IMMUNISATION & EXCLUSIONS FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES & ACUTELY ILL CHILDREN & STAFF POLICY

POLICY
SILVERDALE CHILD CARE CENTRE has a duty of care to ensure that all persons are provided with a high level of protection during the hours of the service’s operation.

Protection includes:
- notifying children, families and staff/carers when an excludable illness or disease is present in the service;
- maintaining a record of children’s and staff/carers immunisation status;
- complying to relevant health department exclusion guidelines; and
- increasing staff/carers awareness of cross infection through physical contact with others.
- Notify local public health unit if outbreak occurs

The centre will minimise the spread of infectious diseases between children, other children and centre staff, by conforming to National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) requirements for exclusion of children with infectious diseases, and other legislative requirements. Including the exclusion of children who are not immunised during a breakout of a contagious disease.

BACKGROUND
Exclusion of infectious children significantly reduces the risk of the spread of diseases to other healthy children and children’s centre staff. Exclusion periods are recommended by the NHMRC, based on the time a child is infectious to others. Contacts of certain infectious diseases may at the discretion of the local Public Health Unit, be excluded for their own safety. There are circumstances where a child is too ill to attend a children’s centre and needs to stay home for treatment and recovery.
There are a number of diseases that are notifiable under the Public Health Act 1991 to the local Public Health Unit.
Immunisation is an important strategy in infection control, which encompasses the service’s guidelines for excluding children and adults with an infectious illness or disease.
RELEVANT LEGISLATION
Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Services Regulation (No.2) 1996 (NSW); Public Health (Amendment) Act 1991 (NSW); Food Act 1989 (NSW); Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 and Regulations 2001 (NSW).

SCOPE: This policy applies to all children families and staff within the centre.

LOCATION OF INFORMATION: This information is located in the staff and family policy folder.

KEY RESOURCES / SOURCES
- Frith, J., Kambouris, N., & O’Grady, O. (2003). Health & safety in children’s centres: Model policies & practices (2nd ed.). NSW: School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales.¹

Useful websites
- HealthInsite - www.healthinsite.gov.au
- Immunise Australia Program – www.immunise.health.gov.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council - www.nhmrc.gov.au
- Raising Children Network – www.raisingchildren.net.au

PRACTICES:
To minimise spread of infectious diseases between children and other healthy children, children’s centre staff and visitors, centres should:

¹ This publication is produced on behalf of Early Childhood Australia New South Wales (NSW) Branch and the NSW Children’s Services Health and Safety Committee. Services should be aware that the publication may refer to practices that reflect NSW licensing regulations or health department exclusion guidelines.
notify families or emergency contact when a symptom of an excludable infectious illness or disease has been observed;
notify stakeholders when an excludable infectious illness or disease has been confirmed by a medical practitioner;
identify and comply to exclusion guidelines and timeframes;
identify when an illness or disease is no longer excludable or infectious; and
maintain immunisation records of children and staff/carers.

- The centre prevents the spread of illness and disease by implementing strategies which:
  - promote hand washing and other hygienic practices;
  - identify and exclude children and staff/carers with symptoms of an excludable infectious illness or disease;
  - maintain clean and hygienic environments; and
  - encourage child and adult immunisation.

Please refer to the Health, Hygiene and Infection Control Policy.

- In meeting the service’s duty of care, it is a requirement under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* that management and staff/carers implement and endorse the service’s Immunisation and Health Related Exclusion Policy and procedures.

**IMMUNISATION:**

- It is a requirement of SCCC that parents inform our service of their children’s immunisation status on enrolment.
- An immunisation schedule is included in our enrolment pack.
- If a child is not immunised or if their immunisation has lapsed, an immunisation information pack is given to the parents.
- Immunisation status reminders are given to parents and returned in order to update our records.

**Children**

- The centre keeps a record of each child’s current immunisation status.
- Children’s immunisation records are maintained through the software programme *Qikkids*.
- When children’s immunisation schedule has lapsed, the Child Care Benefit assistance payment is cancelled by the government and the centre will be notified.

**Children who are not immunised**

- The centre will keep a record of those children who are not immunised.

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2 There are legislative Acts and regulations for each state and territory that address the issue of Occupational Health and Safety. Services are advised to seek information that is relevant to their jurisdiction.
• For families who decide not to immunise their children, those children will be excluded from the centre until the disease outbreak is under control. This may occur even if the child is well. If there is an outbreak of a contagious disease, a notice is immediately placed at the front door of centre. Any parents of children who are not immunised will also be told verbally and will be asked to not return to the centre until the disease outbreak is under control – for their child’s own welfare.

Staff/Carers
• Staff/carers are encouraged to maintain their immunisation status against immunisable diseases.
• The centre has a record of staff/carers’ current immunisation status.
• Relevant information on immunisation is available to staff in the staff room.

