

Child Illness and Exclusion

- *Child Immunisation*

Policy Statement

Meerilinga will take reasonable steps to ensure that the health and wellbeing of every child is safeguarded. Maintaining a healthy, safe and inclusive environment for Educators, staff, children and families, is paramount for high quality education and care.

Policy Purpose

We aim to maintain the health and wellbeing of all children, workers, and their families, ensuring a healthy environment and minimising cross contamination and the spread of infectious illnesses by implementing best practice and high standards of personal hygiene within our service.

We have a duty of care to ensure that children families, Educators, staff and visitors of the centre are provided with a high level of protection. We aim to manage illnesses and prevent the spread of infectious diseases throughout the Centre. Immunisation is a simple, safe and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases before they come into contact with them in the community. Immunisation not only protects individuals, but also others within the community and reduces the spread of disease and illnesses.

Scope

This policy applies to Meerilinga workers, children, families, students and visitors of the service.

Exclusions

Policy Review

Biennial or from time to time when the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operations and customer service.

Policy Reviewed	26 April 2023	By	Advisor Policy & Compliance
Approved By	CEO		
Previous Review	6 April 2021		

Implementation

Meerilinga children and community services have adopted the Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (Fifth Edition) publication recommendations developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council to guide our practices to help limit the spread of illness and disease. We aim to provide families with up to date information regarding specific illnesses and ways to minimise the spread of infection within the service and at home.

We are guided by decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases by the Australian Government- Department of Health and local public health units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following policies and processes of the organisation:

- Infectious Disease Management
- Health, Hygiene and Infection Control
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and First Aid
- Medical Conditions
- Medications

Families are informed upon enrolment and reminded not to bring sick children to the service. If a child is unwell at home, the family is not permitted to drop the child off at the service.

Families will notify staff if a child has been injured or has been unwell or sought medical advice since they last attended the service.

Meerilinga Educators and staff are not qualified to diagnose whether or not a child has an infectious illness. However, if an infectious illness is suspected, we will contact the family to collect their child.

A child would be considered ill if they:

- Sleep at unusual times.
- Have a fever above 38°C and are lethargic.
- Are crying from discomfort.
- Vomit or have diarrhoea.
- Have symptoms of an infectious disease eg: a rash.

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded depend on how easily the infection can spread, how long the person is likely to be infectious and how severe the disease can be. It is important that children and staff who are ill are kept away from the service for the recommended period.

Children arriving at the service who are unwell

A child will not be accepted into care if they:

- Are showing obvious signs of being unwell and unable to participate in program activities or require additional attention.
- Have had a high temperature, vomiting and/or diarrhoea within the last 24 hours.
- Have been given medication for a temperature prior to arriving at the service (eg: Panadol)
- Have started a course of antibiotics in the last 24 hours.
- Have a contagious illness or disease.

Children who become ill at the service

Children may become unwell throughout the day. Management and Educators will respond to children's individual symptoms of illness.

- Educators will monitor and document the child's symptoms on the Child Incident Report - Illness.
- The parents or authorised nominee will be contacted and asked to collect the child from the service
- Educators will take the child's temperature. If the child's temperature is above 38°C, the Responsible Person will contact the child's parents/guardian/emergency contacts to have the child collected as soon as possible (within 30 minutes)

Educators will attempt to lower the child's temperature by:

- Removing excessive clothing (shoes, socks, jumper, pants)
 - Encouraging the child to take small sips of water
- An ill child will be made comfortable and placed in a quiet area where they can rest, whilst being supervised. Every effort will be made to separate them from the other children until collected.
 - Continue to document any progressing symptoms.
 - Complete the Child Incident Report - Illness, ensuring the parent/guardian or authorised nominee has signed the completed Child Incident Report upon collection of the child.
 - Upon request, families will be provided with information regarding exclusion periods as recommended by Staying Healthy in Childcare (5th Edition) guidelines or Control of Communicable Disease Manual.

