



COVID-19 POLICY

AUTHORISATION

Originally adopted: August 2020

REVIEW DATE:

As needed or annually
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Review Date: Feb 2023

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.

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 a household contact with a known case of COVID-19. Staff may attend as a household contact only if absolutely necessary and with the agreement of both the employer and staff member, and under conditions outlined by DET

- Under current rules children who are household contacts are able to continue attending preschool if they undertake an RA test every day for 5 days and return negative results. They are also required to have no symptoms. It is our preference that household contacts remain at home for 5 days if that is possible, and test negative on an RA test before returning. However, this decision is up to parents/carers. Parents are required to inform staff of household contacts and let staff know what they decide to do. This information will be kept confidential.

Procedures for deciding when to send a person home:

- Staff or children experiencing compatible symptoms with the infection should be encouraged to test using a PCR or RAT. 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.
- Keep unwell children at home until they are completely well and showing no signs of illness.
- Follow government guidelines and directives.
- Inform staff as soon as possible if your child or any member of your household has a positive COVID-19 test result.
- Inform staff about household contacts and the decision you have made for your child regarding this.
- Follow the above procedures if you continue to send your child and have a household contact.
- Provide evidence of triple vaccination prior to doing “stay, play, and help”.
- Follow the covid safe plan guidelines.
- Only send food and clothing in your child’s backpack; no toys or other items from home are to be brought into the kinder.
- Abide by the procedures laid out in this policy.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES

Drop off and Pick up Procedures may change as Department rules and Government advice change.

The procedures that we follow may differ for different groups. Staff will keep you informed as to the procedures and requirements for your group.

Drop Off - The following may apply:

- Session start times may be staggered to allow for social distancing and to support individual children with separation from families. Parents/Carers may be asked to remain outside the preschool gates, adhering to social distancing rules, and wait for the teacher to open the gate. Say goodbye to your child and a staff member will sign them in. All children attending and families must be feeling well and have no symptoms.
- At this time parents/carers may be requested not to enter the preschool grounds.
- For some groups parents may be asked to bring their child into the outside space and sign their child in. Children will be admitted by staff and children say goodbye at the door.
- Families and educators should respect each other's space as much as possible, allowing 1.5m of space between them.
- If children are dismissed at the gate Staff will sign children out and send them to parents/carers
- 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.
- Air purifiers will be in operation daily
- 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, as well as appropriately spacing areas.
- 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 may not be used at times; the decision 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.
- 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
- 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 may or may not be named, as deemed appropriate at the time)
- In the event that the preschool needs to close for a session or a longer period of time, families will be informed as soon as possible.
- If determined that the preschool needs to close:
 - 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>
- 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:

- All staff have three doses of vaccine as required by DET
- Air purifiers are being used indoors
- 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 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 outside 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
- 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;

- If you can work from home, it is recommended to work from home;
- 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;
- 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
- 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 certain times, the only people who will be allowed onsite are staff, children attending the program, and necessary maintenance people. Families will be kept up to date with changes as they happen

Parent help during sessions will be determined by staff, our covid safe plan and the current DET guidelines.

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 where possible. If a delivery person needs to enter they will follow required procedures.

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
- Maintain the visitors sign-in book, which staff will complete for visitors at this time. It records their name, time of arrival and departure, phone number and a record that a vaccination certificate has been sighted

- 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,
- 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 staff member is a household contact, they are required to test and isolate if positive or if displaying symptoms. If the staff member tests negative and has no symptoms, they may, with the agreement of themselves and the employer, return to work under specific conditions as outlined by the Department.
- Estrella has agreed that this would only be done if agreement by both parties as determined on a case by case basis dependent on the specific circumstances at the time and only if we cannot cover in any other way and the other option would be to close the kinder.
- If a staff member 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 may 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 and notify staff;
 - ACECQA NQA ITS must be informed if closure of more than 3 days is required - this decision must be discussed with our KIA or NQAITS first
<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

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](#) (on google drive for committee/staff reference)

Attachment 4: [Staff daily cleaning checklist](#)

Attachment 5: [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>

- COVIDSafe ECEC Settings Guide Updated 24/01/2022

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.