

**CHILD-SER-POL-03**

# **EARLY CHILDHOOD INCIDENT RESPONSE POLICY**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Northside Community Service Ltd. (Northside) prioritises the safety of all children, educators, and visitors to Northside Early Childhood Centres. In the event of a threatening situation (for example, fire) within an Early Childhood Centre, or externally (including, but not limited to, natural disaster and intoxicated trespassers), Northside will ensure the safety of all employees, children, and any visitors.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1. The purpose of the Early Childhood Incident Response Policy is to ensure any incident is responded to appropriately to protect the safety and wellbeing of all employees, children, and any visitors.

## **3. Application**

- 3.1. This policy applies to all employees of Northside, contractors, sub-contractors, and consultants employed by Northside, apprentices or trainees, students gaining work experience, whilst they are on Northside property or engaged in business that involves Northside Early Childhood Centre facilities.

## **4. Policy Owner and Review Requirements**

### **4.1. Policy Owner**

- 4.1.1. The policy owner for the Incident Response Policy is the Director of Children's Services.

### **4.2. Review Requirements**

- 4.2.1. This policy is to be reviewed annually.

## **5. Policy Statements**

### **5.1. Incident Types**

- 5.1.1. The following are the incident types covered by this policy:

- 5.1.1.1. Emergency evacuation;
- 5.1.1.2. Emergency lockdown;
- 5.1.1.3. Incidents involving injury, illness and/or trauma to a child;
- 5.1.1.4. Serious incidents involving a child;
- 5.1.1.5. Incidents involving not being able to locate a child; and
- 5.1.1.6. Extreme weather events and natural disasters.

### **5.2. Appointment of Emergency Response Wardens at each Early Childhood Centre**

- 5.2.1. The Chief Warden is the Nominated Supervisor of each Early Childhood Centre.

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- 5.2.2. When the Nominated Supervisor is absent, the Responsible Person on Duty, who has undergone fire warden training, will act as Emergency Warden and follow Northside's emergency reporting procedure.

### **5.3. Immediate Response to an Incident**

#### **5.3.1. Emergency Evacuation**

- 5.3.1.1. Evacuation Plans are to be developed for all Early Childhood Centres and are to be prominently displayed next to each exit out of the building. These plans are to include the date last reviewed.
- 5.3.1.2. Evacuation Plans and procedures are site-specific and take into consideration location, risk assessments, configuration, assembly points, and the needs of children and staffing.
- 5.3.1.3. Supervisors are to ensure that all employees are aware of the Evacuation Plan as part of their induction to the Centre. For more information, please see the **Governance Policy**.
- 5.3.1.4. If any employee sees or smells smoke or is made aware of a threat against the centre (e.g., a bomb threat is received) they are to immediately respond in accordance with the process appropriate for the specific Early Childhood Centre, detailed in the **Early Childhood Incident Response Procedure 5.1**.
- 5.3.1.5. Employees are only to attempt to extinguish a fire if the fire is small and attempting to extinguish the fire presents no danger to themselves or others.
- 5.3.1.6. Once clearance has been given by the Fire Warden or Fire Department, employees and children may re-enter the building.
- 5.3.1.7. If clearance to re-enter the building is not given, all families are to be called and asked to collect their children as soon as possible.

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- 5.3.1.8. Once the situation has been stabilised, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person on Duty is to inform the Director of Children's Services of the incident immediately and complete all necessary notifications and reports.
- 5.3.1.9. Evacuation procedures will be rehearsed and reviewed every **three** months.
- 5.3.1.10. Evacuation rehearsals should be carried out at different times to accommodate differing levels of attendance and configurations of age groups in attendance, e.g., carrying out a rehearsal when non-ambulant children are in attendance.
- 5.3.1.11. Each time a planned drill or spontaneous emergency evacuation is performed it is timed and documented in the **Evacuation Record Sheet**.
- 5.3.1.12. If the evacuation was because of a real situation (i.e., not a drill), the Nominated Supervisor is to ensure that all employees have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- 5.3.1.13. If the evacuation was because of a real situation (i.e., not a drill), the Nominated Supervisor is to ensure that children and families are offered support that is appropriate for the individual circumstances of the incident, and for the ages of the children involved.
- 5.3.1.14. In the event of an emergency evacuation, where emergency services have attended, a notification must be submitted. Please see **Early Childhood Notifiable Events Procedure** for more information.

