

Mallee Track Health and Community Service

Title: **Relaxation, Sleep and Clothing Policy**

Manual: Early Years Services

Scope:

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

Responsible Position:

Director of Community Services

1. STATEMENT

The *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)* include a focus on social, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing and health. Development Outcome 3 in both framework documents refers to a child’s ability to take increasing responsibility for their own wellbeing. One of the indicators for this capacity is that children “recognise and communicate their bodily needs (for example thirst, hunger, rest, comfort, physical activity)”. The EYLF suggests that to promote this, educators should:

- Consider the pace of the day within the context of the community.
- Provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day, and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation.

Employers have a responsibility under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to provide a safe and healthy working environment. This duty extends to others present in the workplace, including children and volunteers. Providing a safe environment for children at the service includes complying with current Australian/New Zealand standards in relation to equipment, such as cots and mattresses (refer to *References*).

Sleep, rest and relaxation are vital to children’s healthy development. “Children who get enough sleep are more engaged and less prone to behavioural problems and moodiness. Sleep also promotes alertness, memory and performance... Effective rest and sleep strategies are important to ensure that children feel secure and safe, and ECEC settings have a duty of care to ensure that all children are provided with a high level of safety and comfort when resting or sleeping and to maintain adequate supervision” (Childcare and Children’s Health, Vol 14, no 2, June 2011 – refer to Sources). Children are encouraged to wear clothing that promotes independence for wellbeing tasks and allows them to participate in all activities with comfort and safety.

2. OBJECTIVES

This policy will provide clear guidelines for the implementation of safe relaxation and sleep practices that meet the individual needs of children attending the Early Years Services.

The Early Years Services are committed to:

- Providing a positive and nurturing environment for all children attending the service.
- Recognising that children have different requirements for relaxation and sleep, and being responsive to those needs to ensure that children feel safe and secure at the service.
- Consulting with parents/guardians about their child’s individual relaxation and sleep requirements/practices, and ensuring practices at the service are responsive to the values and cultural beliefs of each family.
- Its duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) to all children at the Early Years Services, and ensuring that adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*) is maintained while children are sleeping, resting or relaxing.

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- Complying with all legislative requirements, standards and current best practice and guidelines, including recommendations by Red Nose (refer to *References*).

This policy is based on recommendations from SIDS & Kids. If a family's beliefs and practices conflict with SIDS & Kids, the service will only endorse an alternative practice if the service is provided with written advice from the family. In meeting the service's duty of care, it is a requirement that all educators implement and adhere to this policy.

Our service believes in a short period of rest each day for every child to ensure their growth and development. We will aim to respect and cater for each child's specific needs.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Taking reasonable steps to ensure the sleep/rest needs of children at the service are met, with regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs (Regulation 81(1)).
- Regularly reviewing practices to ensure compliance with the recommendations of Red Nose in relation to safe sleeping practices for children (refer to *References*).
- Providing information and training to ensure staff are kept informed of changing practices in relation to safe sleep practices for children.
- Ensuring parents/guardians are consulted about appropriate relaxation and sleep practices for their child.
- Protecting children from hazards and harm (Section 167).
- Ensuring cots provided at the service comply with the most current Australian/New Zealand Standards (refer to *References* and Attachment 1 – Cots).
- Ensuring that hammocks, prams and strollers are not used to settle children to sleep.
- Consulting with staff in relation to OHS issues when purchasing new equipment for the service.
- Ensuring compliance with WorkSafe Victoria's *Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit* (refer to *References*), including in relation to staff lifting children into and out of cots.
- Ensuring adequate supervision of children at the service at all times, including during relaxation and sleep.
- Ensuring that rooms used for sleep and relaxation are well ventilated.
- Ensuring that there is adequate space to store bedding in a hygienic manner (refer to *Hygiene Policy*).

3.2 The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- Taking reasonable steps to ensure the sleep/rest needs of children at the service are met with regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs (Regulation 81(2)).
- Ensuring the educational program provides opportunities for each child to sleep, rest or engage in appropriate quiet play activities, as required.
- Protecting children from hazards and harm (Section 167).
- Removing any hazards identified in the child's resting or sleeping environment and informing the Approved Provider, as soon as is practicable.
- Ensuring all staff and educators comply with the recommendations of Red Nose in relation to safe sleeping practices for children (refer to *Sources*).
- Educating families about evidence-based safe sleeping practices.

