

**Element 2.1.2:** Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

**Element 2.2.2** Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

**Element 6.1.3** Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family well being

**Education and Care Services National Regulations:** 162(f)(g)(i)

**Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 of Victoria** 147 (143B, 143C)

### PURPOSE

To ensure all children who are enrolled in an Early Education and Care service in Victoria meet the Immunisation documentation specifications as outlined by the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure we meet the legal obligations for enrolment and manage and prevent the spread of infectious illnesses and diseases.

Children who are unvaccinated are not eligible to be enrolled in an early learning service.

### POLICY

It is the policy of FROEBEL services to establish systems that support the management of enrolment records as per Victorian Immunisation legislation.

### PROCEDURES

- FROEBEL informs families prior to enrolment that confirmation of enrolment is only made when required documentation relating to Immunisation is provided and meets the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act, 2008.
- As part of the enrolment process, the Nominated Supervisor will request and review the following documentation to determine if a child:
  - Is fully vaccinated for their age, or;
  - Is on a recognised catch-up schedule, if their child has fallen behind with their vaccinations or
  - Has a medical reason not to be vaccinated

Parents /carers must provide an Immunisation History Statement or an Immunisation Status Certificate which is to be kept with the enrolment record; the following documents are what is acceptable:

- an AIR Immunisation History Statement which shows that the child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations or
- an AIR Immunisation History Form on which the immunisation provider has certified that the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule
- an AIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form which has been certified by a GP.

### **Grace period**

Where a child's vaccinations are not up to date for their age, or the parent/ carer has not supplied acceptable documentation, they may be eligible for the **16-week grace period**. The grace period is for 16 weeks commencing from the date that the child first attends the services.

Children who experience vulnerability and disadvantage are eligible to enroll in a service under a grace period. The grace period provisions allow the family to continue to access the service while receiving information and assistance to have their child's immunisation and obtain required immunisation documentation for the service.

During this time FROEBEL will take reasonable steps to support the family obtain the required immunisation documentation. The Nominated Supervisor will use the Grace period eligibility assessment form to determine eligibility.

During this time parents should endeavor to have their child vaccinated if required, and /or obtain the necessary immunisation documentation and provide it to the service.

The Nominated Supervisor will support the parents in how to obtain the required information.

**ONLY Families who meet any of the following criteria are eligible for the 16-week grace period:**

#### **Evacuated children**

- Children evacuated following emergency (such as flood or fire)

#### **Children in emergency care**

- Children in emergency care (for example, emergency foster care) under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

#### **Children in the care of an adult who is not their parent**

- Children in the care of an adult who is not the child's parent due to exceptional circumstances such as illness or incapacity

#### **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Children**

- Children identified by their parents as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

### **Other children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage**

- Children who hold or whose parents hold a health care card, pension concession card, Veterans Affairs Gold or White card
- Children from a multiple birth of triplets or more
- Children who are refugees or asylum seekers

### **Children known to child protection**

- Children who are on or who have been on a Child Protection Order
- Children in or who been in foster care or out-of-home care
- Children who have a report made about them under the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005*
- Families that have received support through Family Services including ChildFIRST; Services Connect; a community-based child and family service; or an integrated family service.

### **Overseas immunisation**

- Overseas immunisation records will **not** be accepted.
- Should you have an overseas immunisation record, it will need to be assessed by an Australian immunisation provider who will transfer the information to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). Parents can then request an AIR Immunisation History Statement.

The immunisation schedule Victorian and vaccine eligibility criteria sets out the age-appropriate vaccines for children and the AIR Immunisation History Statement will indicate if the child is up to date with their vaccinations

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/immunisation-schedule-victoria>

### **Immunisation Register**

- records the immunisation status of each child enrolled at the Service
- contains immunisation AIR statements and relevant documentation provided by parents.

### **UPDATING FROEBEL WITH IMMUNISATION DETAILS**

- Parents are to provide their updated AIR statements to the '**centre director**' when their child receives new vaccinations
- FROEBEL will send reminder emails every six months for families to submit their updated AIR statements.

If requested, our centre will provide a copy of the record and certificates kept for a child in the Immunisation Register to:

- the parent of the child so they can enroll the child at another education and care Service or
- the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor of another Service at which the child may enrol.

The Immunisation Register must be made available for inspection by the Medical Officer of Health of the local Public Health Unit. The Medical Officer of Health may direct that non-immunised child be excluded from the centre for the duration of the outbreak. Any such directive must be complied with by all educators, children, families and visitors.

