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Online Safety for Children Policy and Procedure

Category:	Health, Hygiene and Safety	**Version:**	V2025.1
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Policy Statement

Our service recognises the part that technology plays in our modern society and is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of each child when using online environments.

Background and Guiding Principles

"A child safe culture is fostered when everyone is actively involved in creating, maintaining and improving a child safe environment. It's crucial to keep children safe when they use digital technologies so they can access online learning opportunities safely. Children have the right to quality education and care in a safe environment. Providers and staff should protect, empower and educate children to be safe from online child maltreatment and abuse.

Children's rights

Children are safer when providers and services see them as active citizens. It's important to acknowledge their rights and teach them that they have the right to:
- *contribute*
- *be heard*
- *be listened to*
- *be taken seriously in matters related to their online safety.*

The United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child was originally created in the same year as the internet, so was not able to consider children's access to, or interactions with, the online environment. However, in 2021, additional information was adopted which sets out children's rights in the digital world.

With the constant and emerging development of digital technologies, supporting educators and children to understand the benefits, identify the risks, and take action to address them, is key to keeping children safe online.

While digital technologies offer enormous benefits and potential, children also face a, range of risks, including safety, privacy and security risks in using a range of devices, apps, games, and platforms. Exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying and new and emerging risks, including those which may be created or amplified through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and technologies, needs careful consideration.

Approved providers and their staff should stay updated on new technologies and manage associated risks. For example, digital toys controlled by apps on other devices such as phones or tablets. Gaps in cybersecurity protection may allow hackers to access wi-fi connections to identify the device location, with the potential to access audio and video functions, which can pose a safety risk to children.

Approved providers and service leaders should set up privacy and safety protections on all service devices. Tools are available to control access to appropriate content based on children's age and development. They can be used to block, filter, monitor, and limit online content on service devices, alongside supervision and other safety strategies. To keep children safe, it is important to limit access to functionalities such as location, camera, photos and videos already stored on the device, and the ability of the device to listen to its surroundings.

Smart Toys
Many smart toys collect data, including video, audio, and location information.
This data can be used by a company for unknown purposes or sold to others.
Data breaches can happen, where hackers access this data and use it for harmful purposes
" [1]

Screen Time
"Sedentary screen time during early childhood can have long-term impacts on a child's development. We recommend no screen time for children under 2 years, and no more than 1 hour per day for those aged 2 to 5 years.
Spending long periods sedentary and using screens unsupervised can lead children to:
* *develop language skills later*
* *have shorter attention spans*
* *be less ready for school, and find it harder to learn to read*
* *make poorer decisions.*
If you do allow screen time, it should be educational. This means watching with your child, talking about the content, and using it as a chance to help your child understand the world around them." [2]

Screen time can also be active, not sedentary. Consider using digital technology for activity such as dancing or yoga.

Procedures and Responsibilities

> **Leadership and Management Responsibilities, including Approved Providers, Nominated Supervisors and Responsible Persons will:**
> * Positively and clearly communicate all aspects of the policy and take a zero-tolerance approach to compliance.
> * Understand and comply with all aspects of this policy and related legislation and support team members to do the same.

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[1] "NQF Online Safety Guide" ACECQA (accessed on-line June 2025) https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf-online-safety-guide

[2] "Physical Activity and Exercise Guidelines for all Australians – infants, toddlers and preschoolers (birth to 5 years) Australian Government, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (accessed on-line July 2025) https://www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-infants-toddlers-and-preschoolers-birth-to-5-years

- Lead a culture of reflection and regular review of policies, seeking feedback from educators, families, children and other community agencies and professionals as appropriate.
- Establish online safety expectations such as acceptable programs, websites and apps that can be viewed by children or used by children, keep a record available to staff and families on the "Approved Digital Programs and APP's Record". Only child-friendly search engines and child-friendly apps should be approved – visit the eSafety Commissioner for advice on how to choose good online content for children under 5 https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/children-under-5/how-choose-good-online-content
- Research requested App's and programs prior to approving use to determine educational use and safe content for users.
- Monitor to ensure that only approved digital programs and apps are used at the service.
- Use filtering programs to restrict access to inappropriate or unauthorised sites.
- Ensure that any apps, online games, smart toys and technology toys used at the service are appropriate/designed for the children's developmental stage and age group.
- Share information with families on technologies used and the educational benefits.
- Check the risks of smart toys and, where possible, disconnect them from the internet to avoid hacking.
- Include approval of digital toys capable with chat or video functions on the "Approved Digital Programs and APP's Record".
- Turn off chat functions on apps and games.
- Choose app settings that turn off location sharing and enable privacy controls.
- Ensure devices are only used in designated areas of the service, where staff can actively monitor children's use.
- Complete the eSafety Commissioner e-safety checklist https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/early-years-program/checklist
- download and display the safety posters https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/early-years-program/teaching-posters
- Provide training on the safe use of technology such as using the eSafety Early Years Professional Leaning Module https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/training-for-professionals/early-years
- Provide families with information on where to go for help with online safety issues, including the eSafety Commissioner.
- Ensure staff are clear on the recommendations for sedentary screen time and restrict to use over 2yrs and no more than 1hr per day.
- Encourage active screen use such as dancing or yoga.

