

Family day care programming, physical environment and relationships policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this policy must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

The South Australian Department for Education (the department) operates a family day care (FDC) Program (the program). FDC services are provided through a network of self-employed FDC educators who are registered with one of the department's 12 FDC services (schemes) to deliver education and care to children in their own home and/or an approved premises.

Scope

This policy applies to all department FDC staff, registered FDC educators and approved FDC educator assistants.



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Detail

The legislative base

As an approved provider of FDC, the department services are governed by the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (NQF). The NQF incorporates and is established by the *Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011, Schedule 1, Education and Care Services National Law, (South Australia)*, (the National Law) and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (the National Regulations) with which the department must comply.

The NQF also includes a *National Quality Standard (NQS)* against which our services are assessed and rated. The NQS comprises 7 quality areas: educational program and practice; children’s health and safety; physical environment; staffing arrangements; relationships with children; collaborative partnerships with families and communities and governance and leadership. Educational programs must be based on two approved learning frameworks: *Being, Belonging and Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework (Early Years Learning Framework)* and *My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care (Framework for School Age Care)*.

The NQF is administered by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). In addition, the state based regulatory authority, the Education Standards Board (ESB) monitors services for compliance with the National Law and National Regulations and assesses them for quality against the NQS.

A series of statutory objectives underpin all aspects of the NQF. Those that particularly apply to individuals and entities involved in the provision of services whether as providers, staff, educators, educator assistants and students, are described in *National Law, Part 1 (3)(2) Objectives and Guiding Principles*).

- (a) to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services;
- (b) to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children attending education and care services;
- (c) to promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care services

As an approved provider, the Department holds overarching responsibility for the achievement of these objectives in our service. The [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#) and [Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Act 2016](#) guide the department’s policies in relation to Working with Children Checks, RRHAN-EC training and mandated notifier obligations.

Overarching policies

To ensure the department meet’s obligations under the National Law and relevant state-based legislation, the department has three overarching policies:

- [Family day care governance, leadership and staffing policy \(PDF 230KB\)](#)

- [Family day care health and safety policy \(PDF 295KB\)](#)
- Family day care programming, physical environment and relationships policy

In addition, the department has two procedures comprising:

- [Management of complaints, incidents and non-compliance in family day care and Respite Care program procedure \(PDF 726KB\)](#)
- [Family day care fee and levy charging procedure \(PDF 422KB\)](#).

Together, these policies and procedures address the key operating requirements of the NQF making clear how those requirements must be met, the responsibilities of all educators and department staff involved in operating our family day care service, and thereby, transparency for all stakeholders.

A suite of operational guides support the policies and educators are required to adhere to these guides. The operational guides have been developed to reflect current expert advice in respect to the delivery of education and care in a family day care setting. The operational guides are published on the [family day care educator portal](#) (staff login required).

Policy purpose

Child centred educational programming, incorporating a wide number of diverse resources and a stimulating environment by respectful and nurturing educators, enables children to learn, develop and flourish. As an approved provider, the department ensures that educators deliver a program to all children being educated and cared for by its service that is based on an approved learning framework; delivered in a manner that accords with the approved learning framework; is based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child; and designed to take into account the individual differences of each child.

This policy outlines the key legislated requirements of:

- Quality Area 1 Program and Practice
- Quality Area 3 Physical Environments
- Quality Area 5 Relationships with Children
- Quality Area 6 Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities.

This policy underpins and ensures systems are in place to optimise the provision of appropriate educational programs, maximise children's learning and development outcomes and enables our schemes to meet or exceed the Standard for these 4 quality areas. It does this by clarifying provider, nominated supervisor, educational leader, coordinator and educator roles and responsibilities in meeting obligations under the National Law, and outlining required practices for program planning, the FDC environment, supporting relationships with children and partnering with parents and community.

The department's [FDC philosophy](#) guides all aspects of our service's operations and outlines the purpose and principles under which our services operate, it is based on the principles set out in the:

- [Being, Belonging and Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework \(PDF 24.9MB\)](#)
- [My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care \(PDF 27.1MB\)](#)

- [National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care](#)
- [Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics](#).