### 5.3.2. Emergency Lockdown

- 5.3.2.1. Lockdown Plans are to be developed for all Early Childhood Centres and are to be displayed in secure locations throughout the Centre, not accessible to the public or unauthorised person.

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- 5.3.2.2. Lockdown Plans and procedures are site-specific and take into consideration location, risk assessments, configuration, assembly points, and the needs of children and staffing.
- 5.3.2.3. Nominated Supervisors are to ensure that all staff are aware of the Lockdown Plan as part of their induction to the Centre. For more information, please see the **Governance Policy**.
- 5.3.2.4. If a situation arises, or there are reports received that there is imminent danger of a situation arising at a Centre that requires a lockdown, staff are to immediately respond in accordance with the process appropriate for the specific Early Childhood Centre which is detailed in the **Early Childhood Incident Response Procedure 5.2**.
- 5.3.2.5. If a lockdown situation does arise, all families are to be notified as soon as practicable.
- 5.3.2.6. Once the situation has been stabilised, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person on Duty is to inform the Director of Children's Services of the incident immediately and complete all necessary notifications and reports.
- 5.3.2.7. Lockdown procedures will be rehearsed and reviewed every **three** months.
- 5.3.2.8. Lockdown rehearsals should be carried out at different times to accommodate differing levels of attendance and configurations of age groups in attendance, e.g., carrying out a rehearsal when non-ambulant children are in attendance.
- 5.3.2.9. If the lockdown was because of a real situation (i.e., not a drill), the Nominated Supervisor is to ensure that all employees have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- 5.3.2.10. If the lockdown was because of a real situation (i.e., not a drill), the Nominated Supervisor is to ensure that children and families are offered support that is appropriate for the individual circumstances of the incident, and for the ages of the children involved.

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5.3.2.11. Each time a planned drill or spontaneous emergency lockdown is performed it is documented in the **Lockdown Record Sheet**.

5.3.2.12. In the event of an emergency lockdown, where emergency services have attended, a notification must be submitted. Please see **Early Childhood Notifiable Events Procedure** for more information.

#### **5.3.3. Evacuation Bags**

5.3.3.1. Each Centre will have adequate evacuation bags for the number of children attending.

5.3.3.2. Evacuation bags will be kept in a clearly labelled and easily accessible (to educators) locations for access in the case of emergency.

5.3.3.3. Evacuation bag styles will vary depending on the centre, these may include backpacks, roller bags, and small enclosed trolleys.

5.3.3.4. The contents of the evacuation bags will be checked, restocked, and audited regularly. For more information relating to evacuation bag contents, please see **Evacuation Bag Checklist**.

#### **5.4. Management of a Serious Incident Involving a Child**

5.4.1. In the event of a serious incident involving a child at a Northside Early Childhood Centre, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person on Duty will act to ensure the immediate safety of the child.

5.4.2. Report the incident to all appropriate authorities including immediate notification to the child's family and Northside CEO. The regulatory authority (CECA) must be notified within 24 hours of becoming aware of the serious incident. Northside will then ensure an investigation is carried out into the incident.

5.4.3. As per the *Education and Care Services National Law*, a serious incident is defined as any of the following:

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- 5.4.3.1. The death of a child while being educated and cared for by the service or following an incident while being educated and cared for by the service;
  - 5.4.3.2. Any emergency for which emergency services attended;
  - 5.4.3.3. A child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service;
  - 5.4.3.4. A child appears to have been taken or removed from the service in a manner that contravenes the National Regulations; or
  - 5.4.3.5. A child is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the service premises or any part of the premises.
- 5.4.4. Please refer to the **Early Childhood Incident Response Procedure 5.4** for more information on managing serious incidents.

