Information sheet

QUALITY AREA 2
Active Supervision: Ensuring safety and promoting learning

Children need safe and secure environments to thrive in their life and learning. Effective supervision is integral to creating environments that are safe and responsive to the needs of all children.

It also helps to protect children from hazards or harm that may arise from their play and daily routines. Effective supervision also allows educators to engage in meaningful interactions with children.

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

The importance of actively supervising children to promote children's health, safety and learning is reflected in Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard (NQS), in particular:

Standard 2.2	Each child is protected
Element 2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS NATIONAL LAW

Section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Section 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
Section 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

NATIONAL REGULATIONS

Regulation 101(2)(f)	Supervision during excursions
Regulation 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
Regulation 168(2)(h) and (ha)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to providing a child safe environment (h) and the safe use of digital technologies and online environments at the service (ha)
Regulation 176	Timeframes for notifying certain information to the Regulatory Authority
Regulation 102C(2)(g)	Supervision during transportation
Regulation 168(2)(ga)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to transportation
Regulation 168(2)(gb)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to safe arrival of children
Regulation 102E	Children embarking a means of transport - centre based service
Regulation 102F	Children disembarking a means of transport - centre based service
Regulations 84A, 84B, 84C	Sleep and rest requirements

ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Educators promote children's learning and development by creating physical and social environments that have a positive impact. It is necessary for educators to be alert and aware of risks and hazards and the potential for accidents and injury, not only in their immediate location but also throughout the service. To provide effective supervision, educators need to be conscious of the physical environment and be attuned to the needs of individual children.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN CAN BE ACHIEVED IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, INCLUDING:

- **Careful planning of rosters to ensure that educators are always available to respond to children.**
- **Policies and procedures that address supervision clearly.**
- **Making sure the service's supervision plan includes the online environment. Strategies may include using speakers for online games or limiting communication to text-based chat to monitor conversations.**
- **Flexible supervision arrangements to allow for supervision of individual children or small groups, such as sleeping children or indoor and outdoor experiences offered simultaneously.**
- **Close observation of children to provide support and to extend on children's play experiences. Educators who closely observe children and are attuned to their needs and interests can recognise when children wish to play without adult involvement.**
- **Actively engaging with children to support their learning. Effective supervision requires a combination of observation and engagement. Educators need to assess and respond to children's supervision needs in conjunction with engaging with children to promote quality learning opportunities.**
- **Scanning or regularly looking around the area to observe all children in the environment ensures that all children are actively supervised. Educators who are aware of the environment can identify appropriate positions for maximum vision of children. Educators should avoid standing with their backs to children and undertaking tasks that will distract them from supervising children, such as administrative tasks.**
- **Listening carefully to children and noting any changes of tone or volume in their voice. Noting these changes can assist in supervising children who may not be in direct vision.**
- **Evaluating situations to determine the potential risks and benefits for children's health, safety and wellbeing.**
- **Observing children's play and anticipating what may occur next allows educators to assist children as difficulties arise and to intervene when there is a potential danger to children.**

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

The Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations require approved providers to ensure that all children being educated and cared for at an approved service are adequately supervised at all times and are protected from harm and hazards. There are also requirements to notify the regulatory authority of any serious incidents or complaints alleging the safety, health or wellbeing of children has been compromised. If children are not effectively supervised, a situation may arise in which the regulatory authority will need to be notified.

The National Regulations also prescribe the minimum number of educators required to educate and care for children and prescribe the required qualifications for educators, including how many educators are to be early childhood teachers. Services must maintain set educator-to-child ratios at all times based on the ages and number of children being educated and cared for at the service. Educator-to-child ratios must also be maintained during excursions. The requirements for educator-to-child ratios can be found on the ACECQA website.

APPROACHES TO SUPERVISION

To effectively supervise groups of children, educators need to conduct risk assessments and make professional judgements to determine an approach to supervision. Consider the environment, the children, and the context of the activities children participate in.

Risk assessments allow educators to determine the level of supervision that is required for particular situations. For example, an educator may recognise that a particular activity that involves some risk, such as carpentry, requires close supervision. Supervising children when they use electronic devices is very important to keep them safe from unwanted contact and online grooming, including being subjected to manipulative behaviours online. Even if an adult is in the same room, they need to actively supervise the child's online activities. Additional supervision considerations may exist in OSHC and FDC environments. Alternatively, if children are participating in low risk activities, the educator can focus their attention on engaging with children.

When adopting an approach to supervision, it is also important to consider how children's agency is promoted. The decisions educators make about how they supervise children can provide opportunities for children to participate in genuine decision-making. For example, when an educator adopts an approach to supervision allowing a child to engage in independent exploration and appropriate risk taking, they provide opportunities for the child to make responsible and genuine decisions about their play.

TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION

Educators need to communicate and collaborate with one another to ensure children are supervised effectively. This is necessary to ensure educators know where their colleagues are in the service and how this may affect the supervision of children. Additionally, it enables roles and responsibilities to be clearly understood. For example, educators should let their colleagues know if they are leaving an area for any reason, such as to get a resource from another room, or to go to the bathroom.

Educators may also need to communicate details about individual children. For example, an infant who has had difficulty eating solid foods due to a cold may need to be monitored more closely when they are eating food.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CENTRE-BASED SERVICES

In a centre-based service, children of different ages and abilities will need different levels of supervision. Generally, the younger children are, the more they need an adult to be close by to support and assist them.

For young children, adequate supervision may involve children remaining in close proximity to the adult who is supervising them. With preschool age children, the program may involve simultaneous use of indoor and outdoor environments. It is important that educators effectively supervise children in both of these environments.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE (OSHC)

OSHC settings cater for children of a wide range of ages. Children of different ages and abilities will need different levels of supervision. Young children will require close supervision, where for older children it is important to balance the need for close supervision with respect for their age and developing independence.

OSHC services may also need to consider the following:

- organisation of the environment to balance supervision and children's growing need for privacy and autonomy
- the location of children's toilets and how children will be supervised when visiting and returning from the toilets
- supervision during the transition between school to the OSHC service.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FAMILY DAY CARE

In a family day care service, the children may be a variety of ages and so different levels of supervision may be required in response to each child's developmental needs. Children may also play in different parts of the family day care residence or venue and the educator will need to consider how these children will be effectively supervised.

SUPERVISION DURING EXCURSION

A thorough risk assessment will take into account the levels of supervision and number of adults needed during an excursion and determine whether the minimum ratios are sufficient to provide adequate supervision.

Services may consider using strategies during certain times of the excursion when children may require different levels of supervision, for example when leaving and entering the service premises or excursion venue. Strategies may include head counts and attendance checks or allocating a group of children to a particular adult or educator.

SUPERVISION DURING TRANSPORTATION

Children can be transported by, or be on transport arranged by, children's education and care services including between the service premises and another location, for example their home, school, or a place of excursion.

Conducting a risk assessment will determine how children are supervised while being transported and whether additional adults are required during transportation.

Transportation may present additional risks to children depending on how it occurs, and particularly how the movement between the vehicle and an education and care service premises or other location is managed.

Centre-based services that offer or arrange regular transportation must ensure a staff member or nominated supervisor is present at the service to account for children as they embark and disembark the vehicle at the education and care services premises. (Regulations 102E and 102F). See Policy Guidelines - Safe Transportation of Children for more information.

However, it is good practice for all approved providers, nominated supervisors, family day care coordinators and educators to apply requirements for regular transportation to all periods of transportation including single trips.

SAFE ARRIVAL OF CHILDREN

Children travelling between an education and care service and any other education or early childhood service requires careful planning to ensure that children's safety, health and wellbeing are maintained. It is important that services plan for the safe arrival of children carefully using risk assessments to identify the specific risks that may occur and how the service will mitigate these risks.

To minimise the risk to children who travel between an education and care service and any other education or early childhood service, services must have safe arrival of children policies and procedures in place and have conducted a risk assessment for the purpose of preparing the policies and procedures.

SLEEP AND REST

Sleep and rest policies and procedures must address the matters set out in regulation 84B. Approved providers need to ensure a risk assessment is conducted in relation to sleep and rest for the purpose of preparing sleep and rest policies and procedures (regulation 84C). For services where overnight care is provided (such as services in hospitals, where shift workers' children attend overnight), the risk assessment must address management of risks relating to overnight care, to inform policies and procedures. See Sleep and rest legislative requirements for more information.

The policies and procedures should be collaboratively reviewed and communicated regularly and must be consistent with current health guidelines on best practices from recognised authorities (such as Red Nose Australia).

Red Nose recognises continuous supervision, in which an educator is in sight and hearing of a sleeping child at all times, represents best practice. There may be exceptional or extenuating circumstances or certain service settings where continuous supervision is not achievable at all times, for example, if an educator working alone is attending to another child's needs. As part of the new sleep and rest risk assessment requirements, approved providers must assess and mitigate risks to address such circumstances to ensure children are adequately supervised. In all cases, safe sleep practices and regular physical checks must continue to be implemented.

Acknowledgment: The information in this publication was adapted from a National Childcare Accreditation Council resource.

More information is available on the ACECQA website.

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RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

For additional information:

- Children's Health and Safety, Occasional paper 2
- Guidance for adequate supervision during transportation
- Safe arrival of children
- Policy and procedure guidelines-Safe arrival of children
- Risk Assessment Management Tool
- Sleep and rest legislative requirements
- NQF Online Safety Guide
- NQF Child Safe Culture Guide.