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- Assessing whether there are exceptional circumstances for alternative practices where family beliefs conflict with current recommended evidence-based guidelines for safe sleeping practices, seek written support from a professional and develop a risk management plan.
- Ensuring all staff and educators comply with WorkSafe Victoria’s *Children’s services – occupational health and safety compliance kit* (refer to *Sources*) in relation to lifting children into and out of cots.
- Ensuring adequate supervision of children at the service at all times, including during relaxation and sleep.
- Storing items such as bedding in a hygienic manner to prevent cross-contamination (refer to *Hygiene Policy*).

3.3 Educators and other staff are responsible for:

- Providing each child with appropriate opportunities for relaxation and sleep according to their needs.
- Complying with the recommendations of Red Nose in relation to safe sleeping practices for children (refer to *References*).
- Developing relaxation and sleep practices that are responsive to:
 - The individual needs of children at the service.
 - Parenting beliefs, values, practices and requirements.
 - The length of time each child spends at the service.
 - Circumstance or events occurring at a child’s home.
 - Consistency of practice between home and the service.
 - A child’s general health and wellbeing.
 - The physical environment, including room temperature, lighting, airflow and noise levels
- Educating families about evidence-based safe sleeping practices.
- Implementing the documented sleep regime and risk management strategies where in exceptional circumstances family beliefs conflict with current recommended evidence-based guidelines for safe sleeping practices.
- Minimising distress or discomfort for the children in their care.
- Ensuring that resting and sleeping practices are not used as a behaviour guidance strategy (refer to *Interactions with Children Policy*).
- Providing a range of opportunities for relaxation throughout the day work with children to help them learn about their need for rest and comfort. Children will be encouraged to communicate their needs where possible.
- Provided children who do not require sleep or rest with appropriate and quiet play activities.
- Encouraged children to make appropriate decisions about their participation throughout their time at the service.
- Each child will be supplied with clean, appropriate spare clothes when necessary.
- Group children will be in a way that minimises overcrowding.
- Privacy needs of each child will be respected during dressing and undressing times.
- Complying with WorkSafe Victoria’s *Children’s services – occupational health and safety compliance kit* (refer to *References*), including in relation to lifting children into and out of cots.

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- Providing input in relation to OHS issues when new equipment is purchased for the service.
- Conducting regular safety checks of equipment used for sleeping/resting, such as cots and mattresses.
- Removing any hazards identified in the child’s resting or sleeping environment and informing the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider, as soon as is practicable.
- Ensuring that any hanging cords, mobiles, curtains and blinds are inaccessible to children who are resting or sleeping.
- Providing adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*) of all children, including during sleep, rest and relaxation.
- Supervising children displaying symptoms of illness closely, especially when resting or sleeping (refer to *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*).
- Ensuring that artificial heating, such as heat bags and hot-water bottles, is not used to provide warmth.
- Ensuring that each child has their own bed linen, and that the *Hygiene Policy* and procedures are implemented for the cleaning and storage of cots, mattresses and linen.
- Documenting and communicating children’s rest and sleep times to co-workers during shift changes.
- Providing information to families about the service’s relaxation and sleep practices.
- Developing communication strategies to inform parents/guardians about their child’s rest and sleep patterns, including times and length of sleep.
- Encouraging children’s independence, and assisting children with dressing as needed.

- 3.4 Parents/guardians are responsible for:**
- Discussing their child’s relaxation and sleep requirements and practices prior to commencing at the service, and when these requirements change.
 - Providing information on the child’s enrolment form if the child requires special items while resting or sleeping e.g. a comforter or soft toy.
 - Providing a written medical report if their baby/child is not to be placed on their back during sleep. Parents/guardians must communicate alternative resting practices to staff.
 - Ensuring children wear comfortable and safe footwear and clothing to the Early Years Services.

3.5 Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

4. 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 [Glossary of Terms – Early Years](#).

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

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Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- Number, age and abilities of children.
- Number and positioning of educators.
- Current activity of each child.
- Areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility).
- Developmental profile of each child and of the group of children.
- Experience, knowledge and skill of each educator.
- Need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Duty of care: A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury.

Red Nose: (formerly SIDS and Kids), the recognised national authority on safe sleeping practices for infants and children (refer to *References*).

Relaxation/rest: A period of inactivity, solitude, calmness or tranquillity.