Infection Control

All Meerilinga community members will continuously promote healthy hygiene practices to minimise the risk of infection. Cleaning, hygiene and safety processes will be followed at all times and in accordance with documented processes and schedules to ensure the premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.

Refer to the Health, Hygiene and Infection Control Policy and Processes

Infectious Disease and Exclusion

When a child has been diagnosed with an illness or infectious disease, the service will refer to Staying Healthy in Childcare (5th Edition) and the Control of Communicable Disease Manual for teachers, child care workers, local government authorities and medical practitioners for recommendation on exclusion periods.

When an infectious disease has been diagnosed and confirmed, the service will display appropriate documentation and alerts for families including information on the illness/disease, symptoms, infectious period and the exclusion period. (This information is obtained from Staying Healthy in Child Care 5th Edition or Control of Communicable Diseases Manual)

The Responsible Person may request a medical clearance from a registered health practitioner when there are signs of illness eg: body rash. In order for the child to attend, a medical clearance will be required from a Registered Health Practitioner the stating the child is not contagious and fit for care.

Some of the common Infectious Diseases in children are:

High Temperature

Educators will take the child's temperature. If the child's temperature 38°C or higher and the child is showing other signs of being unwell, the Responsible Person at the time will contact the child's parents or authorised nominee and request that the child be collected.

Educators will take physical steps to try to reduce the child's temperature ie. removing excess clothing, laying child in a cool place, encouraging the child to drink cool water etc. until they are collected.

Common Colds and Flu

The common cold or flu (viral upper respiratory tract infections) are very common in children occurring 6-10 times a year on average with the highest number usually being during the first 2 years in childcare. Symptoms may include coughing, runny nose and a slight temperature.

In circumstances where a child appears to have cold or flu symptoms, the Responsible Person will determine if the child is well enough to continue at the service or if the child requires parental care. As cold and flu symptoms are very similar to COVID-19, children with these symptoms may be required to obtain a RAT or PCR test.

Children who are generally healthy, will recover from a common cold in a few days. Keeping a child home and away from childcare, helps to prevent the spread of germs.

Influenza is a highly contagious illness and can spread to others for 24 hours before symptoms start. To prevent the spread of influenza our service encourages staff and children to be vaccinated once a year.

Vomiting and/or Diarrhoea

Children that have diarrhoea and/or vomiting at the service, the Responsible Person will contact the child's parents or authorised nominee and request that the child be collected as soon as possible. The child will be excluded until the symptoms have stopped for at least 24 hours.

Ear Infection

Children will be excluded if there is any fluid coming out of their ear.

Hand, Foot and Mouth

Hand foot and mouth disease is a common viral infection. The obvious signs include tiny blisters on various parts of the body. The virus is in the fluid of the blisters so children with the virus will be excluded until all blisters have dried.

Head Lice

If head lice has been detected, the family will be contacted and asked to collect the child for treatment. The child may return to the service as soon as 'effective treatment' has started. An effective treatment is when a treatment is used and all the lice are dead.

Reporting Notifiable Communicable Diseases

Upon notification of suspected or confirmed case of a notifiable illness at the service, refer to the Infectious Disease Management policy and process.

Child Immunisation

Under the [Public Health Act 2016 \(WA\)](#), persons in charge of child care services have legal responsibilities in relation to the immunisation status of children, as outlined below:

- Collect immunisation status information at the time of a child's enrolment in child care services.
- Report the immunisation status of enrolled children to the Chief Health Officer, when directed to do so.
- Report a child who has or is reasonably suspected to have contracted a vaccine preventable notifiable infectious disease to the Chief Health Officer, when directed to do so.
- Not permit a child to attend or participate in an educational program of the child care service if the child has not been immunised against a vaccine preventable notifiable infectious disease, when directed to do so by the Chief Health Officer.

- Close whole or part of the child care service, community kindergarten or school in order to limit or prevent the spread of a vaccine preventable notifiable infectious disease, when directed to do so by the Chief Health Officer.

