

A9 Absent and Missing Children

Epping Heights OSHC

NQS

QA. 2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort
QA. 2.1.2	Health practices and procedures.
QA. 2.2.1	Supervision.
QA. 4.1.1	Organisation of educators.
QA. 5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions.
QA. 5.2.2	Self-regulation.
QA. 6.1	Supportive relationships with families.
QA. 6.1.1	Engagement with the service.
QA. 6.1.3	Families are supported.
QA. 7.1.2	Management systems.
QA. 7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities.

National Regulations

Reg. 76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
Reg. 86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
Reg. 99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
Reg. 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
Reg. 123	Educator to child ratios—centre-based services
Reg. 158	Children's attendance record to be kept by approved provider
Reg. 146	Nominated supervisor
Reg. 165	Record of visitors
Reg. 166	Children not to be alone with visitors
Reg. 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
Reg. 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
Reg. 174	Time to notify certain circumstances to Regulatory Authority
Reg. 176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

My Time, Our Place

LO. 1	Children and young people feel safe, secure, and supported
LO. 2	Children and young people develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary as active and informed citizens
LO. 3	Children and young people become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing

POLICY STATEMENT

We aim to ensure the safety and welfare of the children by facilitating clear communication and co-operation between the centre, parents and the school. Children who are missing or absent without notice will be treated with extreme seriousness until educators are assured of their wellbeing.

RELATED POLICIES

- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-1: Hours of Operation
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-3: Philosophy
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-4: Enrolment
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-5: New Children Orientation
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-6: Fees
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-7: Bookings
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-8: Dropping off and Picking Up
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-11: Maintenance of Records
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-14: Complaints
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-15: Role of the Management Committee
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy A-17: Privacy and Confidentiality
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy C-3: Educator orientation and induction
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy C-10: Volunteers/students/visitors
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy C-11: Educator Child Ratios
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy C-12: Communication
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy C-14: Reportable Conduct
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy D-9: Emergency Procedures
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy D-11: Management of Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy D-22: Child Protection Policy
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy D-23: Child Management
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy D-30: Supervision
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy E-5: Excursions
- Epping Heights OSHC Policy E-9: Out-of-Centre Activities

PROCEDURE

Absent Children

Parents/guardians are to advise the Centre if their child will be absent for a session that they are booked into care, whether it be a before or after school care permanent or casual booking.

If parents/guardians are aware of a future absence prior to the cut-off time for online notifications (midday the working day prior to the absence), they must enter an 'away' notification through the webserver for the session of the expected absence.

If parents/guardians do not know until after midday the day prior, or on the day itself, they must telephone the Centre and inform a staff member, as early as possible. This change should be confirmed in writing by hand or by email. Parents/guardians must indicate the expected end date of an absence and also advise if this changes. Under no circumstances will educators make assumptions as to a child's attendance or accept notification from an unauthorised person or person under the age of 18 including the sibling of a child.

Parents/guardians will be informed of this requirement on enrolment and through the Family Handbook detailing the imperative nature of the Centre knowing of a child's absence.

ABSENT CHILDREN – MORNINGS

If a child is not present at the Centre by 8.35 AM, and the Centre has not been notified of their absence, the staff member will:

Telephone parents/guardians.

Upon making contact, the parents/guardians will be informed of their failure to advise the Centre of the child's absence and of any charges that may apply such as a Non-notification Fee(PolicyA-6: Fees). Session fees will apply for all bookings, casual or permanent, where educators have not been informed of an absence. An educator will also ascertain the next expected session that the child will attend.

If parents/guardians are not available, an educator will continue to call and send emails to the family until contact is made.

If the staff member is unable to contact the parent/guardian, the staff member is to contact the school to see if the child has arrived safely.

Non-notification fees apply.

If any booking is not attended and no notification is given, the booking is payable with additional non-notification fees.

ABSENT CHILDREN – AFTERNOONS

**** (In all cases of afternoon absences when it is ascertained that a child is missing, accurate notes should be taken by designated educators regarding times and details of phone contact and all other relevant information until the child is found)****

If any booking is not attended and no notification is given, the booking is payable with additional non-notification fees.

For all PM sessions, EHPS will receive (at approximately 2pm) a document listing the children in OSHC attendance that afternoon. This roll assists in increasing school/teacher awareness of which children attend OSHC each day. The list is up to date as of midday that day.

Should a child not be present and waiting in the designated area when expected, the staff member will:

Ask other children of their knowledge of where the child might be.

Inspect school grounds, ensuring all other children are well supervised during this time.

Approach the school office and ask for information regarding the child's attendance at school.

If the child cannot be found on school grounds the staff member will phone all parents/guardian contacts.

If the child was absent, then the parents will be called on arrival back at the Centre to remind them of their failure to contact and to find out if the child will be attending the next day or not.