Programming

A planned educational program and its responsive and thoughtful delivery is fundamental to optimising the learning and development of each child educated and cared for by our service. Educators draw on the family day care philosophy, their pedagogy and in-depth knowledge and understanding of each child to guide everyday practice and development of the educational program unique to their service.

Program

Consistent with the National Regulation 73, educational programs are designed to meet the needs and include the experiences and interests of each child and to contribute to the following outcomes:

- (a) the child will have a strong sense of identity
- (b) the child will be connected with and contribute to his or her world
- (c) the child will have a strong sense of wellbeing
- (d) the child will be a confident and involved learner
- (e) the child will be an effective communicator.

Educator programs are based on the two approved and closely related learning frameworks *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* ('Early Years Learning Framework') and *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* ('Framework for School Age Care'). Where children of both preschool and school age are educated and cared for by an educator, the program will be based on both frameworks.

Practice

Educator programs are planned to maximise learning opportunities which include daily routines such as eating meals and snacks or hygiene practices. Educator programs are play based, seek children's active involvement, include intentional teaching, and encourage child directed learning and the development of children's agency.

Planning and Assessment

Consistent with the National Law and Regulations each child's learning and development is assessed and/or evaluated as part of an ongoing planning and assessment cycle that incorporates analysing children's learning, documentation, planning, implementation, and reflection. In the early childhood context, analysing learning refers to assessment of children's learning. This involves a process of gathering and analysing information as evidence of what children know, can do and understand (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15). For school age children, evaluation of wellbeing and learning refers to the process of scanning, monitoring, gathering and analysing information about how children feel and what children know, can do and understand (*Framework for School Age Care*, p.16).

Documentation about each child's learning program and progress in relation to the intended program

outcomes for each child is available and provided to parents.

A copy of the educational program for children must be available at the family day care premises or venue.

Physical environments

The way that the environment is designed, equipped and organised determines the way that the space and resources are used and has the potential to maximise children's engagement and level of positive experience and inclusive relationships. We are committed to providing physical environments that are safe, suitable and provide a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development¹.

This policy focusses on the design and use of the spaces in an educator's premises or other approved venue for the FDC program service which they provide consistent with National Regulations. We recognise that FDC is very different from education and care provided in a purpose-built facility. This is a strength which we seek to optimise for the benefit of children's learning and development. For preschool and school aged children, a family day care premises offers the familiarity and comfort of a family home which they share with an educator's family and a small group of children of mixed ages. To ensure adequacy, appropriateness, safety and the use of sustainable practices, the National Law, National Regulations, National Quality Standard and department policy and operational guides have a number of requirements that educators must meet.

Design for inclusive play-based learning

The way in which the service environment is designed, equipped and arranged determines how children use space and resources. The environment also impacts on the behaviours and interactions of children and adults². The design, equipment and arrangement of the physical environment must facilitate a range of experiences, including quiet, solitary, active and group-based experiences, the inclusion of all children, be developmentally appropriate and enable easy movement between indoors and outdoors. There must be space and opportunity for all children to create, explore, engage with natural materials and collaborate with others as well as rest and sleep. Good ventilation, natural light and a comfortable temperature indoors, shade from the sun and adequate supervision of children at all times must be met. Collectively, these all contribute to safe, play-based learning and recreation. A well created physical environment that responds to and anticipates children's competence, interests and needs, enables the educator to engage with children to support their learning and development.

Indoor and outdoor requirements

The principal basis on which the department assesses and re-assesses premises and venues for educator registration is their capacity to provide physical environments suitable for early childhood education and care and/or school age care, depending on the ages, number and individual requirements of the children

¹ <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>, accessed 13 Feb 2022)

² *Guide to the National Quality Framework*, p 182

who attend.

To support children's health and safety in the physical environment our family day care service's practices and procedures must follow:

- [Kidsafe SA](#) advice
- [Australian Standards](#) to support building, furniture, materials and equipment
- [Red Nose Australia](#), [SIDS and Kids SA](#)
- [Cancer Council SunSmart](#)
- [Royal Life Saving Australian Water Safety Council](#).

