



COVID-19 POLICY

AUTHORISATION

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REVIEW DATE:

As needed or annually
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PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines and procedures to follow during a coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic with regard to:

- preschool attendance;
- responsibilities of parents and carers;
- visitors;
- drop off and pick up procedures;
- planning and program set up;
- extra cleaning procedures;
- the event of a positive COVID-19 case at Estrella;
- staff safety and wellbeing;
- Our COVIDSafe Plan, including:
 - Actions to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 in the workplace;
 - The level of face-covering or personal protective equipment (PPE) required for the workforce; and
 - How it will prepare for, and respond to, a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Estrella Preschool is 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 COVID-19;
- preventing the spread of COVID-19;
- complying with current exclusion schedules and guidelines set by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS);
- complying with the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), Victorian Chief Health Officer (CHO) and DHHS;
- providing up-to-date information and resources for families and staff regarding protection of all children from COVID-19; and
- complying with National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidance, *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in day-to-day Charge, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Estrella Preschool.

This policy applies in the specific case of a COVID-19 pandemic, and may be used as a guide for any other emerging novel virus of public concern.

PROCEDURES

PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- No child or educator is to attend the service if they present with any symptom that is included in the DHHS exclusions table (See [Sources](#)), including a fever of 37.5 degrees or above.
- Alternative care arrangements should be made for children that are considered highly vulnerable and they should follow medical advice from their Medical professional.
- Families using the kindergarten during Stage 4 Restrictions must have provided the appropriate permit to allow attendance. (See Attachments) The permit is provided by the parent/carer, must be recorded as sighted by staff and a copy (digital or hardcopy) saved for our records.

When children, parents/carers and staff must remain at home:

- If they are at all unwell. Anyone showing the symptoms listed below must not attend preschool – fever or chills, respiratory infections including cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, any form of runny nose, or any loss of smell or taste.

- If they have been in contact with a known case of COVID-19.
- If any member of your household has been tested for COVID-19 in response to symptoms or exposure to a known or potential case, until results are known.
- If they have been to an exposure site until allowed to return following the DHS guidelines

Procedures for deciding when to send a person home:

- Staff or children experiencing compatible symptoms with the infection should be encouraged to seek the advice of a healthcare professional who can advise on next steps. Staff and children should not return until symptoms have resolved.
- If a child shows any signs or symptoms during a session, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to collect their child as soon as possible. Symptoms include a runny nose or fever, or any of the above listed symptoms (see *Definitions*). A child displaying any symptoms will be isolated until they are collected; this will involve providing them with an appropriate space aside from other children while still in the company of their educators to maintain supervision and wellbeing.
- If staff become unwell during a session they will need to go home, at which point parents/carers will be contacted and asked to collect their child if ratios cannot be maintained.

PARENTS'/CARERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- Inform staff if your child is unwell and will be away, and the reason for their absence.
- Inform staff if your child has had a COVID-19 test and of the results.
- Keep unwell children at home until they are completely well and showing no signs of illness.
- Follow government guidelines and directives.
- Keep your child at home if any member of your household has a COVID-19 test. Please keep your child at home until a negative result is returned.
- Keep your child at home if they or any household members have been to an exposure site until a negative test or for the time deemed necessary by DHHS
- Inform staff as soon as possible if your child or any member of your household has a positive COVID-19 test result.
- Only send food and clothing in your child's backpack; no toys or other items from home are to be brought into the kinder.
- Provide the appropriate permit to access the kindergarten during Stage 4 Restrictions. (See DHHS's Permitted Worker Scheme - Childcare Permit page:
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/permitted-worker-scheme-covid-19#childcare-permit>
 - This can be provided in whichever way works best for the parent, e.g. emailing a photo of the signed permit, mailing a hardcopy, etc. A digital copy at least will be recorded by the kindergarten.
- Abide by the procedures laid out in this policy.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES

Drop Off

- Session start times may be staggered to allow for social distancing and to support individual children with separation from families.
- Parents/Carers are asked to remain outside the preschool gates, adhering to social distancing rules, and wait for the teacher to open the gate. (The keypad will be covered and not in use to limit the number of external community members coming into direct contact with hard surfaces.)
- Parents/Carers please guide your child to the gated area one at a time.
- Parents/Carers will then say goodbye to their child at the gate and a staff member will welcome your child into the preschool and take their temperature if required. Parents/Carers will need to remain until their child's temperature is confirmed. Any child with a temperature of or over 37.5°C will be sent home.
- All children attending and families must be feeling well, have no symptoms, have not been in contact with anyone suspected or confirmed to have Covid-19, not have been to an exposure site and have not recently returned from overseas travel.
- At this time parents/carers are requested not to enter the preschool grounds.
- Staff will sign your child in at the gate.
- Families and educators should respect each other's space as much as possible, allowing 1.5m of space between them.
- Families are discouraged from spending long periods of time (in excess of 5 minutes) with educators and should phone or email if they need to chat with an educator.

Pick Up

- Pick up will operate the same as drop off with staggered finish times if required and staff helping children to pack their bags and come down to the gate.
- Staff will sign children out and send them to parents/carers who we ask to again wait outside the gated area. We will say goodbye one at a time.
- If it is raining, children will wait under the sheltered area and staff will bring them down to the gate using an umbrella, one or two at a time.

PLANNING AND PROGRAM SET UP

Planning

- Staff will plan a program that reflects the needs of the differing number of children attending.
- Teaching and discussions about hygiene will be regularly reinforced. Discussions about mask wearing and the virus will be done as the need arises with individual groups and children.
- Staff will endeavour to support children who are not attending onsite by keeping regular contact and emailing programs and ideas as appropriate.

Learning spaces and resources

- Time outdoors will be increased where possible and indoor/outdoor play used at times.
- Windows will be open during the day to promote airflow where possible.
- Room set up and placement of learning spaces will be considered with distancing in mind. This includes considering the number of chairs placed at each table and therefore the number of children at tables, and the number of experiences provided will be limited where possible and appropriately spaced across the room.
- Consideration to group times will be given in regard to the number of children on the mat and the length of the group session. Informal opportunities will be used for reading books, singing and music.
- Playdough will not be used at this time; the decision to reintroduce it will be made by staff as appropriate.
- Resources and toys will be cleaned after use by each group.
- Children will need to bring their own utensils if required for meals.
- Children should have food containers that they can open and manage themselves.
- At this time, we are unable to refrigerate items, so food should be sent in a cold pack if needed.
- Drink bottles and lunch/snack will be kept in children's bags.

EXTRA CLEANING PROCEDURES

Estrella is following the NHMRC guidelines and undertaking extra cleaning procedures at this time.

- High touch surfaces are cleaned at least daily and between groups.
- Disinfecting and cleaning of toys and resources is done after each session. This includes both indoor and outdoor resources.
- Staff have a checklist which is completed daily to record the extra cleaning that is being undertaken
- Our cleaners are doing extra cleaning every evening including high touch surfaces.
- The cleaning products used comply with health department guidelines.
- We have ensured that we have MSDS for all products on the premises.
- Increased hand hygiene is being used by children and staff. The preferred method is washing with soap and water, however hand sanitizers are also available at entrance points to the service.
- All educators wash their hands at regular intervals during the day in line with requirements expected of the children. on arrival, after outside play, before and after eating, after using the bathroom, and after sneezing.
- If children put toys in their mouths, these are being removed and cleaned before being returned to use.

IN THE EVENT OF A CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASE AT ESTRELLA

Families are requested to inform the preschool as soon as possible if a child or family member tests positive to COVID-19. These procedures will then be followed:

- Staff will inform the Director and Committee and follow [Estrella's Plan](#) and the guidelines provided by DET as directed on their page [Managing a confirmed case of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/Pages/closure-preparedness.aspx) <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/Pages/closure-preparedness.aspx>.