### **Immunisation Related Payments for Parents - Child Care Subsidy Payments**

The benefit applies Child Care Subsidy Payments apply to children who are fully immunised or have an approved exemption from immunisation. This initiative ensures parents are reminded of the importance of immunising their children at each of the milestones. For parents to receive Child Care Subsidy Payments without their child being fully immunised their doctor or immunisation provider needs to certify that the child:

- is on a catch-up immunisation schedule or;
- has an approved exemption from the immunisation requirements, and an approved medical reason with relevant documentation

Information on how a child's immunisation status affects payments made to a family, and more information on exemptions is available on the following website:

<http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/acir/family-assist.jsp#N10059>

Parents are responsible for payment of fees while their child is excluded under all circumstances.

### **Educators**

Educators are encouraged to maintain their immunisation status against immunisable diseases.

The centre strongly recommends that all centre educators are immunised for all preventable childhood diseases, including:

- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Meningococcal
- Chicken pox
- Pertussis (an adult booster dose is especially important for those educators caring for the youngest)

children who are not fully vaccinated)

- Hepatitis A, and
- Hepatitis B.

Female educators and women of child-bearing age are also advised to seek medical advice regarding their immunity to rubella, chicken pox and Cytomegalovirus (CMV).

Female educators and women of child-bearing age are warned about the potential hazards of **rubella** and **chicken pox** to their health and the health of their unborn child and immunisation is strongly recommended.

### **COVID Vaccinations**

FROEBEL strongly encourages all staff to receive a COVID-19 Vaccination. Public Health Orders in relation to mandatory vaccinations will be implemented as required.

### **Identifying symptoms of an excludable infectious illness or disease**

Educators need to be aware of symptoms which may indicate an excludable infectious illness or disease. However, children might be brought to care with symptoms or signs of illness or while in care suddenly develop an illness that has not been diagnosed by a doctor, and that might be potentially infectious or potentially life-threatening for the child. Symptoms may not clearly fit those listed in exclusion diseases making it difficult for educators to decide whether to accept or exclude the child from care. Many illnesses while not fitting exclusion criteria can transmit disease to other children in care, and many non-exclusion diseases can make a child too ill to participate in normal care activities.

To minimise the spread of potential infectious disease between children, other healthy children and educators and to minimise the detrimental impact on a sick child and the ability of the educators to safely supervise other children, educators should:

- Advise families to always inform you when their child has been sick at home prior to bringing their child to care so you can assess whether or not they are well enough to attend. Use this guide to assess whether the child is too ill to attend or needs to see a doctor, inform the family that the child cannot attend until they have recovered or have a certificate from their doctor.
- If you are having difficulty assessing whether a child is ill or not fit enough to attend care, discuss with the family and contact the child's doctor if they consent.
- If you are unable to contact the child's doctor, contact:
  - another local doctor,
  - the local hospital or emergency department,
  - the local Public Health Unit.

Refer difficult or unresolved situations in relation to infectious diseases to the local Public Health Unit or Children's Services Advisor.

We will

- Advise families to take a child with any of the illnesses or symptoms listed in the National Health and Medical Research Council's schedule of infectious conditions or a child we believe to be acutely ill or infectious to their doctor.
- Write a report and include any actions and decisions taken regarding excluding a child from care or advising families to take their child to a doctor.
- Exclude a child and advise the family to take the child to a doctor if we consider:
  - the child has fever which has not yet been assessed by a doctor, or
  - the child has fever accompanied by abnormal behaviour or symptoms or signs that indicate a possible severe illness (such as lethargy, drowsiness, severe or prolonged coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, unusual irritability or crying), or
  - the child will be unable to participate in normal activities without possible detriment to their care and safety, or
  - the child will require extra supervision which may compromise the adequate supervision, care and safety of other children, or
  - the child needs to see a doctor for any reason.

### **Exclusion guidelines for immunisable diseases**

This section relates to those infectious diseases that are immunisable as detailed by the Department of Health.