If the child attended school and is expected by all parties to attend the Centre, then the staff member will:

Inform the school of the missing child.

Ask them to find out if the teacher is aware of the parent or anyone else collecting the child and assist in the search of the local school area.

Continue to search the school grounds with school staff assistance.

Ensure all other children are well supervised during this time.

If the child is found, educators are to ensure that all persons attempting to locate the children are informed. In addition, the parent/guardian is told of the problem with collecting the child.

The staff member is to ensure all persons attempting to locate the children are informed. In addition, the parents/guardians should be contacted to advise the child has been located and an incident, injury, trauma and illness record is to be completed. This will require a signature by the parents/guardians on collection of the child.

However if the child is still not found then the staff member will:

Make contact with the parent/guardian or emergency contacts to inform them that the child is still missing and find out any further information.

Continue to keep in contact with the school.

Make contact with Management Committee to inform them of the situation.

If the child remains missing:

The parents/guardians are to be kept informed.

The Management Committee are to be kept informed.

The police are to be contacted.

If contact cannot be made with parents/guardians or authorised nominees:

The police are to be informed

The staff will continue to try and make contact with the parent/guardian.

Advise the Management Committee that the Police have been phoned.

Where the police are called, the Responsible Person on Duty will complete an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness record and report this incident to the Department of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate) using the NQAITS.

In the event that the child was found safe, and the parent/guardian had knowledge of where the child had been, a formal letter from the Management Committee, detailing the failure to notify the Centre of absence, will be delivered to the parent/guardian. Further issues may result in suspension of service.

The Coordinator will ensure that all educators are aware of the policies and procedures relating to a missing child and will display the steps needing to be taken in their absence.

ABSENT CHILDREN – EXCURSIONS

**** (In all cases that a child is ascertained as missing from an excursion, accurate notes should be taken by designated educators regarding times and details of phone contact and all other relevant information until the child is found) ****

Should a child be recognised as missing during an excursion, the educator will:

Ask other children as to where the child might be.

Contact the Responsible person on the excursion via phone/walkie-talkie etc to inform them of the missing child.

The responsible person will:

Coordinate the excursion group to enable enough educators to search for the child whilst maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the rest of the cohort.

Make contact with the excursion facility if necessary/possible to assist in locating the child.

Continue to organise the search for the child until the child is found.

An incident, injury, trauma and illness record is to be completed. This will require a signature by the parents/guardians on collection of the child.

Educators are to ensure that the incident is discussed with the parent/guardian when collecting the child. The responsible person may however, determine that the parents should be contacted immediately for the child to be collected from the excursion dependant on the nature of the incident.

If the child is not found within a reasonable timeframe (15-20 mins dependent upon the reasonable assessment/judgement of the responsible person):

Make contact with the parent/guardian or emergency contacts to inform them that the child is missing and continue to keep in contact with them. This role should be delegated to an educator not searching for the child.

Make contact with Management Committee to inform them of the situation.

If the child remains missing:

The parents/guardians are to be kept informed.

The Management Committee are to be kept informed.

The police are to be contacted.

If contact cannot be made with parents/guardians or authorised nominees:

The police are to be informed

The staff will continue to try and make contact with the parent/guardian.

Advise the Management Committee that the Police have been phoned.

Where the police are called, the Responsible Person on Duty will complete an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness record and report this incident to the Department of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate) using the NQAITS.

If the child is not located within the excursion timeframe, a senior representative of the team of educators (Director or senior team member), will remain at the location of the excursion and the rest of the children/team will return to the school.

Regular contact will be maintained between parties to ensure information regarding the child's location is updated.

Notify issues of significance to:

NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate
Department of Education and Communities via NQAITS

<https://www.acecga.gov.au/resources/national-quality-agenda-it-system>

Absconding/Missing child

The Nominated Supervisor will ensure throughout each shift that staff are positioned to adequately supervise children in care as per Policy D-30 Supervision.

If a child absconds or is missing the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person on Duty is to be notified immediately, who should contact the parents and inform them of the situation. The Centre should ensure they maintain constant communication with parents and update them on the situation

Educators should never chase a child as this could encourage the child to panic and run without looking for dangers around them, such as traffic.

An educator should stand in a position where they are able to see the child is safe without following or leaving the premises (i.e., at the gate looking down the street where the child may go).

If the educator loses vision of the child or believe they will lose vision, or the situation appears to be escalating the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person on Duty are to contact the local police and advise them of the situation immediately.

If not already aware, the Nominated Supervisor and Management Committee must be contacted.

An incident report is to be completed and submitted via NQAITS.

In the case of a reportable allegation against a staff member, a 7-Day notification form will need to be submitted to the Office of the Children’s Guardian.

SOURCES

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- Family Law Act 1975
- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- My Time, Our Place Framework for School Age Care in Australia - V2.0
- NSW Office of the Childrens Guardian

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