

# Safe sleep and rest requirements for children in preschool procedure

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# 1. Policy statement

This document outlines how preschools must ensure that the sleep and rest arrangements for children are appropriate for the risks and factors relevant to the ages, developmental stages and individual needs of children enrolled in the preschool; and supports preschools to comply with the Education and Care Services National Law (National Law) and Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations). The relevant legislation is listed under section 6.1 of this procedure and guidelines.

Preschools must ensure each child's comfort is provided for and that there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's sleep, rest and relaxation needs.

This document includes procedures and guidelines for preschools including carrying out a risk assessment.

## 2. Procedures

The National Regulations requires preschools to carry out a risk assessment relating to sleep and rest annually. The sleep and rest risk assessment template is to be used to guide and document the risk assessment process.

The risk assessment must consider the following:

- number, ages and developmental stages of preschool children
- individual sleep and rest needs of the children, including specific health care needs, cultural preferences and requests from families
- suitability of staffing arrangements to supervise and monitor children during sleep and rest periods
- level of knowledge and training of the staff supervising children during sleep and rest periods
- location of sleep and rest areas, and the arrangement of the beds within the areas
- the safety of the beds and bedding equipment, having regard to the ages and developmental stages of the children who will use them
- any potential hazards on a child during sleep and rest periods
- the physical safety and suitability of sleep and rest environments, including the temperature, lighting and ventilation of the areas.

Preschools must ensure a copy of the current risk assessment is available for review by the regulatory authority and to support discussions with parents. An electronic copy is permitted. It is also recommended that previous years' risk assessments are kept on file, to demonstrate that previous risks have been addressed.

## 3. Guidelines

The following outlines the considerations preschools should make regarding their sleep and rest practices.

### 3.1. Meeting children's sleep, rest and relaxation needs

Preschools must take reasonable steps to meet the needs for sleep and rest of preschool children.

Individual children's needs must be met, including:

- specific needs based on a child's age or development stage
- specific health care needs

- cultural preferences and requests from families.

Preschools must establish a process for how children's individual needs, cultural preferences and requests from families are considered and addressed. Preschool staff must also ensure information about the preschool's sleep and rest practices are clearly communicated and consulted on with parents, families and carers.

Preschools must provide a comfortable, safe area for children to rest if they request a rest or are showing clear signs of tiredness. It is important that opportunities for rest and relaxation, as well as sleep, are provided. Preschool staff must look for and respond to children's cues for sleep, for example, yawning, rubbing eyes, disengagement from activities, crying, decreased ability to regulate behaviour and seeking comfort from adults.

## 3.2. Safe sleep and rest practices

Preschools must incorporate best practice guidance into its safe sleep and rest practices. This includes having processes in place to ensure preschool staff are inducted, trained and maintain current knowledge on best practice guidance on sleep and rest.

Best practice includes ensuring that:

- children sleep and rest with their face and head uncovered
- a quiet place is provided for rest and sleep, away from interactive groups. The location must meet children's sleep and rest needs. If designated for rest, the space should allow for a calm play experience.
- children's sleep and rest environments are free from cigarette or tobacco smoke
- sleep and rest environments and equipment are safe and free from hazards.

Preschools must plan the placement of educators across a service to ensure they are able to adequately supervise and monitor sleeping and resting children. This planning must be documented, including the method and frequency of checking children's safety, health and wellbeing.

Educators must check and inspect sleeping children at regular intervals. They must be within sight and hearing distance of sleeping and resting children to assess a child's breathing and the colour of their skin.

Preschools should consider the risk for each individual child, and tailor sleep and rest practices, including the frequency of checks and inspections to reflect the levels of risk identified for children. Factors to be considered include the age of the child, medical conditions, individual needs and history of health or sleep issues.

## 3.3. Safe environments and equipment

Preschools must ensure that a safe environment and equipment is provided for children to sleep and rest.

This includes ensuring:

- any bedding and bedding equipment are safe and appropriate for the ages and developmental stages of the children who will use them
- a safety check of sleep and rest environments is undertaken on a regular basis
- potential hazards in the sleep and rest area and on the children are eliminated. If hazards are identified, it must be documented in writing and reported to the principal as appropriate.
- the physical safety and suitability of sleep and rest environments is checked regarding temperature, lighting and ventilation of the areas

- hanging cords or strings from blinds, curtains, mobiles or electrical devices are away from sleeping children
- children are not sleeping in walkways or in a place where access to resources and equipment is obstructed

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1. Early Years and Primary

Early Years and Primary will:

- develop, review and maintain department policies, procedures and guidelines relating to early childhood education and care to ensure the ongoing compliance of preschools with the National Law and National Regulations.