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome): The unexpected and unexplained death of an infant, usually occurring during sleep.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 Safe Resting Practices

5.1.1 Safe Resting Practices for babies (birth to 24 months):

- Babies will be placed on their back to rest.
- If a medical condition exists that prevents a child from being placed on their back, the alternative resting practice must be directed in writing by the child's registered medical practitioner.
- If older babies turn over during their sleep, allow them to find their own sleeping position, but always lay them on their back when first placing them to rest.
- At no time will a baby's face be covered with bed linen.
- To prevent a baby from wriggling down under bed linen, they will be placed with their feet closest to the bottom end of the cot.
- Quilts and duvets will not be used as bed linen. Pillows, soft toys, lamb's wool and cot bumpers will not be used.
- Light bedding is the preferred option, which must be tucked in to prevent the baby from pulling bed linen over their head.

5.1.2 Safe resting practices for toddlers (18 months – 3 years):

- Toddlers will be placed on their back to rest, unless otherwise directed in writing by the parents.
- If toddlers turn over during their sleep, allow them to find their own sleeping position, but always lay them on their back when first placing them to rest.
- At no time will a toddler's face be covered with bed linen.
- If using a cot, toddlers will be placed with their feet closest to the bottom end of the cot to prevent them from wriggling down under bed linen.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quilts and duvets will not be used to cover toddlers in a cot or on a mattress. Pillows, soft toys, lamb’s wool and cot bumpers will not be used. • Light bedding is the preferred option, which must be tucked in to prevent the toddler from pulling bed linen over their face. • Sleeping bags with a fitted neck and arm holes are an alternative option to bed linen and encourage a toddler to rest on their back. If parents request to continue using the sleeping bag option when the toddler rests on a mattress, then the service will comply. • Quiet experiences may be offered to those toddlers who do not fall asleep. • Calm relaxing music will be played
<p>5.1.3</p>	<p>Safe resting practices for preschool aged children (3 - 5yrs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool aged children will be placed on their back to rest. If they turn over during their sleep, allow them to find their own sleeping position but always ask them to lay on their back when first placing them to rest. • At no time will a preschool aged child’s face be covered with bed linen when they are sleeping. • Light bedding is the preferred option. • Quiet experiences may be offered to preschool aged children who do not fall asleep. • Calm relaxing music will be played.
<p>5.2</p>	<p>Supervision of resting children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children who are resting will be supervised by educators ensuring ratios are upheld at all times. • All children who have fallen asleep in the service will be monitored regularly with specific attention to breathing patterns.
<p>5.3</p>	<p>Settling children for rest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators will comfort children when required. • We discourage rocking children to sleep as this will form an unworkable habit with families at home
<p>5.4</p>	<p>Beds, Cot and Sleeping Areas Checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators will visually conduct a safety check of the resting environments, equipment and/or aids before use.
<p>5.5</p>	<p>Cots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All cots meet Australian Standards for Cots, where older cots are still in use they will be assessed for safety and future replacements must meet Australian Standards. • Cot mattresses should be in good condition, clean, firm, flat and must fit the cot base with no more than a 25mm gap between the mattress and the sides of the cot.
<p>5.6</p>	<p>Prams and strollers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not to be used for children to sleep or rest in.

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5.7	<p>Hygiene Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cots and mattresses protective covers are cleaned with detergent and water if they are visibly soiled and as per cleaning schedule. • Each child has their own bed linen. • Children’s bed linen will be returned to families for washing at the end of care during the week or at the end of week, whichever comes first.
5.8	<p>Rest Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please refer to the Physical Environment Policy for information regarding the appropriate sleep and rest environment for children.
5.9	<p>Sleepwear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators monitor the temperature of the rest environment and address children’s clothing needs. • Children will not have hoods and cords from clothing as per our clothing policy.
5.10	<p>Communicating with Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest strategies and practices are outlined in newsletters, posters and brochures. • Information regarding SIDS & Kids Safe Sleeping Practices will be displayed on noticeboards and made available to all new enrolments.
5.11	<p>Children’s Clothing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children should be clothed in an appropriate manner which will allow them to explore and play freely and not restrict them using equipment while at play. • Clothing should also allow easy access for children when they are initially toilet training i.e. elasticised trousers, track pants – rather than buttons, zips, belts etc. • Children will be encouraged by educators to use aprons or smocks for messy play and art experiences to protect their clothing. For this reason it is important to not send the children in their best clothes. • Children should be appropriately protected from the sun during outdoor play - please refer to sun safety policy for further directives on hats and clothing. • Children’s clothing should accommodate weather conditions i.e. be loose and cool in summer to prevent overheating and warm enough for cold weather – including outdoor play. At all times educators will monitor children to ensure they are appropriately dressed for all weather, play experiences, rest and sleep routines. • Children should have appropriate footwear that enables them to play comfortably and not cause safety concerns i.e. thongs, clogs or backless shoes have a trip factor and do not allow children to use equipment safely, however we do not expect that families go to additional expense to purchase closed in shoes. • Comfortable and non-restrictive clothing is important at sleep time to promote your child’s comfort at this time of the day. • Clean and appropriate spare clothing should be supplied by families and will be made available to children should it be needed. • All clothing and belongings must be clearly labelled with the child's name.