“A dedicated and specialised team has been established in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to provide end-to-end support for services affected by a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case. Services will be assigned a case manager to ensure services are supported throughout the process. The team can be contacted on 1800 338 663 and is open from 8.00am to 8.00pm weekdays and 8.00am to 6.00pm on weekends.”
- Committee will send an email out to all families informing them that there has been a positive case at the preschool (due to privacy the child/family name will not be disclosed. The specific group will not be named at this stage), including whether the preschool will close, using the appropriate DET template letter (See [Attachment 3: Template letters to inform families of confirmed cases](#) - Both closure and non-closure letters are ready for distribution by the Communication Officer on Committee.)
- DHHS will determine whether or not the preschool is required to close and if so for how long, but this may take several days from when we become aware of the positive result;
- It is most likely that the preschool will be closed and families will be asked not to attend until further notice from DHHS;
- Teachers will call families individually to ensure they have received the message and are able to stay at home;
- It will be recommended that families isolate at home until further advice is given by DHHS;
- If determined necessary by DHHS, the preschool will close, undergo a deep clean and follow any other procedures as guided by DHHS;
 - The Director, Staff, Vice President or Secretary must follow the COVID Safe Plan's notification instructions, including informing, DET, Council, and the ACECQA NQAITS of the closure - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system>
 - The VP (OH&S Officer) or Director must inform Worksafe using the [online confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) diagnosis form](#), or calling 13 23 60;
- If staff think a child or staff member has a case of COVID-19, or is a close contact of someone who is a confirmed case, they should call DHHS on 1300 651 160 to discuss next steps; and
- Parents/carers will be kept informed about decisions and requirements along the way by either Estrella or DHHS.

STAFF SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Staff are undertaking extra precautions at this time including:

- Staff are all encouraged to have the flu injection and this has been paid for by the Committee of Management, as this has been encouraged to support safety;
- Maintaining social distancing from other staff where possible;
- Having one worker per four square metres of enclosed workspace or in shared areas;
- Having one staff member in the office at a time;
- Wearing masks for temperature checking and when engaging with parents/carers, including at drop off and pick up times;
- Masks have been supplied by the employer; however all staff have their own reusable masks as well and are aware of the requirement for these to be washed after use;
- Wearing masks during planning and preparation times, when appropriate;
- Continuing to wear masks when administering first aid as per the guidelines for when masks should be worn by early childhood educators, in accordance with the Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy;
- Wearing gloves when administering first aid and cleaning bathrooms or supporting children with their toileting;
- Wearing masks when teaching if they choose; but it is not required;
- Whenever possible, undertaking planning and preparation at home;
- If a meeting is required between a staff member and a parent, an email or a phone call will be used as first preference. If face to face is required, this will be done off-site with both parties practising social distancing and wearing masks and only if the current restrictions allow it at that time;
- Regularly checking how each other is going and offering support where needed. All staff have been given access to webinars about looking after our own mental health and wellbeing; and
- Social distancing and wearing masks during staff meetings. Where possible meetings such as committee meetings are conducted online.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- Know your workplace's COVID Safe Plan and understand what's required (See [Att 2: Estrella's COVID Safe Plan](#)), especially in terms of:
 - distancing in different spaces onsite (including any limit of adults in each space),
 - the additional cleaning schedule and checklist,
 - the location of, and details required in, the visitor's sign-in book,
 - the routines for child collection and drop off, and
 - responding to suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19;

- Record the permits sighted by staff that allow attendance at kindergarten during Stage 4 restrictions, and keep a hard or digital copy of each permit;
- If you can work from home, you must work from home;
- If you need to travel to work, you must have a specific work permit (see [Att 5: Worker permit templates for Estrella 2020](#)):
- If you need to travel more than 5km from your home to attend work, carry your Travel Permit with you while in transit (see [Att 4: Letter to confirm permit to travel](#));
- Check that you are feeling well before starting your shift – you cannot work if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). Your employer(s) cannot require you to work if you have symptoms;
- Provide your details to your employer when you start your shift, for record keeping purposes;
- If you are working at another centre as well as Estrella, provide written notice to both employers - including the contact details of each employer with the other - and record your work hours at both locations; ;
- If you have symptoms of coronavirus, get tested and then stay home. You must stay home until you have your result;
- Tell your employer(s) if you test positive to coronavirus (COVID-19);
- Keep your workplace safe, by regularly cleaning equipment and shared space; and
- Supplies such as cleaning supplies and disposable masks etc are reordered by staff as required. We are aware that if we have trouble sourcing these, we can contact the DET to receive help sourcing these essential supplies.

