

2.07V DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES

QUALITY AREA 2 | VERSION 1.0

PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- when a child attending LEVNT EC Services shows symptoms of an infectious disease
- when a child at a LEVNT EC Service has been diagnosed with an infectious disease
- when an adult working at or attending a LEVNT EC Service shows symptoms of or has been diagnosed with an infectious disease
- managing and minimising the spread of infectious diseases, illnesses and infestations, including head lice
- managing and minimising infections relating to blood-borne viruses
- managing and minimising infections relating to epidemics and pandemics e.g. Coronavirus (COVID-19)

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

LEVNT EC Services are committed to:

- providing a safe and healthy environment for all children, staff and any other persons attending the service
- responding to the needs of the child or adult who presents with symptoms of an infectious disease or infestation while attending the service
- adhering to evidence-based practice infection prevention and control procedures
- preventing the spread of infectious and vaccine-preventable diseases
- complying with current exclusion schedules and guidelines set by the Department of Health (DH) and Staying Healthy in Childcare (NHMRC)
- complying with the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), Victorian Chief Health Officer and DH
- providing up-to-date information and resources for families and staff regarding protection of all children from infectious diseases and blood-borne viruses, management of infestations and immunisation programs.

LEVNT EC Services support the Immunise Australia Program and National Immunisation Program (NIP), which is currently recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and supported by the Commonwealth Government. All early childhood teachers, educators/staff at LEVNT EC Services are committed to preventing the spread of infectious diseases through simple hygiene practices such as hand washing, effective cleaning procedures and assessing acceptable immunisation documentation and complying with recommended exclusion guidelines and timeframes for children, early childhood teachers and educators/staff.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, parents/guardians, student educators, volunteers and contractors attending LEVNT EC Services, including during offsite excursions and activities.

BACKGROUND

Infectious diseases such as chickenpox, the common cold, measles and mumps, are common in children and adults may also be susceptible.

Children are at a greater risk of exposure to infections in a children's service than at home due to the amount of time spent with a large number of other children.

The DH publishes the Minimum Period of Exclusion from Primary Schools and Children's Services for Infectious Diseases Cases and Contacts, to assist in protecting the public by preventing, or containing, outbreaks of infectious conditions common in schools and children's services and is regulated by the *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019*.

During an epidemic or pandemic, further instruction and guidance may be issued by the DH and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

An approved provider must take reasonable steps to prevent the spread of infectious diseases at the service, and ensure that the parent/guardian, authorised nominee or emergency contact of each child enrolled at the service is notified of the occurrence of an infectious disease as soon as possible. The service must have policies and procedures in place for dealing with infectious diseases (*Regulation 88 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*). The service has a duty of care to ensure that everyone attending the service is provided with a high level of protection during all hours that the service is in operation. Protection can include:

- notifying (as soon as practicable) children, families and educators/staff when an excludable illness/disease is detected at the service
- complying with relevant health department exclusion guidelines, advice and information
- increasing educator/staff awareness of cross-infection through physical and close contact with others.

The Victorian Government offers an immunisation program for children to assist in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. There is also the Immunise Australia Program and National Immunisation Program (NIP), which is currently recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and supported by the Commonwealth Government.

Early childhood education and care services that are regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* have obligations under No Jab No Play legislation (*Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*), including to request, assess and manage immunisation documentation and to assist parents/carers and families who may face difficulties in meeting the requirements (refer to Enrolment and Orientation Policy).

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms refer to the Definitions file of each LEVNT EC policy folder.

Blood-borne virus (BBV): A virus that is spread when blood from an infected person enters another person's bloodstream and include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. Where basic hygiene, safety, infection prevention and control and first aid procedures are followed, the risks of contracting a blood-borne virus are negligible.

Communicable Disease Section: Responsibility for communication and advice in relation to infectious diseases on behalf of the Secretary of the Victorian DH.

Epidemic: Is an outbreak of a contagious disease that spreads rapidly and extensively, and affects many individuals simultaneously in an area or population.

Exclusion: Inability to attend or participate in the program at the service.

Infection: The invasion and multiplication of micro-organisms in bodily tissue.

Infestation: The lodgement, development and reproduction of insects such as head lice), either on the surface of the body of humans or animals, or in clothing.