This policy aligns closely with the [family day care health and safety policy \(PDF 230KB\)](#) as it relates to the safety and suitability of the physical environment.

Operational guides that outline the requirements of the physical environment must be followed by educators at all times. These relate to:

- assessments of the family day care premises and venues and their reassessment
- furniture, building, equipment and learning resources for children
- fencing
- glass
- sleep, rest and relaxation (including beds and bedding)
- water hazards and water safety (including swimming pools and spas)
- sun safety and shade
- animals on the premises
- transportation and vehicles.

Educators must meet the requirements that are outlined in the educator premises assessment and any risk identified must be addressed through control measures that reduces or eliminates the risk.

Educators are required to advise departmental staff of any changes to the premise or venue that affects the suitability of the environment.

In addition, venues unlike premises, must also meet the legislated requirement of at least 3.25 square metres of unencumbered indoor space and at least seven (7) square metres of unencumbered outdoor space for each child being educated and cared for at the service.

Safety, cleanliness and maintenance

All our actions and interactions with children must prioritise their health, safety and wellbeing. Educators must have procedures in place to check and ensure the safety of the physical environment, including maintenance and cleaning of the premises, furniture, materials and equipment routinely.

The indoor and outdoor environment is assessed for its safety and suitability in line with the requirements of the Part 4.3 of the National Regulations relating to the physical environment including fencing, toilet,

hygiene and laundry facilities, ventilation and natural light, nappy change arrangements, bedding, water hazards, water features and swimming pools and the management of animals and glass.

Operational guides will reflect current expert advice in relation to the assessment, safety and suitability of the physical environment in a family day care setting. The operational guides are published on the [family day care educator portal](#) (staff login required).

Risk benefit assessments

Risk is a factor in all everyday activities. The aim of managing risk is to minimise negative outcomes, not to eliminate risk and challenge for children. Risk is measured in terms of a combination of the consequence or impact and the likelihood of a negative impact balanced against the benefits. Educators must continuously undertake risk benefit assessments of the physical environment and put in place strategies to mitigate risks and maintain a safe educational and recreational environment.

Environmental responsibility

Educators must make sure they promote and take an active role in contributing to conserving and sustaining the environment and supporting children and young people to become socially and environmentally responsible and show care and respect for the environment. *Children develop positive attitudes and values by engaging in sustainable practices, watching adults around them model sustainable practices, and working together with educators to show care and appreciation for the natural environment*³. The department FDC educators and staff must have regard for the wellbeing of people and the environment.

FDC educators are able to:

- incorporate animals and plants into the program to support children's understanding of ecology and the environment, while keeping children's safety at the forefront
- foster children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land
- share information and support children to access resources about the environment and the impact of human activities on environments
- provide opportunities for children to grow and prepare food, contribute to recycling and waste reduction.

Relationships

Relationships between educators and children that are responsive, respectful and promote children's sense of security and belonging⁴ are critical to supporting their learning, development and wellbeing. So too is supporting children to relate respectfully and collaboratively with each other, so that they learn to

³ Hughes, 2007 in *Guide to the National Quality Framework*, p 202

⁴ <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>, accessed 13 Feb 2022

resolve conflict by communication and to self-regulate. It is a requirement of the National Law that no child in an education and care service may be subjected to any form of corporal punishment; or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances (s166). Responsibility for this provision applies to the department as Approved Provider, nominated supervisors of our services and FDC educators. Failure to ensure this requirement is an offence under the National Law which carries a significant fine.

Similarly, collaborative relationships with families are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children along with community partnerships based on active communication, consultation and collaboration⁵.

The continuity of educators for children is a strength of the FDC service model which we value, support and build on. Consistent with our agreed philosophy, positive and constructive relationships are the bedrock of our service. In addition to the requirements of legislation, policy and operational guides, these are promoted through our code of conduct, [protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people guidelines for staff working or volunteering in education or care settings \(PDF 3.2MB\)](#), induction, support and professional development for educators and staff and through educational programming for children.

Relationships between educators and children

Consistent with National Law, educators are required to interact with children in a way that:

- encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions
- allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child
- gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour
- has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service.

Relationships between children

We are also committed to providing children who we educate and care for with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other. Through their interactions, children learn how their behaviours and actions affect themselves and others. As children develop and learn how to make choices about their behaviour, they develop the skills to regulate their actions independently and understand the benefits of positive behaviour. Educators must nurture respectful and reciprocal relationships among children and support them to value collaboration and teamwork. Educators with their own children must also support, in a fair and consistent way, collaboration and teamwork between their own children and the children at the service. Practices must align with the [sexual behaviour in children and young people procedure and guideline](#).

⁵ <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>, accessed 13 Feb 2022

Partnerships with families and communities

Families

We recognise that families are the primary influence in their children's lives and have strong and diverse beliefs and values regarding the education and care of their children. We acknowledge that children are best placed to learn and develop when relationships between educators and parents are collaborative, respectful and inclusive. We assist families to choose an educator with whom they feel comfortable and welcome them to our service with clear processes for enrolment and orientation. This supports smooth transitions between home and FDC and children's positive sense of self and enables joint problem solving and shared approaches to learning and recreation.

Consistent with our philosophy, we are committed to communicating openly with parents to seek their input on decisions about their children's education and care and to regularly inform parents about their children's experiences, learning and development. Educators are required to display prescribed information about our service for parents to access, such as their educator registration certificate. Educators and staff also make current information available to families about relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing. Concerns and complaints are reviewed and assessed to determine appropriate follow up and actions in accordance with the Management of complaints, incidents, and non-compliance in family day care and respite care program procedure.

Authorisations

As required by the National Law and in the interests of children's health and safety we ensure that parent authorisations are obtained for a range of circumstances that may arise in the provision of family day care. These are for:

- administering medication to children (regulation 92)
- children leaving the premises in the care of the parent or the authorised nominee (regulation 99)
- excursions, including transportation (regulation 102)
- transport provided or arranged by the service (regulation 102D)
- seeking medical treatment for children (regulation 161)
- transportation by an ambulance service (regulation 161).

Parents may also authorise children to:

- self-medicate.

There are occasions when an authorisation may be refused in the interests of a child or children where duty of care to the child or children cannot be fulfilled.

Access to the family day care premises

Consistent with the National Law (regulation 157) we ensure that parents can access their child or children whenever they are being educated and cared for except where it poses a risk to safety, duty of care or contact is prohibited by a Court Order.

Communities

Our services are integral parts of their local communities. Communities are a powerful source of experience and resources for children’s learning and development. They include other agencies and people who provide services to children and families, to assist them to participate in our learning programs or those that our educators can access. For example, libraries and council organised activities in both built and natural environments help to inform and enrich their programs. Our services and educators actively engage with their local communities.

Our FDC service operates as an early childhood program within the department. Staff and educators are encouraged to establish and maintain links across our other early childhood programs, such as preschools and Children’s Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting to support families and children. Educators are encouraged to inform families on the provision of preschool programs in their area to support children accessing preschool.

Roles and responsibilities

The department

The department provides leadership and management to each scheme through a structure that clearly defines roles and responsibilities and levels of decision making in accordance with the National Law.

This policy supports the legislated responsibilities detailed in the National Law and Regulations; such as the statutory positions of approved provider, responsible person, nominated supervisor, educational leader, persons delegated in day-to-day charge, coordinator, educator, and educator assistant.

Head, Office for the Early Years

Delegate under the National Law as the approved provider of the FDC services

Ensures that educators deliver a program to children being educated and cared that is based on an approved learning framework:

- delivered in a manner that accords with the approved learning framework
- is based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child
- and designed to take into account the individual differences of each child.

Director, Child Care Services

Oversee the efficient management of the FDC program and compliance with associated legislation.

Endorse FDC policies and operational guides to ensure the efficient management of the program that meets the strategic direction of the Department for Education.

Assistant Director, Child Care Services

Line manage scheme managers.

Oversee service quality and compliance.

Senior Policy Officer (FDC Programs)

Develop FDC policy, procedures and standards in accordance with the Department for Education policy framework requirements.

Implement appropriate controls to minimise risks in accordance with the Department for Education risk management policy and procedures.

Scheme Manager

Monitor compliance with this policy with all scheme staff.

Ensure that non-compliance with this policy and associated guides is effectively managed through training, support and disciplinary action if necessary.

Team Leader

Provide educational leadership to influence, mentor and build capacity of each educator's knowledge, skills, understanding and delivery of the educational program that reflects on practice.

Work with coordination staff to focus on continuous quality improvement and identify training needs.

Provide educational leadership to influence, mentor and build capacity of each educator's knowledge, skills, understanding and delivery of the educational program that maximises use and design of the physical environment and incorporates health and safety considerations.

Work with coordinators to focus on continuous quality improvement and identify training needs in relation to the use of risk benefit assessments.

Coordinator

Provide mentoring support and information to department FDC educators about:

- children's learning and development
- safety and design for education and learning in their physical environment.

Seek guidance and support from the educational leader to influence, mentor and build capacity of each educator's understanding and delivery of the educational program.

Monitor and assess practice of department FDC educators to ensure compliance with this policy and associated operational guides.

Conduct assessments on an educator's environment prior to initial registration and at least annually to

determine its appropriateness for the provision of education and care.

Educator

Deliver care and education to children and young people in line with the national approved learning frameworks.

Document, assess, evaluate and plan for children's learning and development.

Undertake professional development to attain and maintain an understanding of current research and pedagogy relating to children's learning.

Comply with the National Law and the National Regulations.

Undertake ongoing risk benefit assessments of the physical environment and implementing actions to maintain a safe education and care environment.

Report a reasonable suspicion/concern of harm and/or risk to CARL (131478) as per RRHAN-EC training and mandated notifier obligations.

Monitoring, reviewing and reflecting on each child's development and continually adapt the physical environment to their evolving capabilities, interests and ability.

Definitions

governance

The systems in place to support the effective management and operation of the service, consistent with the service's statement of philosophy.

service philosophy

A statement from the approved provider that outlines the purpose and principles under which the service operates.

Supporting information

[Being, Belonging and Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework \(PDF 24.9MB\)](#)

[Guide to the NQF](#)

[My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care \(PDF 27.1MB\)](#)

[National Quality Standard](#)

Related legislation

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011, Schedule 1, Education and](#)

[Care Services National Law \(SA\)](#)

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#)

[Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Act 2016](#)

Related policies

[Family day care fee and levy charging procedure \(PDF 422KB\)](#)

[Family day care health and safety policy \(PDF 230KB\)](#)

[Family day care governance, leadership and staffing policy \(PDF 230KB\)](#)

[Management of complaints, incidents and non-compliance in family day care and respite care program procedure \(PDF 726KB\)](#)

[Safeguarding children and young people policy \(PDF 826KB\)](#)

[Financial management and compliance framework \(PDF 357KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[SA Treasurer's Instructions](#)

Related operational guides

[Animals on the premises \(PDF 216KB\)](#)

Beds, cots and safe sleep environments (under development)

[Fencing and barriers \(PDF 159KB\)](#)

General home equipment and appliances (under development)

[Glass \(PDF 175KB\)](#)

Gym and exercise equipment (under development)

Non-standard hours of care and overnight care (under development)

Outdoor play equipment and softball (under development)

[Relationships with children \(PDF 145KB\)](#)

Resources for Play Based Learning (under development)

Safe sleep practices (under development)

[Sun safety and shade \(PDF 179KB\)](#)

Trampolines (under development)

Transportation (under development)

Vehicles (under development)

[Water safety and practices \(PDF 156KB\)](#)

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Revision record

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Amendment(s): Removed bullet referring to parents authorising children to leave FDC premises alone from 'Authorisations' sub-heading to align with policy content and as practice does not occur.

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Contact

Family Day Care Programs

Email: education.FDCCorporate@sa.gov.au

Phone: 8226 1600