

KINDERGARTEN CLOSURE POLICY 2022

Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy will provide a clear set of guidelines and procedures to:

- ensure all children attending **Friend Street Kindergarten** are provided with a safe environment
- ensure all reasonable steps are taken by the Approved Provider, educators and staff to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children attending the service
- provide a clear and consistent approach to be followed in times of local emergencies that require either pre-emptive and voluntary closure of the service to maintain the safety and protection of children, staff and families.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Friend Street Kindergarten has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all children are safe in their care, and will provide training, resources, information and guidance to support this. **Friend Street Kindergarten** is committed to:

- ensuring that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times while also promoting their learning and development
- fulfilling its duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) obligations under the law by protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm
- ensuring that people caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child, and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing at all times
- supporting the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of **Friend Street Kindergarten**.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Emergency procedures are required to be developed and these form part of the service's overall Emergency Management Plan (EMP). It is suggested that based on the risk assessment undertaken by the proprietor that this plan should also deal with and communicate potential closures that may arise in order to safeguard children and staff of the service. A closure policy should be established to form part of the EMP and be used to communicate to parents and staff the services intention to close should the risk be imminent.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2012
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (Vic):
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (Vic):
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety*
 - Standard 2.3: Each child is protected
 - Element 2.3.1: Children are adequately supervised at all times
 - Element 2.3.2: Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury

- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
 - Element 3.1.2: Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management
 - Standard 7.1: Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community
 - Element 7.1.5: Adults working with children and those engaged in management of the service or residing on the premises are fit and proper
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Working with Children Regulations 2006* (Vic)

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 *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Child: In Victoria, under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, a child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

Department: Department of Education Training (DET)

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. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility of education and care services to provide children with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury.

Emergency: An emergency is any event which has an impact on your ability to care for or educate children under your supervision. Unlike individual injuries, accidents, or incidents, emergencies are usually major events requiring special consideration and careful planning to ensure the safety of children and adults (see Risk Assessment – Attachment 2). Examples of potential emergencies are:

- Bushfires
- Internal Fires and Smoke
- Severe Storms and Internal Flooding
- Pandemic and Communicable Diseases
- Earthquake
- Chemical Hazard or Gas Leak
- Violent Incidents
- Bomb Threats

Pre-emptive closure: Pre-emptive closures during fire season are pre-determined based on the high risk register and the trigger of 'Code – Red'. The Department will provide children's services up to three days warning; however implementation of the services EMP may be based on less warning. Funded services will experience no financial disadvantage regarding per capita funding subsidy for pre-emptive closure.

Voluntary Closure: Voluntary closure occurs when a decision is made by the approved provider to close the service with or without receiving advice from the Department. Where funded services have opted to voluntarily close at times other than pre-emptive closures, to ensure the safety of children and adults, the service should demonstrate that the closure has been locally researched and discussed with the department regional office. Generally such closures will not impact on kindergarten funding from the Department.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

- *The Kindergarten Guide 2014* DEECD
- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Governance and Management Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- ensuring parents/guardians have completed the enrolment form including details of authorised nominees, and permission forms for excursions and administration of medication
- determining when an emergency requires the voluntary closure of the service in order to protect children, staff and families
- continually monitoring the status of the emergency and determining when it is safe to re-open the service to staff, children and families
- in the event of an on-going situation take advice from the Department and extend the closure of the service in accordance with their advice.
- ensuring that all staff, children and families are notified of the closure as soon as the decision to close has been made (See Attachment 1 Notification Procedures)
- in the event of extended closure ensure that staff, children and all families are continually updated
- ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children prior to the re-opening of the service
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards
- implementing and practising emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*)
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring parents/guardians have completed the enrolment form including details of authorised nominees, and permission forms for excursions and administration of medication
- informing the approved provider immediately when an emergency arises
- continually monitoring the status of the emergency
- ensuring that all staff, children and families are notified of the closure as soon as the decision to close has been made (See Attachment 1 Notification Procedures)
- in the event of extended closure ensure that staff, children and all families are continually updated
- ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children prior to the re-opening of the service
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards
- implementing and practising emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*)

- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the approved provider, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy
- ensuring educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

Certified Supervisors and other educators/staff are responsible for:

