



COVID-19 Policy

Purpose

To ensure the health and well-being of our educators/staff and children and their families attending the Dawson Street Children's Cooperative, to ensure Dawson Street, its educators/staff and families take suitable steps to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and to deal with the implications of any incidents of infection.

Objective

To provide a policy which informs staff and families of the procedures they are required to follow in connection with COVID-19, circumstances where a child may be excluded from care and other steps the centre may take in connection with any infection.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all educators/staff, children, families and visitors to Dawson Street.

Policy Statement

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause illnesses similar to the common cold, but it can also cause more serious respiratory diseases. Most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not COVID-19. However, the threats posed by the virus mean serious steps must be taken to stop the spread of the disease.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) met recently to consider the issue of educational closures in relation to the community transmission of COVID-19.

The Committee's current advice is that pre-emptive childcare, kindergarten and school closures are not likely to be proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time.

It's important for children to try to keep things as normal as possible.

As outlined in our Dealing with Illness & Infection Policy and our other relevant Health & Safety policies, we have strict hygiene and infection control procedures to prevent or minimise the spread of contagious illnesses. Hygiene measures and exclusion principles outlined in these policies continue to apply.

Our approach to COVID-19 will be informed by current guidance on COVID-19 issued by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments including:

- [Victorian Department of Health and Human Services coronavirus \(COVID-19\) updates](#) from the Victorian Chief Health Officer
- [Federal Department of Health COVID-19 health alerts](#) which are updated daily
- [Victorian Education Department](#) which may issue COVID-19 updates directly to service providers. Latest updates and resources can also be reviewed online
- [Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#). Subscribe to email updates
- [Federal Department of Health](#) COVID-19 Information Sheets

Procedures

What will Dawson Street do?

Dawson Street will appoint a COVID-19 Lead to review government guidelines and advice daily, to identify whether this policy needs to be updated or families should be advised of new requirements.

What must educators/staff and families do?

All educators/staff and families are required to:

- comply with guidance issued by Government agencies relating to COVID-19, including in relation to attendance, quarantine and self-isolation as updated from time to time
- comply with any isolation/exclusion periods in relation to COVID-19 implemented by Dawson Street, including requirements which exceed government requirements as updated from time to time
- comply with Dawson Street's other policies and procedures regarding COVID-19 as updated from time to time

A summary of current guidance and policies is set out below.

What if the guidance and policies change?

As the COVID-19 situation is constantly evolving, it is likely the above guidance and policies will change after the date of publication of this policy. Educators/Staff and families must comply with any updated versions, which may conflict with the information set out below.

If you are not sure what guidance or policies are in place at any given time please contact the Federal COVID-19 hotline on 1800 020 080 or Dawson Street.

When should educators, staff, families and children not attend the centre?

At the time of publication, all educators/staff and families are required to **NOT attend Dawson Street** when:

- **Any immediate household member has been directed by Government agencies to quarantine or self-isolate.** (check <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert> for updated information about these)
- if the child OR a member of the child's household has COVID-19, is being investigated or tested for a suspected case of COVID-19, or has been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, until cleared by a medical professional;
- if the child is unwell (including high frequency runny nose or cold which is additional to the usual requirements of the Dealing with Illness & Infection Policy) unless cleared by a medical professional to attend; or
- if otherwise directed by Dawson Street.

You are required to notify Dawson Street if any of the above circumstances apply to your child or your anyone in their immediate household/s.

Further, we also require you to notify Dawson Street in writing of any interstate travel by plane or any international travel planning in the next 3 months and update the centre if these plans change or if new destinations are added.

NOTE: Dawson Street may at its discretion require your child to be subject to exclusion requirements which exceed those issued by the government. This could include situations where a member of your children's household and/or those which you/the child has ongoing close contact with are subject to isolation requirements but the child is not.