### 4.2. Senior Directors Education

Senior Directors Education will:

- ensure that all preschools within their regional areas comply with the requirements of the National Law, National Regulations and departmental policies, procedures and guidelines.

### 4.3. Principals

Principals will:

- ensure the preschool is compliant with the regulatory requirements under the National Law and National Regulations by implementing the required procedures to manage the safe sleep and rest requirements for children
- ensure sleep and rest practices, based on current research and recommended evidence-based principles and guidelines, are in place
- approve the annual risk assessment, ensure it complies with the requirements of these procedures and ensure risk mitigation strategies are implemented
- ensure preschool children with specific medical and health requirements, as indicated in their enrolment form or their preschool health care plan, are managed and catered for
- support families whose children have cultural preferences regarding sleep and rest, and ensure these needs are met.

### 4.4. Preschool teachers and educators

Preschool teachers and educators will:

- ensure the preschool complies with regulatory requirements under the National Law and National Regulations and departmental policies, procedures and guidelines
- regularly review and update sleep and rest practices to ensure they are maintained in line with these procedures and guidelines
- undertake a risk assessment relating to sleep and rest every 12 months

- exercise a duty of care to ensure all children are provided with a high level of safety when sleeping and resting and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect them from harm and hazard, including performing regular checks of children and recording all checks at the time they occur
- consult with families about their children’s individual needs and exercising sensitivity to different values and parenting beliefs, cultural or otherwise, associated with sleep and rest
- ensure preschool children with specific medical and health requirements, as indicated in their enrolment form or their preschool health care plan, are managed and catered for.

## 5. Definitions

Terms	Definition
Approved provider	A person or legal entity who holds a provider approval under the National Quality Framework (NQF). Provider approval is a prerequisite for operating an approved education and care service. The Department of Education is the approved provider of all Northern Territory Government preschools. Responsibility for this role has been delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive School Education.
Children	For the purposes of these guidelines, refers to children in and attending preschool.
National Quality Framework	A regulatory system agreed to by all Australian governments, through the Council of Australian Governments, to raise the quality of and drive continuous improvement in early childhood education and care services, including preschools.
Nominated supervisor	For the purpose of these guidelines, is the school principal. The department has nominated all principals of government schools that operate a preschool in scope of the NQF, as the nominated supervisor for the preschool. It is considered that in their role as school principal, they are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the preschool service.
Parent	Refers to a child’s father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal and Torres Strait customary law or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.
Preschool teacher or educator	A person who is involved in the planning or instruction of an education and care program.

## 6. Related legislation, policy and procedures, documents and resources

### 6.1. Legislation

- *Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-AND-CARE-SERVICES-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011> is the legislation that adopts the National Law in the Northern Territory.

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (Vic) - <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-care-services-national-law-act-2010/012> is the Schedule that sets out the National Law.
  - Section 165 – Offence to inadequately supervise children
  - Section 167 – Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (NSW) - <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653>
  - Regulation 82 Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
  - Regulation 84A Sleep and Rest
  - Regulation 84B Sleep and rest policies and procedures
  - Regulation 84C Risk assessment for purposes of sleep and rest policies and procedures
  - Regulation 87 Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
  - Regulation 103 Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
  - Regulation 105 Furniture, materials and equipment
  - Regulation 106 Laundry and hygiene facilities
  - Regulation 107 Space requirements – indoor space
  - Regulation 110 Ventilation and natural light
  - Regulation 115 Premises designed to facilitate supervision
  - Regulation 168 Education and care services must have policies and procedures in relation to:
    - (2)(a)(v) health and safety including sleep and rest for children

## 6.2. Policy, guidelines and procedures

The following documents are available on the Policy and advisory library -

<https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/early-childhood-education-and-care/preschool-specific-policy>

- Preschool specific policy
- Managing health care needs in preschool guidelines
- Enrolment and orientation of new children in preschool guidelines

## 6.3. Documents

- Sleep and rest risk assessment template

## 6.4. Resources

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health and Safety:

- Element 2.1.1 – Each child’s wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s need for sleep, rest and relaxation.

Acronyms	Full form
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
NQF	National Quality Framework

<b>Document title</b>	Safe sleep and rest requirements for children in preschool procedure
<b>Contact details</b>	Early Years and Primary, Teaching and Learning Services,
<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Date approved</b>	
<b>TRM number</b>	50:D23:22811

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
3.1	September 2023	Teaching and Learning: Early Years and Primary	Updated template and incorporating regulatory amendments regarding sleep and rest (Education and Care Services National Amendments Regulations 2022) commencing 1 October 2023.