In accordance with the regulations and the terms and condition of enrolment, Meerilinga will request and obtain each child's immunisation record from the parent/guardian at the time of enrolment or re-enrolment.

Meerilinga will accept the following documentation to verify each child's immunisation status:

- Australian Immunisation Register - **AIR Immunisation History Statement**, no more than two months old showing that a child is:
 - ✓ Up to date with their immunisations *OR*
 - ✓ Following an approved catch-up schedule as indicated on the child's AIR immunisation history statement.
- A valid **Immunisation Certificate** issued or declared by the Chief Health Officer.
- If Meerilinga is satisfied the child is exempt in accordance with the [Western Australian Department of Health Immunisation Requirements](#) because of particular family circumstances and includes supporting evidence

A copy of the document/s will be taken, the information recorded in the Child Care Management System and filed with the child's enrolment records.

Failure to provide a current immunisation status record or will result in non-acceptance or cancellation of the child's enrolment.

Until the child reaches the age of 4, the enrolling parent/guardian must provide an updated AIR statement each time the child receives an immunisation.

Children must meet the immunisation requirements for the parent/guardian to receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) fee assistance.

Meerilinga will provide families with information on immunisation and other health issues relevant to immunisation at the time of enrolment and is regularly conveyed to families through various methods as outlined in the Centres Communication Plan.

Refer to the Relationships and Partnerships with Families Policy and Processes - Communication Plan.

Meerilinga will inform families of their closest immunisation clinic. This information will be gained as required by regular contact with the local Government and the Health Department.

Educators and staff will be provided with information and encouraged to receive immunisation from vaccine preventable diseases.

Vaccine exemption due to medical reasons or natural immunity

If a child cannot receive one or more vaccines for certain medical reasons or the child has natural immunity, parents need to contact their GP in the first instance. If a vaccine exemption is warranted, the medical practitioner needs to advise the AIR online or by completing and submitting the AIR – Immunisation Medical Exemption Form.

Children who have a valid medical exemption to vaccination or natural immunity will have an immunisation status that is recorded as up-to-date on their AIR immunisation history statement.

Vaccine exemption due to particular family circumstances

A child may be exempt because of particular family circumstances. This is any child who meets the description of a class of children prescribed in regulation 10AB of the Public Health Regulations 2017.

Upon enrolment, the Enrolments Advisor and Place Administrator will determine eligibility and use the Exemption Eligibility Form (family circumstance) only in a situation where:

- A child is enrolling in the service; and
- The child's immunisation status is not up-to-date according to their AIR immunisation history statement; and
- The child is not following an approved catch-up schedule prescribed by the Public Health Regulations 2017; and
- The child does not have immunisation certificate issued or declared by the Chief Health Officer The child's immunisation status is not up-to-date according to their AIR immunisation history statement; and
- The child is not following an approved catch-up schedule prescribed by the Public Health Regulations 2017; and
- The child does not have immunisation certificate issued or declared by the Chief Health Officer.
- The child meets at least one exemption category with supporting evidence in the description class of children prescribed in the regulation. [Western Australian Department of Health Immunisation Requirements pages 17-19](#)

Child's AIR Statement, Completed Exemption Eligibility Form together with supporting evidence is filed in the child's individual enrolment folder.

The enrolling parent/guardian will be informed that under the Regulations, and as an approved service provider, Meerilinga must report the child as non-immunised to the WA Department of Health.

Meerilinga reports under vaccinated child to the WA Department of Health.

Children with an exemption due to family circumstances may be at risk and would be considered non-immunised during a suspected and actual outbreak of the specified vaccine preventable disease.

Refer to the Infectious Disease Management Policy and Processes

Overseas Immunisation Records

Overseas immunisation records will not be accepted.

