

SECTION 3 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

3.5 Emergency Procedures Policy (Evacuation & Invacuation)

INTRODUCTION

When an emergency situation occurs, it is important that the situation be handled carefully and with consideration for all involved. The emergency, no matter what the circumstances, has the potential to cause a ripple effect within the centre and therefore the manner in which the situation is handled is vital. Supporting children to cope with an emergency situation requires careful planning and cohesive implementation.

Characteristics of an emergency situation may be that they are sudden, unexpected, dangerous or distressing. Emergency situations may challenge educator's beliefs, and the policies and procedures of the Centre. Normality is threatened. The situation may induce a strong emotional reaction that could have the ability to hamper clear thinking.

Potential reactions

When presented with a crisis our mind and bodies respond quickly. This is reflected in a change in our mental state; how we think and how we act. This reaction may be varied in different people, and until experienced, is often an unknown reaction. For this reason, it is important that policies and procedures are in place and are well practiced by educators and children.

Signs of panic that may be exhibited:

- Shallow breathing: your breath becomes shallow and the person can feel like there is not enough air to fill their lungs;
- Increased heart rate: person may feel their heart beating faster than normal, may report pounding heartbeat or palpitations
- Sweating: hot or cold sweats are common;
- Discomfort in the chest area: including chest pain or tight feeling in the chest;
- Nausea: a bloated feeling or abdominal discomfort;
- Behavioural changes;
- Confusion or speech difficulties;
- Trembling muscles or uncontrollable shaking: both visible or just a feeling of shaking all over;
- An urgent need to go to the toilet; and/or
- Children may become clingy or withdrawn.

Having a clear plan for the management of emergency situations assists educators to handle these calmly and effectively, reducing the risk of further harm or damage. Educators need to be aware that when confronted with a crisis, children will be less capable of concentrating. They may be anxious and more attuned to nonverbal cues such as tone of voice, body posture and facial expressions. Educators need to monitor children closely. **If adults are unable to remain calm, they should be removed from the direct care of children.**

MANAGING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Examples of emergency situations which may affect The Gums:

- Power outage
- Accident or serious injury to child or staff member where medical attention or hospitalisation is required
- Burst water main or pipe
- Fire
- Flood
- Severe storm or dust storm
- Atmospheric contaminant
- Dangerous animal, insect or reptile
- Violent or potentially violent individual
- Bomb threat
- Siege or hostage situation
- Gas leak
- Lost, missing, unaccounted for or abandoned child
- Fatal incident involving a child, family member or staff member at the Centre

Power outage

A power outage is not a preventable occurrence. It can happen at any time and is usually unexpected. Should a power outage occur at The Gums, educators must remain calm and continue to reassure children.

Educators should assess the situation carefully and if there are no power lines down or any danger of risk of harm to children, move children toward natural lighting or outside to allow them to continue their activities.

The Responsible person should first check the circuit board located in the Toddler Room storeroom to ensure all circuits are active. If the circuit board appears to be working, contact the local energy supplier to ascertain if the outage is temporary or if further planning is required to ensure children's wellbeing. If the situation will take time to be resolved, the responsible person will decide:

- Are children at risk of harm from the lack of power? If they are, contact families and recommend that the children are collected;
- Explain to families that the ongoing lack of electricity could affect the safety of the children, as there is no heating, cooling, some phones may not work, no refrigeration and no cooking facilities; and reassure families that service provision will continue as soon as the electricity returns and families will be notified when this occurs.

Severe storm conditions

In cases when a severe storm occurs:

- Liaise closely with the SES;
- Ensure the building is well secured with windows closed, entry doors cleared and accessible for families to enter the premises;
- Have a radio on with a staff member listening for updates;
- Follow recommendations given by emergency services;
- Contact families stating that the education and care service will be closed as roads are to become inaccessible due to the conditions;
- Ensure that all children and staff are signed out as they leave the premises;

- Maintain the child: educator ratio. As the numbers of children drop, encourage staff to leave;
- Make staff and educators who travel the furthest a priority to leave;
- The last two staff members check the building to ensure all children and adults have left the premises;
- Advise emergency services that there are no longer any people in the building; put up signs on front door "This building has been evacuated";
- The last staff members leave the premises together.

Dangerous insects, animals or reptiles

Prevention is the best solution. Schedule regular pest control visits to reduce the risk of insects, animals or reptiles residing at the education and care service. Rats, mice and other vermin can gain access to buildings through ventilation panels, cracks in walls, edges of roofs, wall, floor, door and window junctions, or the access points for electrical wiring and plumbing. They may also live and nest in framed walls, sub-floor spaces, ceiling spaces, under stoves, and around hot water systems. Always keep premises clean and eliminate any open or uncontained food sources. Have the number of your local council, local vermin controller or re-locator and National Parks and Wildlife Service available in your emergency directory and contact them to ask for support. Move children to a safe area or it may be necessary to follow the Invacuation (lock down) or Evacuation procedure if the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.