- conducting a daily check of the building, ensuring all children are signed out of the service, doors and windows are closed and locked, and appliances are switched off etc.
- ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy
- keeping up to date and complying with any changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with this policy

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

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, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns
- 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 (Regulation 172(2)).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Closure Policy Notification Procedures
- Attachment 2: Risk Assessment

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of **Friend Street Kindergarten** on 9 March 2022

REVIEW DATE: MAY 2024

ATTACHMENT 1

Kindergarten Closure Notification Procedures

Should an Emergency arise which requires the voluntary closure of the service the following procedure will be implemented:

Developing Emergency Situation Prior to Service Opening for the day

- 1) A decision should be made as early as is possible on whether the centre will open for day. In making this decision the following steps should be followed:
 - a. Approved provider in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor discuss the possibility of closure, taking into account all information gathered such as health warnings or alerts, advice of extent of affected areas, notifications from other sources ie. local radio, local councils and government departments, closure of businesses/ schools in the area and obtain advice regarding possible hazards and health consequences.
 - b. If it is decided to close the service the nominated supervisor is required to inform all staff not yet at the service of the closure and contact any emergency services and the Emergency Management Coordinator at the Department's regional office.
 - c. The approved provider will contact all families by phone to explain the situation and advise them that the service will be closed. If a family is unable to be reached by phone, an SMS or email will be sent directly to families and they will be requested to contact the approved provider immediately to confirm they have received the advice.
 - d. A notice will be displayed on the entrance door to the premises, if a staff member has attended the premises.
 - e. To cover staffing cost commitments, fees will be charged as normal.
 - f. No extra sessions will be provided in lieu of the day/s of closure.

Emergency Situation Developing During Normal Operating Hours

- a. The nominated supervisor should follow the appropriate action as outlined in the Emergency Management Plan and act according to instructions from authorised personnel.
- b. Nominated Supervisor to evacuate all children from the premises to a safe emergency assembly point.
- c. Nominated supervisor to contact the relevant emergency services if required.
- d. Nominated supervisor to contact the approved provider who will in turn contact parents and advise them to collect their children immediately from the service.
- e. The Nominated supervisor to contact the Emergency Management Coordinator and the Department's regional office.
- f. The approved provider and nominated supervisor to assess the situation and inform families and staff when the service will re-open.

ATTACHMENT 2 RISK ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX A: RISK ASSESSMENT



Complete the following Risk Assessment Matrix, which is a table that can be used for assessing the consequence and likelihood of risks:

Assess each of the following hazards and any others you think relevant:

6.

- **BUSHFIRES**
- **SEVERE STORMS AND FLOODING**
- **INTRUDERS**
- **CRIMINAL INCIDENTS**
- **EARTHQUAKE**
- **BOMB THREAT**
- **SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT/VEHICLE INCIDENT**

7.

8.

- **INTERNAL FIRES AND SMOKE**
- **PANDEMICS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**
- **INCIDENTS**
- **HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE RELEASE: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE FACILITY GROUNDS**
- **OFF-SITE FACILITY EMERGENCY**
- **OTHER**

The objective of Risk Assessment is to separate lower priority risks from the major high priority risks. For each risk identified determine the local context and analyse the risk in terms of impact and likelihood, considering the range of potential impacts and how likely they are to occur.

Likelihood	Very High				
	High				
	Moderate	Storm and flooding	Communicable diseases		
	Low	Intruders, Criminal incidents, earthquake, bomb Threat, bushfire	Off-site emergency	H S release	Internal fire and smoke, bus/vehicle incident
		Low	Moderate	High	Very High
	Impact				

Priority Risks Schedule

The estimated levels of risk are then prioritised into a list of the risks requiring further action. Insert each of the hazards into the appropriate coloured Priority Box.

Priority	Hazard specific risks
Very High	
High	
Moderate	<i>Communicable disease, bushfire, internal fire and smoke, H S release, bus/vehicle incident</i>
Low	<i>Storm, intruders, criminal incidents, earthquake, bomb threat bushfires, off-site emergency</i>



Complete the following Priority Hazards Table, which is a list of the top three Priority Risks for your facility obtained as a result of the analysis of the Risk Assessment Matrix.

PRIORITY HAZARDS TABLE

1. Communicable disease
2. Internal fire/smoke
3. Storm