



## EDUCATION AND CARE

### Portable / Folding Cots in Family Day Care

#### Information sheet

##### *What is a portable/folding cot?*

Portable cots (or porta cots) are designed and suitable for domestic use while travelling or away from home when a regular cot is not available.



##### **Portable cots are not suitable to use as a permanent sleep option.**

A standard/fixed cot compliant with Australian Standards is suitable and recommended for everyday use. Standard or fixed cots are more durable than portable cots and can accommodate larger babies.

##### *What do I need to consider when determining if portable cots should be used in family day care?*

Considerations should include:

- Portable cots in Australian stores are required to meet the mandatory Australian Standard AS/NZS 2195 (either the 1999 or 2010 version for portable cots (porta cot)). The later version, 2010, includes tests for adequate breathable zones.
- Equipment including portable cots can be recalled, therefore approved providers, nominated supervisors and family day care educators should sight and/or retain documents that confirm any portable cots

meet Australian Standards and check to ensure the product has not been recalled.

- Information on safety recalls can be found on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) [product safety website](#).
- The intended use for the portable cot, including:
  - age, weight and height of the child
  - intended duration and frequency of use
  - services policies and procedures in relation to the use of portable cots.

##### *What do I need to consider relating to Section 167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards of the National Law?*

The approved provider, nominated supervisor and individual family day care educator of a family day care education and care service, are required to ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury including during sleep and rest time.

The ACCC and Red Nose have compiled information about the use of portable cots. Consideration for use must address the following requirements:

- Only use the firm, thin, well-fitting mattress that is supplied with the portable cot. Never add a second mattress or additional padding under or over the mattress, as baby may become trapped face down in gaps between the mattress and the sides.
- If you are accepting a second-hand portable cot, look for a label or sticker that says that it complies with the mandatory standard; never place baby in a cot or portable cot that does not meet the current Australian safety standard.

- Wear and tear can expose baby to hazards. Only use a portable cot that has the mesh intact and that has no broken parts. Ensure that the base is flat and regularly check the portable cot for signs of damage.
- Do not use bedding that has exposed elastic as this presents a strangulation hazard for baby.
- Do not use a portable cot if the child weighs more than 15kg (or check instructions of your particular model).
- Use only on an occasional basis, and not for regular use.
- Regularly check the mechanics and locking mechanisms of the portable cot, to ensure the risk of the cot folding in while in use.

Whilst a definition of what constitutes ‘regular checks’ is not provided in manufacturers guidelines or best practice guidelines, approved providers, nominated supervisors and family day care educators of family day care services are required to implement adequate precautions, communication and monitoring to protect children during sleep and rest in portable cots while in the care of the service.

#### *What other legislative requirements relate to safe sleep practices?*

Regulation 81 requires an approved provider, nominated supervisor and family day care educator to take reasonable steps to ensure children’s needs for sleep and rest are met, which includes consideration of the child’s age and developmental needs.

Regulation 169 currently requires an education and care service to have a policy that addresses sleep and rest for children, including guidance for educators on health and safety considerations for children’s sleep and rest. Additional considerations as stepped out by regulation 84B will be required to be addressed from 1 October 2023 when the regulation comes into effect.

From 1 October 2023, approved providers will also need to ensure a risk assessment is conducted at least every 12 months, or sooner, if new risks are identified related to safe sleep and rest practices as prescribed by regulation 84C, covering off important factors to be considered relevant to safe sleep and rest practices.

The ECU considers Red Nose, Kidsafe and ACCC recommendations when determining if sleep practices are safe and appropriate for the age of the child.

Regulation 103 requires the approved provider to ensure that all equipment and furniture used in the provision of education and care are safe, clean and in good repair. The approved provider should have systems in place to monitor that portable cots being used by family day care educators are safe, clean and in good repair including maintenance and safety checks.

The upkeep of portable cots can impact directly on the safety of children, and it is the responsibility of the service to ensure, and family day care educators to implement, effective maintenance, cleaning and appropriate safety precautions to protect children if portable cots are used.

#### *Why is portable cot use an important issue?*

One of the objectives and guiding principles of the National Quality Framework is to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services. Consideration of appropriate sleep and rest environments, resources and practices are important safety factors in achieving this objective.

Historical incidents relating to portable cots identified wear and tear as a contributing factor to child safety, with injuries sustained due to a mechanism failure of locking mechanisms not locking in or failing causing choking or suffocation.

It is important to recognise that portable cots may suffer undue wear and tear when being folded and unfolded frequently. If service policy enables portable cots to be used by family day care educators, then the service is required to ensure that educators are aware of the risks associated with

the wear and tear, and have systems and procedures to monitor and maintain the portable cots, including any locking mechanisms.

If the service's policies enable educators to use portable cots for children in their care, processes should be in place to:

- clearly communicate expectations about the safe use of portable cots.
- have systems in place to monitor the use of portable cots, including checking cots for potential mechanism failures.
- ensure Red Nose recommendations are followed regarding the above bedding and use requirements.

Portable cots are not designed for regular use. Services are encouraged to conduct risk assessments regarding the use of portable cots, including whether second-hand equipment should be used. If the service supports the use of a second-hand portable cot or a cot that the parent has provided from home, ensure that all parts are in good working order and it comes with full instructions for safe assembly and use.

## Useful Links

- [Keeping Baby Safe Brochure.pdf \(rednose.org.au\)](#)
- [Portable or Folding Cots | Red Nose Australia](#)
- [Is your port-a-cot safe? | Red Nose Australia](#)
- [FDC Safety Guidelines \(kidsafe.com.au\) \(PDF, 2988KB\)](#)
- [Second Hand Nursery Furniture | Red Nose Australia](#)
- [Safe Sleeping Practices for Newborns | Red Nose Australia](#)

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