

Tasmania's Operational Plan for Managing COVID-19 in Early Childhood Education and Care

This Plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains contemporary, complies with Public Health advice, and continues to provide the best protection for children.

Principle 1 - ECEC Services and schools are essential and should be the first to open and last to close wherever possible in outbreak situations, with face-to-face learning prioritised

Services remain open unless it is unsafe to do so, or they are directed by Public Health or other regulatory body to close.

Where possible, partial closure for ECEC is preferred over full closure.

Where the service, or a part of the service, has closed, it is because educator to child ratios cannot be safely met. Services are encouraged to explore all options to remain open.

Educators are essential workers and can continue to work unless they are symptomatic, a positive case or a close contact.

To support this, services will have their [COVID-19-Safety Plans](#) and case and outbreak management plans in place.

COVID-safe behaviours are clearly communicated and encouraged for all staff and families.

Services will conduct COVID-safe risk assessments before undertaking excursions.

Mandated vaccination for all staff will continue, and boosters are encouraged.

The Australian Government has allowed ECEC services to [waive gap fees](#) for families who access the [Child Care Subsidy](#) (CCS) in the event that the area they are in is declared a COVID-19 hotspot by the Commonwealth for more than seven days.

ECEC services have business continuity plans in place.

Long Day Care may provide remote learning for 4-5 year olds depending on the services' individual capacity.

Outside School Hours services that are co-located in schools are to be aware of the school's COVID Safety plan and outbreak management plan.

An Outside School Hours Care service that operates on a school campus will be required to close if the school is directed to close.

Family Day Care (FDC) services and educators have risk assessments in place and COVID Safe Plans. FDC educators minimise contact with family members/visitors during operational hours. An FDC educator cannot provide their usual service if they, or a member of their immediate household, is quarantining or isolating.

In Home Care (IHC) educators cannot provide their usual service if they, or a member of their immediate household, is quarantining or isolating.

Principle 2 – Baseline public health measures continue to apply

[COVID-safe](#) measures will be in place across all services, in line with public health advice.

All services have a range of complementary health measures in place and actively encourage COVID-safe behaviour.

Stay Home if Unwell

Children, staff and families must stay home if unwell or if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Children, staff and families must stay home if isolating if they have COVID symptoms or quarantining as a household or household-like close contact.

If a child becomes symptomatic while in education and care, isolate the child and contact families to collect them as soon as possible.

If a staff member is symptomatic, they must leave the service immediately, get tested and follow Public Health advice.

Handwashing and Hygiene

Increased hygiene and handwashing:

- Regular handwashing is promoted, and handwashing and sanitising products are available in all services.

Cleaning

Increased COVID-19 safe cleaning is in place at all services, including:

- Additional disinfecting of high touch point surfaces.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing and density requirements help to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

- All staff and families entering the service must stay 1.5 metres apart and abide by density requirements, such as maximum room capacity advice.
- Minimise cross-contact where possible:
 - Keep children within their cohorts
 - Keep educators with the same cohorts of children.

Facemasks

[Facemasks](#) are required to be worn indoors by all staff and families entering the service.

Each service has a supply of surgical masks on reserve.

Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

A COVID Care Package for ECEC services will include an initial supply of RATs for use by ECEC staff if they are symptomatic.

Ventilation

Opening windows and doors to increase natural airflow. Education and care will happen outdoors where possible.

Vaccination

[Vaccination](#) is the best way to reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms and the likelihood of contracting the virus.

- Vaccination is mandatory for all workers in the ECEC sector.
- Children under 5 years old are not vaccinated. Evidence says that their symptoms are milder and they are less likely to develop severe illness.
- Children over 5 years old are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.

Parent, Carer and Visitor Access

Minimising the number of people who come inside buildings helps to minimise transmission.

- Use the [Check-in TAS](#) app.
- Parents and carers may enter buildings where necessary, but must wear a mask
- Drop-off and pick up times are based on risk assessment and taking into consideration individual context/s.

Excursions

Services will conduct COVID-19 safe risk assessments before undertaking excursions.

Communications

Communication strategies are in place to inform families and staff if there is a positive case.

Principle 3 - No vulnerable child or child of an essential worker is turned away

Children who are vulnerable, or children of essential workers, have priority for education and care.

Medical management plans and risk minimisation plans are in place for children with specific health care needs.

Risk minimisation plans are in place for educators with medical exemptions and other health conditions.