Implement effective hygiene process

COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
- close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes
- touching objects or surfaces like door handles or tables contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Close contact means greater than 15 minutes face-to-face, direct contact with bodily fluids or the sharing of a closed space for more than two hours with a confirmed case.

Educators/staff will ensure they continue to implement processes to ensure high standards of hygiene and infection control at all times. This includes ensuring they and where relevant children:

- wash hands frequently with soap and water including before and after eating or handling food, going to the toilet, changing a nappy, using gloves and after wiping or touching nose and cleaning up spills of body fluids
- cough and sneeze into their inner elbow, or use a tissue to cover their mouth and nose and placing tissues in the bin immediately after use
- If using alcohol-based hand sanitiser in place of soap it will contain 60-80% alcohol.

We will ensure hand hygiene posters are displayed in areas which can easily be seen by families, including the front entrance, and require all employees and families to use hand sanitiser (provided it can be sourced by the centre) provided at service entrances.

Drop-off and pick-up procedures, and temperature screening

All children will be screened by an educator upon arrival at the centre each day. The following procedures will apply:

- Every day, each child must have their temperature taken by an educator outside the front door to the centre (in front of our black board) before being admitted into the centre.
- A parent of a child (or children) can accompany the child (or children) as far as the front door, but cannot go into the room either at drop off or pick up, or in-between.
- If the front door is unattended, parents must ring the door bell and wait for a staff member to greet them.
- An educator will meet each child, perform temperature screening and take them into the room and assist them to wash hands.
- At pickup times, parents will wait outside the front door and an educator will collect the child from the room and bring them to the parent.
- iPads are available at the pre-screening area and parent need to apply hand sanitizer before using the iPad to sign in/ out.
- To ensure that the centre can run efficiently the parent must email or advise over the phone necessary daily notifications before children are taken to the centre. This is to ensure conversations upon drop off are kept to a minimum.
- If there is a line of parents and children outside the centre or to sign in/out, the 1.5 metre social distancing gap should be kept between the families. Please limit your time spent in the walkway. Please ensure only ONE parent is to drop off or pick up your child (or children). Friends, extended family, and (if possible) siblings should not attend the centre.
- Some educators may be wearing protective equipment such as mask and gloves during the pre-screening test. Parents should talk to their children about what to expect and why we have these new procedures in place to ensure a safer environment for our centre.

Children will have their temperature checked on entry to the centre, and if the temperature is higher than 37.5 degrees the child will be refused access and the parent will be told to take the child home.

Children's temperature will be checked again at around midday. If the child's temperature is above 37.5 degrees , we will phone the families to immediately pick up their child.

The child will only be accepted to return to the centre if:

- They have medical clearance from a doctor stating that they are able to return to the centre and that either:
 - they do not have COVID-19, or
 - they do not meet the criteria for COVID-19 testing;

and

- Their temperature has dropped back to 37.5 degrees (without paracetamol or ibuprofen).

The following people will be excluded from entering a centre:

- Any worker or child who has a temperature reading over 37.5 degrees.
- Any worker or child who indicates any breathing difficulty.
- Any worker or child who has been outside of the State or Territory in which the Centre is located within the last 14 days.
- Any worker or child who has been in contact with a person who is suspected of or has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Hours of operation

Changes to funding arrangements will require DSCC to review its operations from time to time to ensure the ongoing financial viability of the service. This may include changes to operating hours.

The operating hours of the Centre from 20 April onwards will be 7:45am to 5:45pm. Additional charges will apply for late pick-ups during this period when parent payments re-commence.

Provision of nappies

Children who require nappies will need to provide their own. We recommend 6 nappies in your child's bag per day however you are welcome to bring a big bag to leave here and our educators can let you know if they run low.

No new bookings or casual days

Dawson Street will not be accepting any casual or permanent bookings while the government is providing free childcare, as this was not covered by the bookings that the centre was assessed against.