We will

- Identify when symptoms or a medical diagnosis fit a condition with an exclusion period.
- Refer to the National Health and Medical Research Council's Recommended minimum exclusions periods for infectious conditions for the recommended minimum periods of exclusion: [www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/ch43poster4.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/ch43poster4.pdf)  
(These exclusion periods are recommended *MINIMUM* periods of exclusion based on risk of infection but a child or educator may need to stay at home longer than the exclusion period to recover from an illness at the discretion of the Centre Director or person-in-charge. Recommended exclusion periods are based on the time that a person with a specific disease or condition is likely to be infectious. Recommended 'Not excluded' means there is no significant risk of transmitting infection to others).
- Produce appropriate documentation if an immunisable disease is identified.
- To minimise the spread of infectious diseases between everyone associated with our centre, we will also inform the Public Health Unit of the following conditions:
  - Diarrhoea (if several children in one group are ill);
  - Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib);
  - Hepatitis A
  - Hepatitis B (recent illness only)
  - Measles
  - Meningococcal infection
  - Parvovirus B19 (if 2 or more cases)
  - Pertussis

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- Roseola (if two or more children in one group are ill)
- Scarlet fever and
- TB.
- Advice will be sought in relation to the exclusion of children too young to be immunised against a particular disease.

If a child develops symptoms while at the centre we will:

- Isolate the child from other children.
- Ensure the child is comfortable and supervised by educators.
- Contact the child's nominated family member. If this family member is unavailable, we will contact the next nominated family person. We will inform you of the child's condition and ask for the family member to pick him/her up as quickly as possible.
- Inform the Managing Director.
- Ensure all bedding, towels and clothing which has been used by the child is disinfected. These items will be washed separately and if possible aired dry in the sun.
- Ensure all toys used by the child are disinfected.
- Ensure all eating utensils used by the child are separated and sterilised.
- Provide information in home languages to the best of our ability.
- Inform all centre families of the presence of an infectious disease.
- Ensure confidentiality of any personal or health related information obtained by the educators in relation to any centre family.

If a child or educator has been unable to attend the centre because of an infectious illness the person **must** provide a doctor's certificate which specifically states, the child/educator is ok to return to the Centre.

### **Exclusion guidelines for infectious diseases**

For the recommended minimum periods of exclusion for infectious diseases please refer to Table 1.1 of the National Health and Medical Research Council's publication "Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services

(5th Edition)", June 2013:

[http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55\\_staying\\_healthy\\_5th\\_edition\\_updated\\_130701\\_0.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55_staying_healthy_5th_edition_updated_130701_0.pdf)

### **NOTIFIABLE DISEASES**

Our nominated supervisor will notify the local Public Health Unit by telephone/ email as soon as possible (and within 24 hours) after they are made aware that a child enrolled at the service is suffering from the following vaccine preventable diseases:

- Diphtheria
- Mumps

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- Poliomyelitis
- Hemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella ("German measles")
- Measles
- Pertussis ("whooping cough")
- Tetanus

Information about notifiable diseases is available on the following [Victorian Health websites](#):

Information about the Victorian local Public Health unit directory and contact details are available [on Victorian Local Public Health Unit Website](#)

Our nominated supervisor will comply with any direction given by the Public Health Unit in relation to the notification.

#### **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

- The right for children, families and educators to be afforded a level of privacy and confidentiality in regard to their immunisation status is paramount.
- Educators, students and volunteers should be aware of the FROEBEL's commitment to maintaining and respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- Please refer to the FROEBEL Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

#### **HYGIENE AND INFECTION CONTROL**

FROEBEL services implement the following strategies which to minimise the spread of infection;

- promote hand washing and other hygienic practices;
- identify and exclude children and educators with symptoms of an excludable infectious illness or disease;
- maintain clean and hygienic environments; and
- encourage adult immunisation

Please refer to FROEBEL's Hygiene and Infection Control Policy.

It is understood by educators, children and families that there is a shared responsibility between the centre and other stakeholders that the Immunisation and Health Related Exclusion Policy and procedures are accepted as a high priority.

In meeting FROEBEL's duty of care, it is a requirement under the Work Health & Safety Act that management and educators implement and endorse FROEBEL's Immunisation and Health Related Exclusion Policy and procedures.



It is the policy of the centre to maintain hygienic practices and procedures in all health and safety policies (e.g. through washing hands, concepts of standard precautions and the procedures for maintaining clean and hygienic environments). Please refer to the Hygiene and Infection Control Policy.

## REFERENCES

- Children Education and Care Services National Law Application Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- [Department of health and Human Services, State Government Victoria](#)
- Public Health Regulation 2012
- [National Health and Medical Research Council: "Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services \(5th Edition\)", June 2013](#)
- [Immunisation schedule Victoria](#)

## REVIEW

Last review: 28/03/2024

Next review: 28/03/2024