Families who have moved to Australia from overseas need to take any information about their child's overseas immunisations to a registered immunisation provider, who will then update the child's AIR record. Following the update to the child's AIR record, parents can then access an updated AIR Immunisation History Statement.

Reporting under-vaccinated children

When any child who is enrolled with an immunisation status of not up-to-date, any time such a child enrolls in the child care service.

Under regulation 10C of the Public Health Regulations 2017, the Chief Health Officer may direct the Approved Provider to provide a report to the Chief Health Officer in respect of information given to that person about the immunisation status of children enrolled at service.

How to report:

When requested by the Chief Health Officer, the Enrolments Advisor is required to report all children enrolled who meet the criteria. The Advisor is provided with a unique link to complete their report online.

Multiple children can be reported in the same session and by submitting a report, the Advisor confirms the Approved Provider of the service has approved the information to be provided.

The information is received by the WA Department of Health, who will contact the families of these children to provide support in accessing local immunisation services.

Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor/ Responsible Person will ensure:

- A hygienic environment is maintained.
- Cleaning schedules are completed each day and signed by the Educators.
- Children are directed in their understanding of health and hygiene throughout the daily program and routine.
- Educators and Staff are aware of relevant immunisation regulations and guidelines for children and themselves.
- Relevant and current documentation on each child's immunisation status, and any medical conditions is collected on enrolment and maintained.
- End date calendar reminder set where enrolled children are on an approved and active catch-up schedule. Request updated AIR Statement from parent/guardian.
- Enrolled children with an exemption or on an approved catch-up schedule will be considered non-immunised and added to the Children's Health and Wellbeing Register. Educators informed accordingly.
- To provide families with relevant sourced materials and information on infectious diseases, health and hygiene including:
 - The current WA Immunisation Schedule for children.
 - Exclusion guidelines in the event of an infectious illness at the Centre for children that are not immunised.
 - Advice and information regarding any infectious diseases in general, and information regarding any specific infectious illnesses that are suspected/present in the service.
- To provide information to families about an infectious disease by displaying and emailing the Infectious Diseases Notification and details.
- Illness records are completed and signed no later than 24 hours of an illness occurring.
- All educators are mindful and preserve confidentiality of individual children's medical circumstances.
- Children's enrolment records are updated with regards to immunisation as required eg: as children reach age 4 for immunisation.
- To notify the CEO or Advisor upon notification of a notifiable infectious disease to ensure reporting compliance to relevant Authorities as required.

- To provide opportunities for staff, children and families to have access to health professionals by organising visits/guest speakers to attend the Centre to confirm best practice.
- Children do not attend the Centre if they are unwell. If a child has been sick they must be well for 24hrs before returning
- To complete the register of illness and/or document incidents of infectious diseases. Some diseases require your state authority to be notified.
- The organisations universal health and hygiene procedures for cleaning equipment and the environment are followed at all times eg: colour coded equipment and safe use of chemical.

Educators and Staff will:

- Ensure that any child suspected of having an infectious illness are responded to and their health and emotional needs supported at all times.
- Implement appropriate health and safety procedures, when treating ill children.
- Advise families that they will need to alert the Centre if their child is diagnosed with an Infectious Illness.
- Maintain their own immunisation status, and advise the Co-ordinator of any updates to their immunisation status.
- Provide diverse opportunities for children to participate in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities, and intentional practice.
- Adhere to the services Health, Hygiene and Infection Control Policy and universal Processes including:
 - Hand washing – children and staff
 - Daily cleaning and safety checks of the indoor and outdoor environments
 - Wearing gloves (particularly when in direct contact with bodily fluids)
 - Appropriate handling and preparation of food
 - Cleaning up bodily fluid spills
 - Disposing of Foreign or Sharp objects
- Maintain up to date knowledge with respect to Health and Safety through ongoing professional development opportunities.
- All play dough is to be made fresh every week. If there is an outbreak of infectious disease, or any other contagious communicable disease, play dough is to be discarded after each use. Children are to wash their hands before and after using the play dough.