Closure of the service

In certain circumstances, we may be required to or may voluntarily chose to close the service in connection with the spread of COVID-19.

We will continue to be guided by the relevant Government departments regarding circumstances in which early childhood service providers are required to close to combat the spread of infection.

Consistent with current Victorian Government advice on transmission reduction measures, we encourage parents to plan for the possibility of your child not attending childcare because of any future closure or because they are unwell. Discuss with your employer a plan if needed.

At this time, we anticipate that closure may occur if:

- a staff member, who has been attending the centre, is confirmed to be infected with COVID-19
- a child, who has been attending the centre, is confirmed to be infected with COVID-19
- a parent, who has been in direct contact with staff or children at the centre, is confirmed to be infected with COVID-19.

We are entitled to close the centre in the event one of these situations occur, or in another situation where we decide it is necessary to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of children/educators at the centre or for other reasonable operational reasons.

Information and notification requirements

Dawson Street will:

- report instances of (suspected) COVID-19 to the Victorian Health department
- comply with notification requirements for serious incidents which include:
 - any incident involving serious illness of a child at the service where the child attended, or should have attended, a hospital
 - any emergency where emergency services attended ie there was an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person at the service
- provide families with current information about COVID-19.

Discussions with children

Where appropriate, educators will speak with children about COVID-19 in ways that do not alarm them or cause unnecessary fear or distress.

Educators may, for example, discuss with children their feelings in relation to the virus, remind children that the risk of catching the illness is very low, review hygiene measures they can take to reduce the risk of infection, discuss some of the good things happening in the world, or implement other strategies.

Educators will be careful not to speak to others in an alarmist way about COVID-19 if children are present or within hearing.

We encourage parents to do the same. Some resources which may be helpful are below:

- for younger children: https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/march-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-coronavirus?mc_cid=95d3de736b&mc_eid=424419cf15
- for older children: https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/?mc_cid=95d3de736b&mc_eid=424419cf15

Social distancing measures

There are significant challenges in introducing social distancing measures within a childcare centre setting. However, we will be taking the following steps:

- suspending all external visitors to the centre and external excursions (other than tree kinder);
- reducing the occasions where children are brought together in larger groups.
- removing certain toys/activities that cannot easily be cleaned (e.g. Playdough)

We will be reviewing our practices to find further opportunities to minimise unnecessary interaction that may pose an elevated risk, whilst also being committed to providing appropriate care and affection for the children.

Fees – during a self-isolation period

As outlined in our Payment of Fees & Fundraising Policy, fees are payable for all days that children are enrolled, including when children are sick or cannot attend the centre for any reason. In relation to COVID-19, this means fees are payable where children are unable to travel home to Australia, are in quarantine or home isolation.

Parents are entitled to receive Child Care Subsidy for up to 42 days without providing a reason where their child is absent. Additional absences may also be entitled to the Subsidy in specific situations.

Fees – during a centre closure

Dawson Street are currently considering the financial implications if the centre is forced to close, including what may be required in relation to fees in order to maintain its financial viability. It is important to our community that we ensure that our staff have an income during this difficult time. We also recognise that many families will also be affected dependent on their own circumstances.

The childcare sector is advocating with the Federal Government regarding this issue and we will update you if further advice is received.

Responsibility

All educators/staff and families are responsible for enforcing this Policy.

Legislative Provisions

NQS

QA2 2.1.2 Health practices and procedures Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

National Law

Section 167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

National Regulations

Reg 77 Health, hygiene and safe food practices

Sources

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
Fair Work Ombudsman 'Coronavirus and Australian Workplace laws'
Federal Department of Health COVID-19 information sheets
National Quality Standard
Work, Health and Safety Laws and Regulations

Authorisation & Review

This policy was adopted by the Dawson St Children's Cooperative Management Committee on 18 March 2020.

It was revised and updated by the Management Committee on 27 May 2020.

It will be reviewed and updated in accordance with advice from responsible departments.