VISITORS RESPONSIBILITIES

- abiding by this policy.

At this time, the only people who will be allowed onsite are staff, children attending the program, and necessary maintenance people.

Parent help during sessions will not be allowed during stage 4 restrictions, as per the CHO's restrictions regarding visitors.

Support staff and other professionals may be allowed onsite as decided by the Director on a case by case basis. (This decision will be made in line with the current restrictions in place at the time.) This will be kept to a minimum and allowed only if deemed necessary. If visitors come onsite, they will be required to adhere to all protocols and requirements.

Deliveries are to be left at the gate and will be brought in by staff.

EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Implement a COVID Safe Plan and ensure it is regularly updated (See [Att 2: Estrella's COVID Safe Plan](#));
- Provide a copy of the COVID Safe Plan to Council;

- Ensure that any workers that can work from home are able to do so;
- Collect records of all workers, subcontractors and children attending the work premises for 15 minutes or longer (certain exemptions will apply), including
 - a record of Access to Kinder permits that staff have sighted during Stage 4 Restrictions;
- Maintain the visitors sign-in book, which staff will complete for visitors at this time. It records their name, time of arrival and departure and collects contact phone number;
- Provide and request that all visitors check in with the QR code
- Facilitate space ratios and distancing requirements:
 - Limit employees to one worker per four square metres (1 person per 4sq.m.) of enclosed workspace or in shared areas,
 - temporarily shut down play zones with unacceptable confinement, such as the cubby house, and limit employees to one-at-a-time in small spaces, such as the administration office;
- If staff are working at another centre as well as Estrella, request that they keep Estrella informed - including the contact details of the other employer - and request staff to record their work hours at both locations;
- Ensure that workers understand they must be in good health to work - workers cannot work if they are unwell and employers must not require workers with symptoms to work;
- If a worker is unwell, send them home and direct them to be tested. They must stay home until they have their result;
 - A member of staff or committee must call DHHS Coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398 to seek further advice;
- Report any positive cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) to the OH&S Officer, regulatory bodies as detailed in the COVID Safe Plan, including Worksafe, , and notify staff;
 - the OH&S officer must inform WorkSafe using the online confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnosis form, or calling 13 23 60;
 - DHHS must be contacted on 1300 651 160 to discuss further actions;
 - ACECQA NQA ITS must be informed with 24hrs of closure;
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system>
 - DET must be notified by email licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au within 48 hours of closure; and
 - Boroondara Council.

- Provide additional time and supplies to ensure that facilities, spaces and equipment are thoroughly cleaned as regularly as required;
- Undertake risk assessments for cleaning and the potential closure of your workplace in certain situations;
- Issue workers permits to any employees that fulfill the criteria and are eligible, as per the current restrictions (See [Att 4: Letter to confirm permit to travel](#) and [Att 5: Worker permit template for Estrella 2020](#)).

EVALUATION

To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider or Persons with Management or Control will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to health & safety concerns;
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required; and
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)) unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

ATTACHMENTS

For practical management and use of these items, some are separate documents. Examples will be provided in the policy folder, but hyperlinks are used here.

Attachment 1: Background, legislation, sources and related policies

Attachment 2: [Estrella's COVID Safe Plan](#)

Attachment 3: [Template letters to inform families of confirmed cases](#)

Attachment 4: [Letter to confirm permit to travel](#)

Attachment 5: [Staff daily cleaning checklist](#)

Attachment 6: [Cleaners daily cleaning checklist](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I acknowledge I understand my responsibilities and have implemented this COVIDSafe plan in the workplace.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Policy considered and accepted by Management Committee:	_____
Date:	_____
Policy considered and accepted by Staff:	_____
Date:	_____

Attachment 1: Background, Legislation, Sources and Related Policies

1. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

In 2020, a pandemic known as COVID-19, or Coronavirus, gripped the world. On 16 March 2020, a [State of Emergency](#) was declared in Victoria, which provided the Chief Health Officer (CHO) with additional powers to issue directions (also Restrictions, see *Definitions*) to help contain the spread of the virus. A [State of Disaster](#) was enacted on 2 August 2020, accompanied by Stage 4 Restrictions in the Melbourne Metro area.