Lost or abandoned child

Lost child from the Centre

1. Staff must carry out a thorough check of all outside play areas and all rooms in the building.
2. Staff must try to ascertain if the child was removed from the Centre or has been allowed out through the front door or an outside gate.
3. The Responsible person will take charge whilst other staff supervise the remaining children.
4. The Responsible person shall organise to check the immediate vicinity of the Centre, including the carpark, bush block and up and down Maynard Road.
5. The Responsible person will then notify police of the exact location and provide a photo of the child if possible.
6. The Responsible person will notify the parents, then assist the police with the search if required.
7. The Responsible person (if not the Director) will notify the Director.
8. The Responsible person will notify ACECQA as Serious Incident Notification.

Lost child from an Excursion

1. The Team Leader will take charge whilst other staff supervise the remaining children.
2. The Team Leader shall check the immediate vicinity, and retrace steps and notify the centre.
3. The Team Leader or Responsible Person (at the Gums) will then notify police of the exact location and provide a photo of the child if possible.
4. Remaining staff should return to the Centre with the other children.
5. The Responsible Person will notify the parents, then assist the police with the search if required.
7. The Responsible Person (if not the Director) will notify the Director.
8. The Responsible person will notify ACECQA as Serious Incident Notification.

Fatal incident

If an emergency results in the death of a child, educator or other adult, it will be distressing for all involved. It is important that the needs of children and adults are the priority. Remove children from the area and be open and honest with the children that you are concerned about the individual's wellbeing. Answer any questions as well as you can.

The Responsible Person must call emergency services immediately. If the situation involved a child at The Gums, the Responsible Person must contact the family and state that there has been an emergency situation involving their child. Let them know that you have called for an ambulance and will meet them at the hospital. **Only medical services and practitioners can pronounce a person as deceased.**

The Responsible Person must ensure that they notify ACECQA as per Serious Incident Notification requirements relating to an emergency situation involving children or staff.

EVACUATION / INVACUATION (Lock in) PROCEDURES

Process:

1. The Centre will practice the Emergency Procedures of Evacuation/Invacuation at least 3 monthly to ensure that staff and children know how to react in an emergency situation.
2. Records will be taken and filed in the Emergency Evacuation/Invacuation folder. Records will be taken on the appropriate form, either (a) Evaluation of Emergency Evacuation Practice Report, (b) Evaluation of Emergency Invacuation Practice Report (see attached)
3. At all times the staff's first and foremost responsibility is to protect the children.
4. Evacuation plans and procedures are displayed on all external doors and in all rooms throughout the Centre.
5. The Responsible Person will ensure the maintenance of appropriate fire equipment to meet the needs of the Centre as advised by our regulatory body.
6. The Responsible Person will be responsible for coordinating any emergency procedures and drills.
7. Staff have knowledge and have been trained in the event of Evacuation and Invacuation.

Evacuation and Invacuation Procedures to follow

See also Section 3, 3.1 Accident Policy

Relates to Quality Area 2: elements 2.3.2, 2.3.3, National Regulation 85-87, 97-98.

Evacuation Procedure

1. **Responsible Person will ensure all staff are told in person that an Emergency situation has occurred and that we are evacuating the centre, provide location (eg ELC bottom lawn).**
2. **Staff in each room will collect sign in sheets, individual medication and action plans and emergency contact lists from rooms.**
3. **If children are sleeping, staff must quickly and calmly wake the children throwing all the bed linen back so others can tell all beds are empty.**
4. **Staff assist children to walk holding hands to emergency evacuation point. Babies to exit in emergency cots.**
5. **Responsible Person will do a final check of the Centre, and collect visitor and staff sign in sheets.**
6. **Take rolls once outside, accounting for all staff and children**
7. **Responsible Person will be responsible for coordinating the whole evacuation process and will be available to meet and brief emergency services on their arrival.**
8. **All staff and children must stay outside until advised that it is safe to go inside again.**
9. **Responsible Person will contact parents as soon as possible. This will be either to collect their child/children or to be advised of their safety.**
10. **If the centre is evacuated, responsible person to divert centre phone to Alex's or Jackie's mobile phones and place "This Building has been evacuated" sign on front and back door.**

Invacuation Procedure

1. **Responsible Person will ensure all staff are told in person that an Invacuation is occurring and if deemed necessary take immediate action and invacuate to the kitchen.**
2. **Responsible Person will securely close and lock front door, put up the sign “Invacuation currently in practice” on front door. Close and lock staff room, laundry doors and toilet window.**
3. **If invacuating to kitchen;**
 - **Staff in each room will collect sign in sheets, individual medication and action plans and emergency contact lists from rooms. ELC staff to collect staff sign in sheet from staff room.**
 - **Take rolls once in kitchen, accounting for all staff and children**
 - **All staff to collect mobile phones and return to kitchen**
4. **If remaining in rooms;**
 - **staff to close and lock all doors and windows, and stay in rooms until advised otherwise. Keeping children away from the windows as much as possible.**
 - **Staff should continue with daily routine and programmes inside.**
5. **Parents who are in the centre at the time of an Invacuation are required to participate.**
6. **The Responsible Person will advise staff in person when the danger has passed or the Invacuation practice is over.**
7. **The Responsible Person will be responsible for coordinating the whole invacuation process and will be available to meet and brief emergency services on their arrival.**
8. **If necessary, the Responsible Person will contact parents as soon as possible. This will be either to collect their child/children or to be advised of their safety.**