

7.0 COVID-19 Safe Policy

Policy Rationale

The Empathy Initiative has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of all individuals at all times. Many of the hygiene habits developed during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue indefinitely. The Empathy Initiative demonstrates and models to children the hygiene practices which will mitigate the introduction and spread of COVID-19.

The virus presents greater risks to those members of the Community that are classified as “Vulnerable Persons”.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) identifies the following groups as being at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19:

- people aged 70 years and over
- people aged 65 years and over with chronic medical conditions
- all people with compromised immune systems, and;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50 with chronic medical conditions.

*The AHPPC states that there is limited evidence at this time regarding the risk in pregnant women.

In order to protect those vulnerable members of our community, the following Risk Mitigation strategies have been implemented. All strategies will be updated and align with current Victorian Government regulations.

Procedures

Face masks

All staff must carry a face mask at all times. If required by the State, staff must wear a face mask when facilitating programs.

PPE

Staff will not need to use extra personal protective equipment (PPE), aside from face masks when required by the State.

Hygiene

Hand washing and the use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser are effective ways of controlling COVID-19 infection and spread in the service. Staff must wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer at the beginning and end of a program.

RATs

Staff will voluntarily conduct rapid antigen testing on the morning of a program.

If staff show coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms when they arrive, or during the program facilitation, they will inform school staff immediately, go home, get tested and isolate.

Symptoms include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- Temperature is equal to or above 37.4 degrees Celsius

The staff member will either be replaced, or a suitable and agreeable rescheduling of the program will take place.

Vaccination

The pandemic orders require all education staff to receive a third dose of the COVID-9 vaccine in order to be onsite in an education setting, unless they have a valid exemption.

Getting a third dose will lower the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and reduce the risk of exposure to the school and greater community. A third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine provides additional protection to you and it helps reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 to your colleagues, children and families, and our whole community.

The vaccination status of staff will be recorded.

COVID19 Protocols – Communication and Decision Making

These protocols outline processes in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case by a staff member of The Empathy Initiative.

If The Empathy Initiative becomes aware of an attendee or staff member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, they will immediately inform any schools they have attended within the past 7 days.

References

- ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit (2012)
- Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice.
- Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health and Safety
- Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management (Standard: 7.2; Elements: 7.3.3, 7.3.4, 7.3.5)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010), S 168, S 174
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011), R 173, R 176

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