Principle 4 - Responses to be proportionate and health-risk based

All responses to COVID-19 outbreaks will be guided by the latest advice from Public Health.

ECEC services are continuing to communicate regularly with families.

Stay Home if Unwell

Children, staff and families must stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19 and follow Public Health advice.

ECEC services will be provided with two RATs per educator to support testing of symptomatic educators during February and March 2022.

Positive cases can return to their ECEC setting after 7 days if they have no symptoms, or 10 days if they still have symptoms. They must be symptom free prior to returning.

ECEC services must inform all parents, carers and staff where a positive case has attended and direct them to monitor for symptoms and follow Public Health advice.

Principle 5 - Schools and early childhood services will be equipped with public health advice

Equip ECEC services and schools to respond on the basis of public health advice and with support from public health authorities where required.

The Regulatory Authority (RA) will continue to work with Public Health to support ECEC services.

The RA will inform Public Health of daily notifications of positive cases. Public Health will support services if an outbreak happens.

ECEC services will consider any additional training and capacity building that is needed to support staff.

Principle 6 - Wellbeing of children and education staff to be supported

Services continue to prioritise staff and children's wellbeing.

Requirements under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act and Regulations* ensure that children's health, safety and well-being are met.

Work Health and Safety regulations relating to a safe workplace continue to be met as a high priority.

Staff and families are provided with relevant and current information around COVID Safe requirements.

Workforce planning is ongoing, including communication between the State and Commonwealth on workforce initiatives and funding opportunities.

COVID Safety in Schools Plan

To be in place for the first 5 weeks of Term 1*



Educators, School-based Staff and Early Childhood Education & Care Staff

- Leverage wider pool of educators (trained departmental and retired staff) to assist with teaching continuity, in the first instance and if required.
- Exemption from close contact quarantine protocols to attend work, unless symptomatic or a diagnosed case.
- Undertake Rapid Antigen Tests when symptomatic.
- Access to a supply of masks, which must be worn when teaching indoors, except if clear enunciation is required.

Schools and Early Childhood Education & Care

- Provided a supply of masks for educators and children/students.
- Supplied with Rapid Antigen Tests (enough for two per student, per week, should they be required).
- Virtual Learning approaches in place to support students required to isolate.
- Outbreak Management Plans in place. A class outbreak is determined when five or more cases occur in students and staff from a class within 7 days of each other, with Public Health to support if and when required. In most circumstances when this occurs, staff and students from that classroom would be tested immediately and then every 2 - 3 days, quarantining only if symptomatic or positive.
- Increased ventilation.
- Outdoor learning to be optimised.
- Breaks to be staggered where required.
- Increased COVID-19 safe cleaning is in place at all schools.
- Dedicated education COVID liaison for schools, early childhood education & care to contact:
P: 1800 816 057 E: COVID19support@education.tas.gov.au
W: www.education.tas.gov.au

School Sport, Activities and Excursions

- To progress as normal, with COVID safe practices in place.
- Masks are not worn when outdoors.
- Masks are not worn when undertaking vigorous physical activity indoors.

Vulnerable students

- Schools will prepare a personalised approach to support students with disability, complex health needs or who are medically vulnerable, prior to the student commencing school, in consultation with parents/carers.

Early Childhood Education & Care

Primary School K - Year 6

Secondary School Year 7 - Year 12

Back to School COVID Care

Back to School COVID Care package provided to parents, with two tests to use if child/student develops symptoms.

Face masks

Face masks are not required for children/students.

While not mandatory, masks will be available at schools for students who choose to wear them.

Masks are mandatory for students in indoor settings and will be supplied by the schools.

Ongoing testing

Ongoing tests (up to two per child/student, per week) to be supplied by schools to students to take home if symptomatic.

Close contact definition

Children/students are not defined as close contacts in a classroom exposure unless advised by Public Health directly to the school or services.

Case notifications

If a case is detected in the classroom or services, parents and carers will be notified and asked to monitor child/student for symptoms and test if symptoms develop.

Quarantine requirements

Children/students who are close contacts of a household case, must follow the quarantine guidelines. Quarantine for 7 days and test on days 1 and 6.

COVID-19 case

If a child/student tests positive, they must quarantine for at least 7 days and return to school once symptom free.

Keep practising these COVID safe behaviours



wear masks where required



symptoms? get tested



stay home if sick



stay up to date

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