In early September 2020, the Victoria government outlined a 'roadmap' for the gradual easing of directions as the situation changed. This involved 'steps' from the Stage 4 Restrictions towards pre-covid activities and movement, with the aim of containing the virus where it exists, and hopefully eradicating its incidence in the general community. At this time, the pandemic was still extremely active and devastating across the world, and Victoria was managing the majority of cases in Australia.

This policy has been written specifically in response to this pandemic and to guide the management of procedures during this time.

The sources listed below have been used to inform this policy. All procedures and guidelines are written with protecting the wellbeing and safety of our community, children, families and staff in mind.

General information can be found in our *Infectious Diseases Policy - Attachment 5: Actions for Early Childhood and Care Services in an Epidemic or Pandemic*, and is best read in conjunction with this policy.

During an epidemic or pandemic, further instruction and guidance may be issued by the DHHS and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). In accordance with the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, any advice given by these bodies during a state of emergency or disaster takes precedence over this policy and its procedures.

Legislation and standards

- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Regulation 111)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic).
 - Pursuant directions issued during the COVID-19 pandemic are found at: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation - Victorian Law today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au>

Commonwealth Legislation - ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au>

2. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
- DHHS: *Minimum period of exclusion from primary schools and children's services for infectious diseases cases and contacts*
<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion/school-exclusion-table>
- Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC)
<https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc>
- Business Victoria: COVID Safe Business - *COVID Safe Plan*
<https://www.business.vic.gov.au/disputes-disasters-and-succession-planning/covid-safe-business/covid-safe-plan>
- Business Victoria: COVID Safe Business - *Education and Training Sector guidance*
<https://www.business.vic.gov.au/disputes-disasters-and-succession-planning/covid-safe-business/education-and-training-sector-guidance>
- Department of Education Victoria (DET)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departments/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>
- DET Early Learning services advice
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/Pages/coronavirus-advice-early-childhood.aspx>
- Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA)
<https://elaa.org.au/resources/coronavirus-updates-2/>
- Medical Practitioners
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Restrictions Victoria
<https://www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions-victoria>
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidance, *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>
- DET, *Managing a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)*
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/Pages/closure-preparedness.aspx>
- Workplace Directions (No.3):
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202008/Workplace%20Directions%20%28No%203%29%20-%2016%20August%202020.pdf>
- Re-opening Roadmap: Metro Melbourne
<https://www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-reopening-roadmap-metro-melbourne>

Related Policies

- *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury and Trauma Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers, Students and Families Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

3. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

COVID-19: Coronavirus disease 2019. An illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was first identified in 2019. Symptoms include, but are not limited to, fever, coughing, a sore throat and shortness of breath, loss of smell and/or taste.

Directions: Under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, in the case of a declared state of emergency, the Chief Health Officer is afforded ‘public health risk powers’, which include orders, or directions, that limit different aspects of activity, work and travel in order to hinder or halt infection. The directions can dictate conduct and limitations for different settings, such as safe distances between people; when and where masks are required; occupation densities; which roles are permitted workers and essential workers; when and how Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services can be accessed; and the permitted reasons for, and range of, travel. Directions that affected the ECEC sector included *Permitted Workers and Childcare Permit Scheme Directions (No.4)*, *Workplace Directions (No.3)*, and *Stay at Home Directions (Restricted Areas) Directions (No.13)*, for example.

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

Isolated: Children requiring isolation will be kept apart from others, but supervised, until they are collected.

Pandemic: An epidemic (see *Definitions*) occurring worldwide, or over a wide geographic area and affecting a large proportion of the population.

Restrictions: The rules currently in place to limit the rate of infection. Restrictions are issued in ‘stages’ (i.e. Stage 4 Restrictions) and are announced by the state’s Premier. In each stage the Chief

Health Officer issues Directions (see *Definitions*) that detail the restrictions for different activities, regions, or sectors.