IDENTIFYING SYMPTOMS OF AN EXCLUDABLE INFECTIOUS ILLNESS OR DISEASE
• If staff suspects a child has a contagious disease all precautions are taken to isolate the child from other children and parents are called immediately. Parents are asked to take their child to the doctor to obtain a concise diagnosis. If the child/carer does have a contagious disease, it is documented in our contagious illness register.
• If a staff member thinks they might have a contagious disease they are required to leave the premises immediately and seek medical assistance as soon as possible and only return to work when they have a certificate from a Doctor stating that the staff member is not contagious.
• If a child or staff member has been unable to attend the centre because of an infectious illness, when the child or staff member has fully recovered, the centre asks the family or staff member to obtain a certificate from their doctor which specifically states the child or staff member is not infectious and is able to attend care or return to work.

EXCLUSION GUIDELINES
• Under the Public Health Act and Regulation (NSW) 1991, exclude from care and notify the local Public Health Unit and provide details of any known or suspected person (children or children’s centre staff) with of any of the following vaccine preventable diseases:
  - Diphtheria
  - Measles
  - Mumps
  - Pertussis (whooping cough)
  - Poliomyelitis
  - Rubella (German measles)
  - Tetanus

• Exclude children, staff, volunteers or visitors who have infectious diseases other than listed above in accordance with the NHMRC Recommended Minimum Periods of Exclusion (see Appendix A). Also seek advice from your local Public
Health Unit in other cases of infectious disease, or if a child or staff member has a serious infectious illness such as meningitis, food poisoning, gastroenteritis, streptococcal infection, tuberculosis, hepatitis.

- **Exclude children who are not immunised** because it is our duty of care to ensure that those children be excluded from the service until the disease outbreak is under control. This may occur even if the child is well.

- **Exclude children and staff who:**
  - are acutely ill and may need to see a doctor,
  - are too ill to participate in normal children’s centre activities,
  - may require extra supervision to the detriment of the care and safety of the child or other children,
  - who are ill from gastroenteritis or hepatitis A,
  - have symptoms or signs of a possible infectious illness,
  - are so ill they require Panadol
  - have within the last 24 hours started a course of anti-biotics for the first time

- **Request from the Public Health Unit a clearance** to attend for children and staff who have had diphtheria, hepatitis A, polio, tuberculosis, typhoid or paratyphoid infection.

- **Ensure all staff and persons normally working or visiting the centre conform to all infectious disease policies.**

- **Advise families that when children have commenced treatment with a medication**, the child should not attend care for at least 24 hours to ensure the child is recovering and is not having side effects from the medication.

**FAMILIES**

- Families are informed about centre’s exclusion guidelines through this policy available in the policy book in the foyer. Additionally in the foyer there a poster showing exclusions time frames where children should be excluded from the centre when they have a contagious disease.
- Families are informed about an infectious illness or disease by way of a notice placed next to the front door and only removed when the outbreak is under control.
- Families have information on infectious illnesses, diseases and immunisation and can access them in our foyer library.
- The centre keeps up to date information in relevant community languages regarding infectious diseases and ensure this information is easily accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- The centre is aware that conflicts and difficulties may arise when negotiating with families, and interpreting medical certificates, due to:
  - families finding exclusion requirements difficult because of pressures to meet working and other personal commitments,
- families may present doctors’ certificates of fitness of a child to attend care that the children’s centre staff and the centre manager considers inconsistent with the situation at the time.

Refer difficult or unresolved situations to the local Public Health Unit, or discuss with the child’s doctor (with the parent’s or legal guardian’s consent), before accepting the child into care, difficult situations in relation to infectious diseases should be referred to the Public Health Unit.

STAFF/CARERS
- When a child is unwell and isolated due to a suspect infectious disease, one staff member is nominated to be the primary carer until the child is collected. This strategy minimises the number of people caring for an unwell child and reduces the risk of cross infection. Staff follow the Health, Hygiene & Infection Control policy when dealing with infectious persons.
- Staff/carers are also required to be excluded from the centre when they have an excludable infectious illness or disease.
- Under the Food Act (NSW) 1989 exclude staff from food handling duties who have pustular infections (such as boils) of the skin that cannot be covered or who are ill from gastroenteritis or hepatitis A.

MANAGEMENT STAFF
- Information is provided to staff/carers about excludable infectious illnesses and diseases in their orientation pack and through pamphlets, journals and publications such as Staying Healthy in Childcare.

Privacy and confidentiality
- The right for children, families and staff/carers to be afforded a level of privacy and confidentiality in regards to their immunisation status is paramount.
- Staff/carers, students and volunteers are aware of the service’s commitment to maintaining and respecting privacy and confidentiality. Please refer to the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

Note: In accordance with the Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Services Regulation (No.2) (NSW), 1996, the Regulation and these policies do not authorise the disclosure of any information concerning exposure to or infection by Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS).