Standard
Physical Environment in Family Day Care including beds, fencing and safety

Please note this standard is mandatory and DECD FDC staff (including DECD educators) are required to adhere to the content.

Summary
This standard outlines the physical environment requirements for operating a DECD operated FDC service.

Table 1 - Document details

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication date</th>
<th>September 2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>File number</td>
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<td>South Australia Development Act 1993</td>
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<td>Family Day Care Operations Policy</td>
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<td>Family Day Care Standard – Children’s Health and Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Version</td>
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<td>FDC Policy – Water Safety</td>
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<td>FDC Fact sheets</td>
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<td>• Beds and bedding</td>
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<td>• Safe sleeping for babies</td>
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<td>• Sustainable practices</td>
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<td>• Wheels</td>
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<td>Policy officer (position)</td>
<td>Senior Policy Officer, Childcare Policy and Programs</td>
</tr>
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<td>Policy officer (phone)</td>
<td>8226 2546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy sponsor (position)</td>
<td>Director, Early Childhood Services</td>
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<td>Executive director responsible (position and office)</td>
<td>Executive Director, Early Years and Child Development, Department for Education and Child Development</td>
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<td>Applies to</td>
<td>All DECD Family Day Care staff and educators that are registered under one of the department’s Family Day Care schemes</td>
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<td>family day care, standard, safety, safe environments, bed, fence, overnight care, play equipment, risk management, sleeping, babies, children, soft fall, vehicles, water safety, wheels</td>
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<td>Status</td>
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<td>Approved by</td>
<td>Senior Executive Group</td>
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<td>March 2017</td>
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<td>Review date</td>
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Table 2 - Revision record

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<th>Revision description</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Addition of hyperlink to the newly released ‘Safe sleeping for infants and young children procedure’</td>
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# Table of Contents

- Standard
- Physical Environment in Family Day Care including beds, fencing and safety
- Summary
- Table of Contents
- 1. Title
- 2. Purpose
- 3. Scope
- 4. Standard detail
  - 4.1 Home Safety
    - 4.1.1 Glass and TV Requirements
  - 4.2 Water Safety
    - 4.2.1 General
    - 4.2.2 Swimming Pools and Spas
  - 4.3 Storage
    - 4.3.1 General
    - 4.3.2 Gym equipment
    - 4.3.3 Button batteries
  - 4.4 Fencing
  - 4.5 Play Equipment
    - 4.5.1 Equipment with wheels
    - 4.5.2 Trampolines
    - 4.5.3 Maintenance inspection
  - 4.6 Poisonous and dangerous plants
  - 4.7 Stairs and balustrades
  - 4.8 Nursery Furniture
  - 4.9 Beds and Bedding
    - 4.9.1 Overnight Care
  - 4.10 Sustainable Practices
- 5. Roles and responsibilities
- 6. Monitoring, evaluation and review
- 7. Definitions and abbreviations
- 8. Supporting documents
- 9. References
1. Title
Physical Environment in Family Day Care including beds, fencing and safety.

2. Purpose
To outline the requirements for physical environment that educators are required to comply with as a condition of their DECD FDC registration in accordance with the requirements of Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011 [the Act] and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 [the Regulations].

3. Scope
All DECD FDC staff, educators registered under a DECD FDC scheme, educator assistants approved under a DECD FDC scheme.

4. Standard detail
This Standard is underpinned by the NQS. The NQS consists of seven quality areas, each containing standards and elements, against which education and care services are rated.

The seven quality areas covered by the NQS are:

- QA1 Educational program and practice
- QA2 Children's health and safety
- QA3 Physical environment
- QA4 Staffing arrangements
- QA5 Relationships with children
- QA6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- QA7 Leadership and service management

This Standard focuses on Quality Area 3; the physical environment being safe, suitable and providing a rich and diverse range of experiences promoting children’s learning and development.

4.1 Home Safety
Standards are useful, however they cannot inform expectations of every aspect of a home-based environment. Educators must continuously undertake risk assessments of the physical environment and implement actions to maintain a safe environment. Refer FDC Standard – Children’s Health and Safety (Section 4.2).

DECD FDC staff will undertake a premises assessment at an educator’s home prior to registering an educator.

Once registered a premises assessment will be conducted at least every year thereafter or as required by FDC staff. It is the responsibility of FDC educators to address matters identified through the assessment.

FDC Educators are responsible for undertaking ongoing and regular home safety checks to ensure that the environment and equipment that children have access to, is safe and in good repair.
4.1.1 Glass and TV Requirements

- Glazed areas in the environment accessible to children 0.75m or less above ground level must be either:
  - Fully glazed with safety glass
  - treated with a product that prevents glass from shattering if broken
  - guarded by barriers that prevents a child striking or falling against the glass.

- Flat screen or large TVs that are accessible to young children, are to be secured to a stable surface (wall or horizontal surface) in such a way that prevent them from falling or being pulled over.

4.2 Water Safety

General water safety tips and links to useful information are available in the Education Standards Board Water Safety fact sheet. This information forms part of this standard.

4.2.1 General

Children must be actively supervised at all times when in and around water. Active supervision refers to direct and constant monitoring requiring focused and intentional observation of children at all times.

Young children must not have unsupervised access to any hot water supply (it is recommended that child-resistant covers are installed on taps and / or a tempering valve is fitted).

Water containers including nappy change buckets, eskees, buckets of water, are to be securely covered or inaccessible to children.

All containers / equipment that can collect water (for example paddling pools, water play troughs, buckets) are to be emptied immediately after use and stored in such a way so as to not fill with water when not in use.

Children are to be supervised in the bath at all times. Educators are to remain within arm's reach of young children while being bathed and/or water is still in the bath. Older children should be adequately supervised, with consideration to their privacy and dignity.

Premises adjacent to or providing access to, any water hazards (eg dams, creeks) are made inaccessible to children through a child-resistant barrier or fence at a minimum of 1.2m high.

Fish ponds and water features are to have a rigid barrier over the water to prevent children from climbing or falling in them. Mesh over ponds needs to be able to support the weight of a child.

Where children undertake swimming, or where there is an identified significant water hazard, specific staffing ratios apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Ratio of Adult for each child</th>
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<tr>
<td>Children under the age of 3 years</td>
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<td>Children over the age of 3 years, but less than 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children over the age of 5 years</td>
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</table>

Note: Where a child has limited swimming capabilities, as assessed and notified by the parents through written permission, a ratio of 1:1 applies regardless of the age of the child.

4.2.2 Swimming Pools and Spas

All swimming pools (including portable/temporary pools) and spas are required to have isolation fencing and gates that comply with Australian Standard (AS1926:2012). Refer to the Royal Life Saving
Association pool and safety fact checklist.

A current compliance certificate for pools and spas is required at initial registration and renewed every two years. The certificate must be provided by an independent building surveyor or local government pool/spa assessor.

Any changes or modifications to a pool/spa fence or barrier must be documented and advice of this documentation provided to your FDC Coordinator.

Educators must actively supervise children near fenced pools and/or spas by being physically in proximity to children. Active supervision refers to direct and constant monitoring requiring focused and intentional observation of children at all times.

Educators are responsible for supervision of all family members and visitors to ensure that safe practices relating to water hazards, in particular ensuring that the gate is locked by the use of an approved (AS1926:20) self-closing child safety latch at all times.

Pool filters, skimmer boxes and pool chemicals must be inaccessible to children. Refer ‘Is your swimming pool kid safe’ fact sheet.

Prior to a child accessing an educator’s swimming pool, written permission is required from a parent which includes a summary of the swimming capabilities of each child. This permission is to be renewed at least annually.

Pools and spas that are empty and no longer used will need to be filled in with a suitable substance or removed from the premises. All filtration systems need to be removed.

4.3 Storage

4.3.1 General

Cleaning materials, disinfectants, poisons and other dangerous, flammable or hazardous substances are to be stored securely, inaccessible to children. First Aid equipment and medications should also be stored securely.

Solvents such as methylated spirits or turpentine must not be kept in the kitchen due to the increased fire danger.

In addition to being inaccessible to children, harmful products and medications are to be kept in their original containers (ie not in a drink bottle, plastic container).

Any equipment or product that is harmful to children, including the contents of a shed/s, gas bottle/s, lawn mowers and adult garden tools are kept locked away from children.

Soiled and wet cloth nappies, linen etc stored in containers inaccessible to children.

Waste materials (such as disposable nappies, gloves, cloths) are to be stored in a plastic-lined bin, inaccessible to children.

Any freestanding shelving or storage unit that is accessible to children must be risk assessed and treated to ensure that the item cannot fall over or be pulled over by children.

4.3.2 Gym equipment

Gym equipment is not to be stored in areas accessible to children.

4.3.3 Button batteries

Coin lithium button batteries can cause severe injuries when swallowed. These batteries reside inside many small electronic devices (such as car remotes, electronic candles, watches, singing greeting cards and other electronic devices) and pose a serious risk to young children. Button batteries must be inaccessible to young children. Refer Button Batteries Kidsafe SA information.

4.4 Fencing

The approved premises perimeter fences are to be of a height and suitable material so children cannot
go through, over or under it.

The minimum fence height is 1.2m.

Where features that reduce the effective height of a fence, such as raised garden beds are present, the fence height must be adjusted accordingly to meet the minimum of 1.2m. Features such as seats, pot plants, planter boxes and equipment are not to be placed within 500mm of the fence.

The height of fence is to be determined by the associated risk on the other side (eg major road, road with high traffic flow, dam, creek, dangerous dog etc).

Suitable perimeter fencing materials are of a height and design that children cannot go through, over and under. This may include:

- Capped Colorbond panels
- Swimming pool fencing
- Capped corrugated iron
- Lattice covered with shade cloth to prevent children getting a foothold
- Timber pickets
- Chicken wire or ‘ringlock’ wire fixed to a solid frame, where approved by the FDC coordinator.

Unsuitable fencing materials include:

- Any fencing where a child can get a foot/handhold to climb
- Uncapped corrugated iron or Colorbond
- Single-stranded wire
- Barbed wire
- Electric fencing.

All sharp edges on fences (including gates) that are in reach of children are to be covered.

Any fencing to create enclosures for animals must prevent children having any contact with the animal.

Gate securing devices (the latch) is to be high enough to be out of reach of young children (minimum 1.5m from the ground) or of a type that cannot be opened by young children. Where a gate is provided, it is recommended that the gate have a self-closing latch.

### 4.5 Play Equipment

DECD encourages the use of natural materials and nature play for children’s play environments.

Educators are to ensure that all outdoor play equipment on an educator’s approved premises has a documented risk benefit assessment.

Equipment that has a fall height above 600mm is to be located on loose fill (soft fall / bark chips) in such a way that there is a sufficient fall zone. The loose fill must be compliant with AS/NZ 4422, namely is produced by a supplier as playground soft fall.

The fall zone area is to extend outward from the perimeter of the equipment in all directions at a distance equal to the height of the equipment.

The soft fall / bark chips are to be maintained at a minimum depth of 300mm for the fall zone area (noting that bark chips settle and compress over time and such it is recommended that they are installed and maintained at a greater depth).

Equipment is not to have a fall height above 1.8m.

#### 4.5.1 Equipment with wheels

Wheeled toys and equipment should be offered under controlled circumstances under active
supervision.

Where children use bicycles, scooters, rollerblades and/or skateboards (or similar), the equipment must be age appropriate and correctly fitted safety gear must be worn, including a helmet that complies with the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 2063).

Ride-on toys for young children may be suitable for use without safety equipment, however educators are required to actively supervise children on wheeled toys.

Wheeled equipment is not to be used on a public road. Motorised wheeled ride-on toys are not to be used.

4.5.2 Trampolines

Trampolines must comply with the Australian Standard (AS4989:2015) and be regularly inspected for wear and tear (ie loose springs, frayed nets, rusted frames). The frame and springs are completely covered with frame padding that is a completely different colour to the trampoline bed.

If the trampoline does not have safety netting, it needs a clear fall zone that has a compliant under surfacing and is at least 2 metres wide on all sides. If safety netting is installed, under-surfacing is only required in the fall zone around the entry/exit point.

Ensure only one child at a time uses the trampoline, that they jump in the centre of the mat and that they climb, not jump, off the trampoline. Refer to the Kidsafe SA brochure on trampoline safety. Conduct a risk assessment for the trampoline, considering wear and tear, clearance above the trampoline bed and the fall zone.

4.5.3 Maintenance inspection

Educators are required to regularly inspect all equipment for wear and tear and take appropriate action to remove from the care environment or replace equipment.

4.6 Poisonous and dangerous plants

The following plants are considered to be highly poisonous for children and are to be removed or made inaccessible to children:

- Castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*)
- Coral tree (*Erythrina genus*)
- Common/pink oleander (*Nerium oleander*)
- Yellow oleander (*Thevetia peruviana*)
- Deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*)
- Rhus or wax tree (*Toxicodendron succedaneum*)
- White cedar tree (*Melia azedarach*)

(Extract from dangerous plants checklist – refer reference 9.6 for the complete information sheet)

Other plants, such as roses, can be considered dangerous depending on their location. Educators must conduct a risk assessment and take appropriate action to ensure safety of children.

4.7 Stairs and balustrades

The design of stairs and balustrades should be in accordance with relevant codes or standards including the National Construction Code of Australia.

All stairways, ramps, decks, access paths or external balconies 1m or more above the floor / ground need to be fixed to a wall or a balustrade.

Walls or balustrades should:
be at least 865mm above the front edge of stair treads
• not have horizontal rails that facilitate climbing.

Stairs and balustrades are to have openings no larger than 125mm between the vertical rails and between the base of the balustrade and the floor or front edge of the stair treads.
Stair barriers (permanent or portable) are required. At least one is required at each stair well.

4.8 Nursery Furniture

Educators are to refer to product safety advice when purchasing nursery furniture. Refer ACCC Keeping Baby Safe: A Guide to Nursery Furniture.

4.9 Beds and Bedding

Each child is to have a place to sleep that is welcoming, clean, comfortable and safe. This place must not be accessed by other family members or be used as a walkway to other areas of the house.

Within DECD FDC services prams, pushers, bouncinettes and rockers must not be used as a sleeping environment, even if a parent/carer requests this. A pram is not a suitable place for babies to sleep. If a baby will only settle whilst in the pram, educators should remain with the baby and when the baby is asleep, then place baby into a safe cot.

Bed linen is freshly washed for each child for first time that the child sleeps in them (ie washed at least weekly, or as required).

Beds or cots are to be appropriate for the age and size of each child, noting that children generally move from a cot to a bed from 2 years of age. The use of airbeds, camp beds and folding beds is not permitted.

Cots and portable cots must meet the Australian mandatory standard for cots (AS/NZS 2172) and the Australian mandatory standard for portable cots (AS/NZS 2195). This includes ensuring that the mattress fits snugly, with less than 20mm of space between the mattress and the cot sides or ends.

Infant mattresses are to comply with the Infant mattress safety standard, refer ESB Infant mattress safety standard fact sheet.

Unless agreed with parent/s (where siblings are similar ages) there is to be one bed for each child.

The privacy and dignity of children is to be considered when configuring sleeping arrangements.
Beds and cots are to have an unobstructed gap, end to end and side to side of at least 70cm. Cots are to be positioned in such a way that children cannot access any blind or curtain cords, electrical controls or other hazards).

Safe sleeping practices, as advised by SIDS and Kids, are to be followed at all times (refer reference 9.1 for a safe sleeping information brochure). Additionally, educators are to refer to Kidsafe SA Safe Sleeping for infants fact sheet and the DECD Safe sleeping for infants and young children procedure.

4.9.1 Overnight Care

In addition to the requirements listed at 4.9 above, the following applies to overnight care.

All educators are required to monitor children who are sleeping overnight in the care environment.

Educators must be approved by FDC staff prior to offering overnight care.

Educators must discuss sleeping arrangements for children with families. Parents are to approve the sleeping arrangements for their children when sleeping overnight.

DECD FDC staff will monitor overnight care arrangement with educators and families.

Beds, cots and mattresses are required for children in overnight care.

Bunk beds must comply with the Australian Standards AS/NZS 4420. Bunk beds may only be used for children over the age of 9 years.

Children are not to sleep in a room with another adult (including the educator), unless the child is a young baby and the arrangement is approved by DECD FDC staff. Children must be on their own sleep surface.

A family member’s bed is not to be used for overnight care where that person must relocate to another place in the home unless approved by FDC staff in exceptional circumstances.

4.10 Sustainable Practices

Educators are to ensure that they promote and take an active role in sustainable practices which assist children and young people to become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

Sustainable practices are things we can do to help our communities, suburbs, towns, cities, farms, parks and open spaces. DECD FDC educators and staff are to have regard for the wellbeing of people and the environment, both now and for the future.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Table 3 - Roles and responsibilities

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<thead>
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<th>Role</th>
<th>Authority/responsibility for</th>
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<tr>
<td>DECD FDC staff</td>
<td>Conducting an assessment on the environment of each registered FDC educator prior to initial registration and at least annually.</td>
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<td>Monitoring environments of registered educators to ensure compliance.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing mentoring support and information to educators regarding safety in their physical environment.</td>
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</table>
Role | Authority/responsibility for
--- | ---
FDC Educator | Compliance with *Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011* (“the National Law”) and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*. Undertaking ongoing risk assessments of the physical environment and implementing actions to maintain a safe environment. Seeking advice and support from DECD FDC staff.
Families | Approving overnight sleeping arrangements

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The effectiveness of this standard will be monitored by DECD Early Childhood Services, in consultation with DECD FDC scheme managers. Feedback and queries related to this standard can be forwarded to the Policy Officer, Childcare Policy and Programs [DECD.FDCFeedback@sa.gov.au](mailto:DECD.FDCFeedback@sa.gov.au).

This standard will be reviewed every three years by DECD Early Childhood Services, or earlier if required.

7. Definitions and abbreviations

Table 4 - Definitions and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Actively supervise</td>
<td>direct and constant monitoring requiring focused and intentional observation of children at all times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balustrade</td>
<td>A railing at the side of a staircase, balcony or deck to prevent people falling</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECD</td>
<td>Department for Education and Child Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECD Corporate Office</td>
<td>Staff working in the building at 31 Flinders Street and regional offices, includes DECD FDC staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>DECD FDC registered educator or educator assistant</td>
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<td>Fall height</td>
<td>Measured from the standing surface of the equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDC</td>
<td>Family Day Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glazed areas</td>
<td>Windows, doors, mirrors, furniture, wardrobes, fish tanks, aquariums, shower screens with glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaccessible to children</td>
<td>Children are not able to reach, touch or climb on</td>
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<td>NQS</td>
<td>National Quality Standard</td>
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<td>Older child</td>
<td>School aged child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overnight care</td>
<td>Care that occurs between 9pm and 6am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swimming pool</td>
<td>Any excavation or structure containing water to a depth of 300mm and used primarily for wading, swimming, paddling or similar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young child</td>
<td>Child not yet attending school</td>
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8. Supporting documents

- [DECD Family Day Care Operations Policy](#)
- [Standard – Children’s Learning in Family Day Care](#)
- [Standard – Children’s Health and Safety in Family Day Care](#)
- [Standard – Educators, Families and Community in Family Day Care](#)
- [Standard – Service Management in Family Day Care](#)
- [Fee and Charging procedure](#)
- [DECD Safe sleeping for infants and young children procedure](#)

9. References

9.1 [SIDS and kids – safe sleeping](#)
9.2 [Kidsafe - Playground equipment and surfacing (main changes to the standards 2014)](#)
9.3 [Kidsafe - Playground surfacing](#)
9.4 [Kidsafe fact sheet - furniture tipovers](#)
9.5 [Kidsafe - Button Batteries](#)
9.6 [Raising Children Network - Dangerous Plants](#)
9.7 [Education Standards Board of South Australia, Fact Sheet - Children’s Health and Safety, Infant Mattress Standard](#)
9.8 [National Quality Authority](#)
9.9 [Australian Standard 1170.1 (balustrade regulations and standards)](#)
9.10 [Australian Standard 4685:2014 (playground equipment and surfacing)](#)
9.11 [AS 4989:2015 (trampolines for domestic use)](#)
9.12 [ISO 8124-1:2014 (Safety of Toys)](#)
9.14 [Trampoline Safety – Kidsafe](#)