



ACT
Government
Education

ACT PUBLIC PRESCHOOLS PROVISION OF A CHILD-SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROCEDURE

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Education Directorate

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Regulatory authority	Children’s Education and Care Assurance (CECA), who undertake investigation, compliance, enforcement and assessment and rating functions against the National Quality Standard .
Approved provider	Approved providers must operate approved services that meets the obligations in the National Law . Approved providers must exercise effective leadership, governance and management to meet their legal obligations. Providers must also employ suitably qualified and experienced nominated supervisors, educational leaders, coordinators and educators. In the case of government preschools in the ACT, the approved provider is the ACT Education Directorate.
Setting	An early childhood education and care service (centre-based) under the National Law that provide education and care services. For the purposes of this procedure, these settings are public preschools (managed by ACT Education Directorate as the approved provider and undertaking the government preschool program for four-year-olds).
Enrolment	The term used for the administrative procedure by which a person becomes a student of an education provider.
Orientation	The act of supporting familiarity and understanding with reference to a setting, processes and people.
Placement	The process of allocating a student to a particular preschool.
Preschool age	A child is considered of preschool age if they turn 4 prior to 30 April during the year they start preschool.
Guardian	A person who is legally responsible for the care and wellbeing of a child.
Authorised person	A parent* or family member of a child who is being educated and cared for by an ACT public preschool; or an authorised nominee of a parent or family member of a child who is being educated and cared for by an ACT public preschool. * Does not include a parent who is prohibited by a court order from having contact with the child.

Authorised nominee	A person who has been given permission by a parent or family member to collect a child enrolled in an ACT public preschool.
Nominated supervisor	As part of an application for service approval, approved providers must identify the nominated supervisor for the service. The nominated supervisor must be over 18 years old, have adequate knowledge and understanding of the provision of education and care to children, and have the ability to effectively supervise and manage an education and care service. In the case of government preschools in the ACT, the nominated supervisor tends to be the principal of the associated school campus.
Person in day-to-day charge	The approved provider and/or nominated supervisor needs to designate a responsible person to be placed in day-to-day charge of a service if the approved provider and/or nominated supervisor is not present. The person in day-to-day charge must be over 18 years old, have adequate knowledge and understanding of the provision of education and care to children, and have the ability to effectively supervise and manage an education and care service. The person nominated to be in day-to-day charge must accept this responsibility in writing. The nominated person must have adequate knowledge and understanding of the provision of education and care to children and be able to effectively manage a service. A record that demonstrates who is the responsible person in day-to-day charge should be in place. Being in day-to-day charge of a service does not place any additional legal responsibilities on the person under the National Law . The responsibilities relevant to educators under the National Law continue to apply. An approved provider does not have to appoint a person in day-to-day charge if a nominated supervisor(s) or an approved provider is to be the responsible person in attendance during service operational hours.
Educators	Qualified staff who work directly with children to meet their developmental and educational needs. It includes staff who are tertiary qualified teachers.
Educational leader	The National Law requires approved providers to designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, coordinator or other individual as educational leader.
Blue Book	Personal Child Health Record used to record a child's health, illnesses, injuries, growth and development.
Centre-based service	An education and care service other than a family day care service.
Obligations to notify	Approved providers and services have an obligation to notify CECA about incidents, complaints and changes to information about the approved provider or approved service. This includes serious incidents, complaints and circumstances where the health, safety or wellbeing of children may have been put at risk.

Obligations

ACT Public Preschools must meet the obligations of the [National Law](#), including Regulation 168, which states that education and care services must have policies and procedures in relation to the following:

- health and safety, including matters relating to:
 - nutrition, food and beverages, and dietary requirements;
 - sun protection;
 - water safety, including safety during any water-based activities;
 - the administration of first aid; and
 - sleep and rest for children.
- incident, injury, trauma and illness procedures;
- dealing with infectious diseases;
- dealing with medical conditions in children;
- emergency and evacuation;
- delivery of children to, and collection of children from, education and care service premises;
- excursions;
- providing child-safe environments, including matters relating to –
 - the promotion of a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the service; and
 - the safe use of online environments at the service.
- staffing, including:
 - a code of conduct for staff members;
 - determining the responsible person present at the service; and
 - the participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements.
- interactions with children;
- enrolment and orientation;
- governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records;
- the acceptance and refusal of authorisations;
- payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service; and
- dealing with complaints, including matters relating to –
 - the provision of a complaint handling system at the service that is child focused; and
 - the management of a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.

1. Overview

- 1.1. This procedure identifies expectations surrounding the provision of a child-safe environment within all ACT public preschools.
- 1.2. It acknowledges existing support structures and site-specific requirements that aim to maximise the safety of all children, educators and visitors to public preschools.
- 1.3. This procedure is guided by the ACT Education Directorate's overarching Safety Management System Framework.
- 1.4. The ACT Education Policy Register provides comprehensive access to processes, guidelines, systems and policies, including those relating to safety within Education workplaces and schools. The register can be accessed [here](#). ConnectED also includes a dedicated [Emergency and Safety webpage](#).
- 1.5. This procedure relates to obligations under Regulation 168 of the [National Law](#) and should be used to ensure compliance against the Compliance Guide.

2. Rationale

- 2.1. In accordance with provider approval conditions, this procedure aims to comply with the requirements set out within the [National Law](#).
- 2.2. The [National Law](#) prescribes that all centre-based services must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and hazard. All ACT public preschools are classified as centre-based services and as such are expected to meet the minimum requirements set out within the [National Law](#).

