



ACT
Government

Education

ACT Public Preschool – Provision of a child safe environment

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This procedure is guided by the ACT Education Directorate's overarching Safety Management System Framework. The register provides comprehensive access to processes, guidelines, systems and policies relating to safety within ACT Government workplaces and schools. The register can be accessed <https://index.ed.act.edu.au/our-people/work-health-safety.html>

1. Overview

- 1.1. This procedure identifies expectations surrounding the provision of a child safe environment within all ACT Public Preschools.
- 1.2. It acknowledges existing support structures and site-specific requirements that aim to maximise the safety of all children, educators and visitors to public preschools.

2. Rationale

- 2.1. [Education and Care Services National Law \(ACT\) Act 2011](#), prescribes that all centre based services must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and hazard. All ACT Public Preschools are classified as centre based services, and as such are expected to meet the minimum requirements set out within the National Law Act.

3. Educating children about risk

- 3.1. Educators will discuss and reflect with children about potential risks presented within the context of learning and play at preschool.
- 3.2. Children and educators will work together to problem solve situations regarding risk.
- 3.3. Discussions surrounding these risks will be reflected within the educational program, in documentation, or through communication with families.

4. Physical environment

- 4.1. The Directorate has taken reasonable steps to ensure that children are being educated and cared for in an environment which is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- 4.2. All staff are employed under a code of professional practice which meets the highest possible standards in providing a child safe environment.
- 4.3. All ACT Public Preschools are expected to conduct an annual risk assessment of their indoor/outdoor physical environment, so they may identify any site-specific risks for children. This includes a risk assessment for the regular use of portable outdoor equipment and obstacle courses.
- 4.4. Routine indoor and outdoor safety checks of all ACT Public Preschools are required. These must address the day to day safety of the physical environment; with ongoing routine inspection of furniture, materials and equipment.
- 4.5. The Education Directorate employ external agencies to conduct annual audits and safety checks of trees, playgrounds and the built environment.
- 4.6. Effective processes must be in place to identify and address OH&S issues.
- 4.7. Outdoor environments within ACT Public preschools that are accessible by children, must be fenced with fencing that discourages children of preschool age to go under, through or over it.
- 4.8. Gates will be fitted with approved child safe self-closing mechanisms.
- 4.9. Sand pits are to be cleaned and raked on a regular basis; and covered when not in use.
- 4.10. All fixed outdoor equipment must comply with current Australian Standards.
- 4.11. It is recommended that shelving or cupboards are secured or have secure castors.
- 4.12. Pathways are to be kept clear and safe from trip hazards.
- 4.13. All unused electrical outlets/power points are required to be covered with a safety cap.
- 4.14. Electrical appliances and cords will be kept out of reach of children unless under direct supervision of an educator.

5. Furniture, materials and equipment

- 5.1. All preschool sites must provide sufficient access to furniture, materials and equipment for children, volunteers and staff attending the service.

- 5.2. Furniture, materials and equipment must be developmentally appropriate and suitable for use by children being educated and cared for at the preschool.
- 5.3. Art and craft materials are to be nontoxic and safe for use by children. The use of appropriately sourced, natural and recycled materials is encouraged.
- 5.4. Assessment of the risks associated with the use of certain 'hazardous' materials are required to demonstrate the benefits of use within the curriculum. For example, use of knives during a cooking experience may hold educational value relating to numeracy or scientific understandings; while also supporting children to become independent, capable and competent learners. Supervision for such experiences where benefits outweigh risks, must be monitored according to the risks that the equipment pose.
- 5.5. Furniture, equipment and materials must be cleaned as part of routine use.
- 5.6. The storage of equipment and materials must be in a safe and accessible location.
- 5.7. Consideration regarding the independent access and storage of materials and equipment, that are used on a routine basis by children is encouraged.

6. Use and storage of chemicals, cleaning products or potentially hazardous products

- 6.1. Each ACT Public preschool must have provisions for the safe and secure storage of: --medications, First aid equipment and cleaning products or chemicals. These are to be maintained out of sight and reach of children.
- 6.2. Cleaning materials will not be stored with food products.
- 6.3. Potentially harmful instruments or implements (e.g. Gardening tools/materials, work tools, knives or matches) will be secured in and stored in a safe location that is not accessible to children.
- 6.4. A Material Data Sheet must be documented for the use of any chemicals.
- 6.5. Warning signs will identify locations where potentially hazardous items are stored.

7. Contact

- 7.1. The Director, School Improvement is responsible for this procedure.
- 7.2. For support contact The School Operations Branch on 6205 3313 or email SchoolOperations@act.gov.au

8. Monitoring and review

- 8.1. The procedure owner will be responsible for monitoring the procedure through annual scans. A full review will occur as necessary, or within a three-year period.

9. Complaints

- 9.1. Any concerns about the application of this procedure or the procedure itself, should be raised with:
 - the school principal in the first instance;
 - the Directorate's Liaison Unit on (02) 6205 5429;
 - online at http://www.det.act.gov.au/contact_us;
 - the Director of Early Childhood Policy and Regulation within *Children's Education and Care Assurance* within the Education Directorate via complaintsCECA@act.gov.au ;
 - see also the *Complaints Policy* on the Directorate's website.

10. References

- 10.1. [Education and Care Services National Law \(ACT\) Act 2011](#)
- 10.2. [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- 10.3. [Guide to the National Quality Standard](#)
- 10.4. Australian Safety Standards

11. Related Policies and Implementation Documents:

- 11.1. Child Protection and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Policy
- 11.2. Child Protection and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Procedure
- 11.3. Keeping Children and young people safe – a shared community responsibility
- 11.4. Teachers Code of Professional Practice
- 11.5. Safe and Supportive Schools Policy
- 11.6. Security Management Policy
- 11.7. Alcohol Policy
- 11.8. Reportable Conduct Policy
- 11.9. Identifying Reportable Conduct
- 11.10. Family Law Policy
- 11.11. Family Law Guidelines Dealing with Family Law Related Issues in Schools

11.12. Additional information

- *Building Positive Partnerships Fact Sheet*
- *EDU Schools Risk Register*
- *Student Safety Analysis*
- *Play Equipment Check*
- *Preschool Safety Check*
- *Safe and Supportive Schools*
- *School Planning Guide*
- *School Crossing Flags*
- *Tool Risk Matrix*
- *Working Together with your School*