## **5.5. Administration of First Aid**

- 5.5.1. Northside will administer first aid in response to unpredictable illness or injury at the time that illness or injury occurs to ensure that ill or injured persons are adequately treated, stabilised, and comforted until emergency services arrive and to preserve life, prevent a condition worsening, and promote recovery.
- 5.5.2. All Northside educators are required to hold a current ACECQA approved first aid and CPR qualification, undertake current approved anaphylaxis management training, and undertake current approved emergency asthma management training.
- 5.5.3. For more information, please refer to the **Administration of First Aid Procedure**.

## **5.6. Incidents Involving a Child Not Able to be Located**

- 5.6.1. If a child cannot be located while in Northside's care, either on Northside's premises or on an excursion, follow the **Early Childhood Incident Response Procedure 5.5**.

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**5.7. Incident, Injury, Illness and Trauma**

- 5.7.1. Northside will take all reasonable steps to ensure the physical environment and children's spaces are safe and age appropriate to minimise risks to children's health and safety. Regular environment checks will be carried out throughout the day for hazards. Appropriate actions will be taken to promote the safety of children when hazards are identified.
- 5.7.2. Supervision will be placed as a high priority risk minimisation strategy. For more information, please refer to the **Safety Policy**.
- 5.7.3. Any incident, injury, illness, or trauma that happens to a child at a Northside Early Childhood Centre will be accurately recorded on an **Incident, Injury, and Illness form**.
- 5.7.4. Any incident, injury, illness, or trauma will be treated with a response appropriate for each situation, such as first aid, notification to families, notification to authorities, and provision of information on counselling services.
- 5.7.5. For more information, please refer to the **Early Childhood Incident Response Procedure 5.6**.

**5.8. Extreme Weather Events and Natural Disaster**

- 5.8.1. Northside will operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing children to experience the outdoors across seasons.
- 5.8.2. Extreme weather conditions and/or natural disasters will be treated with a response appropriate for each situation.
- 5.8.3. For more information, please refer to the **Early Childhood Incident Response Procedure 5.7**.

**5.9. Northside Incident Management**

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- 5.9.1. All incidents, regardless of whether they are reportable or not, are to be investigated, and outcomes documented on the Incident Management system.
- 5.9.2. All incidents recorded on the incident management system will be reviewed by a manager and/or member of the senior leadership team.
- 5.9.3. A formal workplace investigation will take place if deemed serious by the relevant Executive Director or the CEO. For more information, please see **Grievance Policy**.

## **6. Breaches and Penalties**

### **6.1. Breaches**

- 6.1.1. Breaches of this policy must be reported immediately to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or nominee. Confidentiality will be maintained where appropriate.

### **6.2. Penalties**

- 6.2.1. If Northside believes that unethical or illegal activities inconsistent with Northside's purpose or mission have occurred, these processes will be followed:
- 6.2.1.1. An investigation will take place to determine potential breaches.
  - 6.2.1.2. Where an employee has breached this Policy, and the offence is judged to be serious, the procedures outlined in the Northside **Grievance Policy** will be followed.
  - 6.2.1.3. Where a breach involves illegal activities, Northside has an obligation to report these to relevant external law enforcement agencies, and individuals may be subject to prosecution.

## **7. Audits**

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- 7.1. All records will be subject to ongoing assurance and audits. All records belong to Northside. In most cases, these will be admissible as evidence and are subject to the relevant Territory and Federal Laws.
- 7.2. The Director of Compliance and Quality is responsible for the development of an audit plan overseeing Early Childhood Centre compliance and facilities maintenance.
- 7.3. The Director of Compliance and Quality is to provide a report to the CEO in relation to the results of audits undertaken during the period.

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 8.1 Roles and responsibilities for the Early Childhood Centre Incident Response Policy are detailed below:

**8.1.1 The Approved Provider (Northside) is responsible for:**

- 8.1.1.1 Ensuring policies and procedures are subject to regular review.