3. Procedures

Educating children about risk

- 3.1. Educators will discuss and reflect with children about potential risks presented within the context of learning and play at preschool, including the safe use of online environments to promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing.
- 3.2. Children and educators will work together to problem solve situations regarding risk.
- 3.3. Discussions surrounding these risks will be reflected within the educational program, in documentation, or through communication with families to ensure the promotion of a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the preschool. This will include the safe use of any online environment used at preschool.

Physical environment

- 3.4. The Directorate has taken reasonable steps to ensure that children are being educated and cared for in an environment which is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- 3.5. All staff are employed under a code of professional practice which meets the highest possible standards in providing a child safe environment.
- 3.6. All ACT Public Preschools are expected to conduct an annual risk assessment of their indoor/outdoor physical environment, so they may identify any site-specific risks for children. This includes a risk assessment for the regular use of portable outdoor equipment and obstacle courses.

- 3.7. Routine indoor and outdoor safety checks of all ACT Public Preschools are required. These must address the day to day safety of the physical environment; with ongoing routine inspection of furniture, materials and equipment.
- 3.8. The Education Directorate employ external agencies to conduct annual audits and safety checks of trees, playgrounds and the built environment.
- 3.9. Effective processes must be in place to identify and address OH&S issues.
- 3.10. Outdoor environments within ACT Public preschools that are accessible by children, must be fenced with fencing that discourages children of preschool age to go under, through or over it.
- 3.11. Gates will be fitted with approved child safe self-closing mechanisms.
- 3.12. Sand pits are to be cleaned and raked on a regular basis; and covered when not in use.
- 3.13. All fixed outdoor equipment must comply with current Australian Standards.
- 3.14. It is recommended that shelving or cupboards are secured or have secure castors.
- 3.15. Pathways are to be kept clear and safe from trip hazards.
- 3.16. All unused electrical outlets/power points are required to be covered with a safety cap.
- 3.17. Electrical appliances and cords will be kept out of reach of children unless under direct supervision of an educator.

Furniture, materials and equipment

- 3.18. All preschool sites must provide sufficient access to furniture, materials and equipment for children, volunteers and staff attending the service.
- 3.19. Furniture, materials and equipment must be developmentally appropriate and suitable for use by children being educated and cared for at the preschool.
- 3.20. Art and craft materials are to be nontoxic and safe for use by children. The use of appropriately sourced, natural and recycled materials is encouraged.
- 3.21. Assessment of the risks associated with the use of certain 'hazardous' materials are required to demonstrate the benefits of use within the curriculum. For example, use of knives during a cooking experience may hold educational value relating to numeracy or scientific understandings; while also supporting children to become independent, capable and competent learners. Supervision for such experiences where benefits outweigh risks, must be monitored according to the risks that the equipment pose.
- 3.22. Furniture, equipment and materials must be cleaned as part of routine use.
- 3.23. The storage of equipment and materials must be in a safe and accessible location.
- 3.24. Consideration regarding the independent access and storage of materials and equipment, that are used on a routine basis by children is encouraged.

Use and storage of chemicals, cleaning products or potentially hazardous products

- 3.25. Each ACT Public preschool must have provisions for the safe and secure storage of: -- medications, First aid equipment and cleaning products or chemicals. These are to be

maintained out of sight and reach of children.

- 3.26. Cleaning materials will not be stored with food products.
- 3.27. Potentially harmful instruments or implements (e.g. Gardening tools/materials, work tools, knives or matches) will be secured in and stored in a safe location that is not accessible to children.
- 3.28. A Material Data Sheet must be documented for the use of any chemicals.
- 3.29. Warning signs will identify locations where potentially hazardous items are stored.

4. Contact

- 4.1. The Director, School Improvement is responsible for this procedure.
- 4.2. For support contact School Operations on 6205 3313 or email SchoolOperations@act.gov.au

5. Monitoring and review

- 5.1. The procedure owner will be responsible for monitoring the procedure through annual scans. A full review will occur as necessary, or within a three-year period.

6. Complaints

- 6.1. Any concerns about the application of this procedure or the procedure itself, should be raised with:
 - the school principal in the first instance;
 - the Directorate Feedback and Complaints team on (02) 6205 5429 or through the [online form](#); and
 - ACT Education's Regulatory Authority, Children's Education and Care Assurance on [\(02\) 6207 1114](tel:0262071114) or complaintsCECA@act.gov.au.
- 6.2. For more information also refer to the [Complaints Policy](#) on the Directorate's website.

7. Related Policies and Implementation Documents

- Child Protection and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Policy
- Child Protection and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Procedure
- Keeping Children and young people safe – a shared community responsibility
- Teachers Code of Professional Practice
- Safe and Supportive Schools Policy
- Security Management Policy
- Alcohol Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Identifying Reportable Conduct
- Family Law Policy
- Family Law Guidelines Dealing with Family Law Related Issues in Schools
- Additional information:
 - *Building Positive Partnerships Fact Sheet*

- *EDU Schools Risk Register*
- *Student Safety Analysis*
- *Play Equipment Check*
- *Preschool Safety Check*
- *Safe and Supportive Schools*
- *School Planning Guide*
- *School Crossing Flags*
- *Tool Risk Matrix*
- *Working Together with your School*

8. References

- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Guide to the National Quality Standard](#)
- Australian Safety Standards