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6. ATTACHMENT 1

Cots

There are currently (at the time of printing) two standards that apply to the use of cots:

- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010), and
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998).

Services can check current standards on the SAI Global website at: www.saiglobal.com

Household cots usually have a lower base and mattress, and WorkSafe Victoria have expressed concern for staff in relation to the manual handling risks posed when working with cots at a lower height.

The Institutional Cot Standard allows for cots with a higher base and mattress, but requires these cots to be made of metal, and to have a drop side that can be lowered to the level of the mattress. The early childhood sector has expressed concerns in relation to the safety of cots with sides that lower to the level of the mattress.

Services should investigate options either for:

- cots that meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010) and have a higher base and mattress, or
- cots that meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998).

No alterations should be made to purchased cots under any circumstances, as this may have serious consequences in relation to liability in the event that an incident occurs.

ELAA **does not** recommend that services use portable or folding cots, as they present an increased risk of injury or death to a child if erected incorrectly. Portable cots also pose an increased risk of manual handling injuries to staff. If a service requires an extra cot to be available for occasional use, it is possible to purchase a cot that meets the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use, and folds flat for easy storage.

Further information on portable or folding cots is available as outlined below:

- Red Nose: <https://rednose.org.au/article/portable-cots>
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission: www.productsafety.gov.au
- ELAA's OH&S website: www.ohsinecservices.org.au

7. EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- Regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness.
- 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.
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

Forms & Records:

Nappy Chart

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Related MTHCS Policy / Procedure:	<p>Child Safe Environment Policy</p> <p>Hygiene Policy</p> <p>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy</p> <p>Interactions with Children Policy</p> <p>Occupational Health and Safety Policy</p> <p>Supervision of Children Policy</p>
References:	<p>Australian/New Zealand Standards: (at the time of printing) the current relevant standards are:</p> <p>Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2003), and</p> <p>Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998)</p> <p>Current standards are available on the SAI Global website at: www.saiglobal.com</p> <p>Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF): https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia</p> <p>The Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne, Grow and Thrive - Sleep, Volume 2 No 1, February 2014, Centre for Community Child Health: https://www.rch.org.au/ccch/publications-resources/grow-thrive/Grow_Thrive_-_Sleep/</p> <p>Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (2016), Consumer product safety – a guide for businesses & legal practitioners: https://www.accc.gov.au/publications/consumer-product-safety-a-guide-for-businesses-legal-practitioners</p> <p>Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, Safe sleep and rest practices: https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/supporting-materials/infosheet/safe-sleep-and-rest-practices</p> <p>WorkSafe Victoria, Children’s services – occupational health and safety compliance kit: https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/childrens-services-occupational-health-and-safety-compliance-kit</p> <p>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF): https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyl df.aspx</p>
Legislation:	<p>Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:</p> <p>Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012</p> <p>Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Regulations 2012</p> <p>Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010)</p> <p>Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998)</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</p> <p>National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety</p> <p>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004</p> <p>Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)</p> <p>Working with Children Regulations 2006 (Vic)</p>

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Children’s Services Regulations 2009
Children’s Services Law 1996

Standards: National Quality Standard – QA2
ISO 9001:2015 – 8.5, 7.5.3

MTHCS Early Years Services operate over two different regulatory requirements, Education and Care National Regulations 2011 and Children’s Services Regulations 2009, differentiating Kindergarten services from Child Care Subsidy services. To reduce the list of Policies and Procedures produced, MTHCS Early Years Services have combined these documents. Designations will only be referenced under the Education and Care National Regulations 2011, however this would be equivalent to the same delegation as the Children’s Services Regulations 2009 as needed but not stated.

Education and Care National Regulations 2011	Children’s Services Regulations 2009
Responsible Person The Approved Provider Persons with Management and Control	The Licensee
The Nominated Supervisor or Persons in Day to Day Charge	Primary Nominee
Certified Supervisors	Approved Nominee or Accepted Nominee