**8.1.2 Nominated Supervisors are responsible for:**

- 8.1.2.1 Ensuring all educators follow policies and procedures in the event of an emergency;
- 8.1.2.2 Reporting to the Director – Early Childhood as soon as practical after a serious incident;
- 8.1.2.3 Conducting evacuations and lockdowns in a calm and collected manner, every 3 months;
- 8.1.2.4 Ensuring all educators, employees and families are notified of any changes to policies and procedures.
- 8.1.2.5 Ensuring Policies and Procedures are kept available and accessible.
- 8.1.2.6 Ensuring educators and employees follow policy and procedures.

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8.1.2.7 Ensuring employees and educators have access to a working phone at all times.

8.1.2.8 Ensuring educators receive an induction upon employment, including relevant emergency procedure training.

**8.1.3 Educators are responsible for:**

8.1.3.1 Familiarising themselves with the Early Childhood Centre's building and evacuation plan, which will detail fire extinguisher, hose and blanket locations, and evacuation routes and assembly points;

8.1.3.2 Alerting the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person on Duty if smoke is smelt or seen, or of any information relating to any danger to the Early Childhood Centre;

8.1.3.3 Following the centre's **Emergency and Evacuation Procedures** in the event of an emergency or evacuation.

8.1.3.4 Following policies and procedures.

## **9. Associated Documents**

### **9.1 Associated Northside Documents**

- 9.1.1 **Early Childhood Centre Incident Response Procedure**
- 9.1.2 **Incident and Illness Form**
- 9.1.3 **Administration of First Aid Procedure**
- 9.1.4 **Grievance Policy**
- 9.1.5 **Governance Policy**
- 9.1.6 **Early Childhood Centre Safety Policy**
- 9.1.7 **Lockdown Record Sheet**
- 9.1.8 **Evacuation Record Sheet**
- 9.1.9 **Evacuation Bag Checklist**

## **10. Definitions**

- 10.1 **Northside** - Northside Community Service, including all programs operated by the organisation.

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- 10.2 **Employee** - means the employees of Northside, and contractors, sub-contractors and consultants employed by Northside, apprentice or trainee, student gaining work experience, and volunteer, whilst they are on Northside property or engaged on Northside business.
- 10.3 **Nominated Supervisor** - The qualified staff member (usually the Centre Director) who has been legally appointed with relevant documentation as the Nominated Supervisor of a particular centre.
- 10.4 **Responsible Person on Duty** - The person in charge of the service when the Nominated Supervisor is absent and marked as such on the Responsible Person Record.
- 10.5 **Educators** - Early childhood Practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings.
- 10.6 **ACECQA: Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority**- The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources, and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.
- 10.7 **CECA: Children's Education and Care Assurance**- The regulatory authority in the ACT that undertakes investigation, compliance, enforcement, and assessment and rating functions against the National Quality Standard.
- 10.8 **Emergency** - An incident, situation, or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety, or wellbeing of a person at the service. For example, a flood, fire, or a situation that requires the service premises to be locked down, evacuated, or other type of emergency response.
- 10.9 **Emergency drill** - A process to rehearse anticipated emergency scenarios or events, designed to help clarify roles and responsibilities, provide training, and verify the adequacy of the emergency response.
- 10.10 **Lockdown** - A security measure taken during an emergency to prevent people from leaving or entering a building or premises until the threat or risk has been resolved.

## 11. Document Control and Version History

### 11.1 Document Control

<b>Document Reference:</b>	Early Childhood Incident Response Policy	
<b>Status:</b>	Approved	
Document Type: Policy	Doc Ref No.: CHILD-SER-POL-03	Distribution: Children's Services
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## EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE INCIDENT RESPONSE POLICY

<b>Approval Authority:</b>	Anna Whitty – Chief Executive Officer
<b>Signature of Approval Authority:</b>	
<b>Approval Date:</b>	11/5/2023
<b>Effective Date:</b>	11/5/2023
<b>Review Date:</b>	11/5/2024
<b>Functional Unit:</b>	Children's Services
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### 11.2 Version History

Revision Date	Version No.	Brief reason for change	Reference Sections

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