Infectious disease: An infectious disease designated by the Communicable Disease Section, Department of Health Victoria (DH) as well as those listed in Schedule 7 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019, the Minimum Period of Exclusion from Primary Schools and Children's Services for Infectious Diseases Cases and Contacts.

Minimum exclusion period: The minimum period for excluding any person from attending a children's service to prevent the spread of infectious diseases as specified in Schedule 7: Minimum Period of Exclusion from Primary Schools and Children's Services for Infectious Diseases Cases and Contacts of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019*. An infringement penalty for failure to exclude a child with, or exposed to, a specified infectious disease applies (applicable to a person in charge). The exclusion period table, published by the DHHS, can be accessed at www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion/school-exclusion-table

Pandemic: Is an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a wide geographic area and affecting a large proportion of the population.

Pediculosis: Infestation of head lice that is transmitted by having head-to-head contact with another person who has head lice. Pediculosis does not contribute to the spread of any infectious diseases, and outbreaks of this condition are common in schools and childcare facilities.

Standard precautions: Work practices that achieve a basic level of infection prevention and control. Using standard precautions aims to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection, particularly those caused by blood-borne viruses. Standard precautions include but are not limited to: hand hygiene, cleaning equipment and the environment, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette and appropriate use of PPE.

RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the table below, the Approved Provider, persons with management and control, nominated supervisor and/persons in day-to-day charge are responsible for meeting requirements set out in [Attachment 1: Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor Responsibilities](#). Actions which are legislated requirements of the ECEC sector are indicated with **LR**.

	Approved provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring standard precaution practices are carried out every day to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection	LR	✓	✓		✓
Ensuring that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of that infectious disease (Regulation 88(1))	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact of each child at the service is notified of the occurrence as soon as is practicable (Regulation 88(2))	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring that information from the DH about the minimum exclusion periods is displayed at the service and is available to all stakeholders	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring that a child is excluded from the service in accordance with the minimum exclusion periods when informed that the child is infected with an infectious disease or has been in contact with a person who is infected with an infectious disease as required under Regulation 111(1) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring when directed by the Chief Health Officer, that a child who is at material risk of contracting a vaccine-preventable disease is excluded until the Chief Health Officer directs that attendance can be resumed (Regulation 111(2)(4) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019)	LR	✓	✓	✓	
Ensuring that a minimum of one educator with current approved first aid qualifications is in attendance and immediately available at all times the service is in operation (refer to Administration of First Aid Policy)	LR	✓	✓		
Conducting a thorough inspection of the service on a regular basis, and consulting with staff to assess any risks by identifying the hazards and potential sources of infection	LR	✓	✓		✓
Establishing and complying with good hygiene and infection prevention and control procedures (refer to Hygiene Policy)	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observing for signs and symptoms of an infectious disease in children, and taking appropriate measures to minimise cross-infection and inform management		✓	✓	✓	✓

Providing appropriate and current information and resources to all stakeholders regarding the identification and management of infectious diseases, blood-borne viruses and infestations	✓	✓	✓		✓
Keeping informed of current legislation, information, research and evidence-based practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Complying with the Hygiene Policy of the service and the procedures for infection prevention and control relating to blood-borne viruses (refer to Attachment 4)	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communicating changes to the exclusion table or immunisation laws to all stakeholders in a timely manner	LR	✓	✓		✓
Complying with the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), Victorian Chief Health Officer and DH in an epidemic or pandemic event	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Notifying everyone at the service of any outbreak of infectious disease at the service including information about the nature of the illness, incubation and infectious periods, and the service's exclusion requirements for the illness, and displaying this information in a prominent position	LR	✓	✓		
Advising parents/guardians on enrolment that the minimum exclusion periods will be observed in regard to the outbreak of any infectious diseases or infestations	LR	✓	✓		
Advising the parents/guardians of a child who is not fully immunised on enrolment and/or is undertaking the 16 weeks grace period, that they will be required to keep their child at home when a vaccine-preventable disease is diagnosed at the service, and until there are no more occurrences of that disease and the exclusion period has ceased	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring that parents/guardians understand that they must inform the nominated supervisor as soon as practicable if the child is infected with an infectious disease or infestation, or has been in contact with a person infected with a condition for which the exclusion of contacts is specified (Regulation 110, Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019)	LR	LR	LR	LR	
Providing information and resources to parents/guardians to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations	✓	✓	✓		
Ensuring all families have completed a Consent form to conduct head lice inspections on enrolment	LR	✓	✓		
Conducting head lice inspections whenever an infestation is suspected, which involves visually checking children's hair and notifying the approved provider and parents/guardians of the child if an infestation of head lice is suspected		✓	✓		
Providing a head lice action form to the parents/guardians of a child suspected of having head lice	LR	✓	✓		
Providing a head lice notification letter to all parents/guardians when an infestation of head lice has been detected at the service	LR	✓	✓		
Maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy)	LR	LR	LR	✓	✓
Keeping their child/ren at home if they are unwell or have an excludable infectious disease or infestation				✓	
Informing service management as soon as practicable if their child has an infectious disease or infestation or has been in contact with a person who has an infectious disease (Regulation 110 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019)				LR	
Complying with the minimum exclusion periods or as directed by the approved provider or nominated supervisor after the Chief Health Officer directed them to exclude a child enrolled whom the Chief Health Officer has determined to be at material risk of contracting a vaccine-preventable disease (Regulation 111(2) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019)				LR	

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to issues arising from this policy

- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of a policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk

AUTHORISATION & REVIEW

This policy was adopted by Lutheran Education VIC, NSW, TAS and ACT Ltd on behalf of the Approved Provider for this service on 4 August 2022.

REVIEW DATE July 2023 or earlier as required.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1: Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor Responsibilities

In addition to the responsibilities outlined in the table above, the Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control, and the Nominated Supervisor and/or persons in day-to-day charge have a number of additional responsibilities relevant to their position.

In relation to the Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy, the following requirements are legislated for the Approved Provider and best practise for the Nominated Supervisor:

- Contacting the Communicable Disease Section, DHHS if there is an outbreak of two or more cases of gastrointestinal illness in a 48-hour period (refer to Sources)
- Ensuring obligations under No Jab No Play legislation (Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008), including to request, assess and manage immunisation documentation are met, and to assist parents/carers and families who may face difficulties in meeting the requirements (refer to Enrolment and Orientation Policy)
- Notifying DET within 24 hours of a serious incident via the NQAITS

REFERENCES

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 88
- Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act 2017 (Cth)
- Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Public Health & Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab No Play) Act 2015 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)

SOURCES

- Communicable Disease Section, Victorian Department of Health & Human Services (2019), A guide to the management and control of gastroenteritis outbreaks in children's centres. Victorian Government, Melbourne: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/researchandreports/A-guide-to-the-management-and-control-of-gastroenteritis-outbreaks-in-childrens-centres>
- Department of Health & Human Services, Victoria (2012) Head lice management guidelines: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/Head-lice-management-guidelines>
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (2017), ACECQA: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-01/NQF-Resource-02-Guide-to-ECS-Law-Regs.pdf>
- Guide to the National Quality Standard (2017), ACECQA: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/acecqa/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF-Resource-03-Guide-to-NQS.pdf>
- Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood services: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit>
- Information about immunisations, including immunisation schedule, DHHS: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation
- Increase in gastroenteritis outbreaks in childcare: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/news-and-events/healthalerts/gastro-outbreaks-childcare>
- National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th edition): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>
- National Immunisation Program, Department of Health, Australian Government: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-immunisation-program>
- Statements Section for statements on health emergencies, AHPPC. Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc>
- Victorian Department of Health & Human Services. Disease information and advice. Available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/disease-information-advice>

- WorkSafe, Victoria (2008) Compliance code: First aid in the workplace:
<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-first-aid-workplace>

RELATED POLICIES

- 1.03V Inclusion and Equity
- 2.05V Administration of First Aid
- 2.06V Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- 2.08V Dealing with Medical Conditions
- 2.11V Providing a Child Safe Environment
- 2.15V Administration of Medication
- 2.21V Hygiene
- 3.02V Occupational Health and Safety
- 6.01V Enrolment and Orientation
- 7.02V Privacy and Confidentiality