Educators and Other Team Members will:
- Be proactive in fulfilling the requirements of this service policy and related legislative requirements.
- Seek further guidance where required to fulfil your requirements.
- Report any concerns or non-compliance immediately to the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider.
- Participate in the review of documents and provide constructive feedback to the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider.
- Participate in the creation and/or review of the risk assessment, at least every 12mths, and as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the online safety of children.
- Follow the recommendations for sedentary screen time and restrict to use over 2yrs and no more than 1hr per day.
- Incorporate active screen use such as dancing or yoga.

- Only use Apps, website and view programs with children approved by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor on the "Approved Digital Programs and APP's Record"
- Share information with families on technologies used and the educational benefits.
- Closely supervise children using devises.
- Teach children what to do if there is a pop up on the devise they are using or if content seems different.
- Regularly discuss concepts of 'being online' and 'using the internet' with children so they continue to develop their understanding.
- Collaboratively establish safe rules when using devises, such as:
  - I will ask before I use a device.
  - I will follow our rules when I use technology.
  - I will take turns and use kind words when I use a device.
  - I will ask before I take a photo of anyone.
  - I will tell my teacher if I see something that makes me feel sad when I use a device.

(You can use the safety online safety agreement for guidance
https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/Online-safety-agreement-early-years.pdf?v=1751345506070)

- Use resources to alert children to online safety such as the e-commissioner's "swoosh and glide picture book and song" https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/early-years-program
- Not introduce any new app or program without it being approved and added to the "Approved Digital Programs and APP's Record".
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in digital play through communicating, creating and consuming digital content in a safe and age-appropriate way.
- Be alert to potential signs of exposure to inappropriate material or online harm
- (e.g. changes in behaviour, secrecy).
- Model respectful and safe online behaviour, including not oversharing, and asking before taking photo and who it may be shown to.
- Use culturally safe online games, apps, songs, music, and videos that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives for all children.
- Teach children what is appropriate to take photos of, ask for permission and to never take photos of others when not dressed or upset.
- Check the risks of smart toys and, where possible, disconnect them from the internet to avoid hacking.
- Turn off chat functions on apps and games.
- Seek approval of digital toys capable with chat or video functions on the "Approved Digital Programs and APP's Record".
- Choose app settings that turn off location sharing and enable privacy controls.
- Follow all requirements in the Information Technology and Social Media Policy and Procedure in relation to adult use of electronic devises.

As part of enrolment terms and conditions, families are asked to:
- Fulfil responsibilities under this policy and related legislative requirements.
- Understand that the service must take steps as required under legislative requirements and follow advise from recognised authorities.
- Participate in the review of documents and provide constructive feedback to the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider.
- Discuss any questions with the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person in charge.
- Understand that children are not permitted to bring personal electronic devices to care, including smart toys.

> - Take steps to protect children from online harm – refer to the eSafety Early Years Online Safety for under 5's booklet https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/children-under-5/online-safety-for-under-5s-booklet

Communication
- Educators and Families will have access to this policy at all times.
- Information will be included in induction for new educator and be included in service handbooks
- Educators and families will be provided with opportunities to be involved in the review of this policy.
- Educators and families will be provided with information from this policy at the time of employment and orientation.
- Changes to this policy and procedure document will be shared with families and educators.

Enforcement
The failure of any person to comply with this policy in its entirety may lead to:
- Termination or modification of child enrolment
- Restriction of access to the service
- Performance management of an employee which may lead to termination

Related Policies and Forms
- "Approved Digital Programs and APP's Record"
- Information Technology and Social Media Policy and Procedure
- "Child Safety NQF Online safety self-assessment and risk assessment tool" https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-06/OS_Self-assessment%20and%20risk%20assessment%20tool_AttB.pdf
- eSafety Commissioner e-safety checklist https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/early-years-program/checklist

Legislation, Recognised Authorities and Sources
- "NQF Online Safety Guide" ACECQA (accessed on-line June 2025) https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf-online-safety-guide
- "Child Safety NQF Online safety self-assessment and risk assessment tool" https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-06/OS_Self-assessment%20and%20risk%20assessment%20tool_AttB.pdf
- "Generative AI: Basic Guidance" NSW Government (accessed on-line June 2025) https://www.digital.nsw.gov.au/policy/artificial-intelligence/generative-ai-basic-guidance
- eSafety Commissioner website (accessed on-line July 2025) https://www.esafety.gov.au
- "Physical Activity and Exercise Guidelines for all Australians – infants, toddlers and preschoolers (birth to 5 years) Australian Government, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (accessed on-line July 2025) https://www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-infants-toddlers-and-preschoolers-birth-to-5-years

Review Information

Dates of Revisions:
Changes in this revision:
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I _____ have been provided with this policy and the opportunity to ask questions. I have read and understand my responsibilities under this policy and procedure. I will ensure I ask questions if I am unsure. I also understand the importance of supporting other educators and families in fulfilling their responsibilities. I will seek support from my supervisor if needed to comply.

Signed: _____   Date: _____