

GUIDELINES

SAFE SLEEP AND REST REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL

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Target Audience:	Principals, preschool teachers and educators, parents, pre-service teachers, students and volunteers	

This document should be read in conjunction with the **Preschool Specific** policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sleep is extremely important for children as it directly impacts mental and physical development. Safe sleep and rest for children has the proven benefits of increases in growth, health, attention span and learning.

Under regulation 168 of the and [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) (the National Regulations), preschools must have in place a policy and procedures relating to safe sleep and rest for children at the service, including matters set out in regulation 81 (sleep and rest).

Standard 2.1 (element 2.1.1) of the National Quality Standard (NQS), against which regulated preschools are assessed and rated, requires early childhood education and care services to ensure each child's comfort is provided for and that there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's safe sleep, rest and relaxation needs.

It is important to note that [Red Nose](#) (formerly SIDS and Kids) is considered the recognised national authority on safe sleeping practices for infants and children. Nominated supervisors and educators need to consider that children have different sleep, rest and relaxation needs. Children of the same age within their service can have different sleep patterns.

2. DEFINITIONS

Approved provider is 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 purpose of these guidelines, refers to children enrolled in and attending preschool.

National Quality Framework is 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 this procedure, 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.

Preschool teacher or educator is a person who is involved in the planning and/or instruction of an education and care program.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal must ensure:

- the preschool is compliant with the regulatory requirements under the Act and National Regulations by implementing the required procedures
- sleep and rest policies and procedures, based on current research and recommended evidence-based principles and guidelines, are in place
- preschool children with specific medical and health requirements, as indicated in their enrolment form and/or medical management plan, are managed and catered for.

Preschool teachers and educators are responsible for:

- ensuring the preschool complies with regulatory requirements under the Act and National Regulations and departmental guidelines and procedures
- regularly reviewing and updating sleep and rest procedures to ensure they are maintained in line with best practice principles and guidelines
- 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
- consulting 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
- ensuring preschool children with specific medical and health requirements, as indicated in their enrolment form and/or medical management plan, are managed and catered for.

4. GUIDELINES

Under Regulation 168 of the National Regulations, including matters set out in Regulation 81 (sleep and rest) early childhood education and care services are required to have safe sleep and rest procedures for children addressed in policy, procedures and guidelines.

Safe sleep and rest practices

- Children should sleep and rest with their face uncovered.
- Children's sleep and rest environments should be free from cigarette or tobacco smoke.
- Sleep and rest environments and equipment should be safe and free from hazards.
- Supervision planning and the placement of educators across a service should ensure educators are able to adequately supervise sleeping and resting children.
- Educators should closely monitor sleeping and resting children and the sleep and rest environments. This involves checking/inspecting sleeping children at regular intervals, and ensuring educators are always within sight and hearing distance of sleeping and resting children so that they can assess a child's breathing and the colour of their skin. Service providers should consider the risk for each individual child, and tailor sleep and rest policies and procedures (including the frequency of checks/inspections of children) to reflect the levels of risk identified for children at the service. Factors to be considered include the age of the child, medical conditions, individual needs and history of health and/or sleep issues.

Safe environments and equipment

- Ensure a safety check of sleep and rest environments is undertaken on a regular basis.
- If hazards are identified, lodge a report as instructed in the service's policies and procedures for the maintenance of a child safe environment.
- Ensure hanging cords or strings from blinds, curtains, mobiles or electrical devices are away from sleeping children.
- Ensure children are not sleeping in walkways or in a place where access to resources and equipment is obstructed.

N.B. *If a family's beliefs and requests are in conflict with current recommended evidence-based guidelines, the service will need to determine if there are exceptional circumstances that allow for alternate practices. It is expected that in this scenario the service would only endorse the practice with the written support of the child's medical practitioner. The service may also consider undertaking a risk assessment and implementing risk minimisation plans for the child.*

In other circumstances, nominated supervisors and educators would not be expected to endorse practices requested by a family if they differ with Red Nose recommendations. Nominated supervisors and educators should be confident to refer to the preschools sleep and rest procedures if parents make requests that are contrary to the safety of the children. Child safety should always be the first priority.

Meeting children's sleep, rest and relaxation needs

If a child requests a rest, or if they are showing clear signs of tiredness, regardless of the time of day, there should be a comfortable, safe area available for them to rest (if required). It is important that opportunities for rest and relaxation, as well as sleep, are provided.

Consider a range of strategies that could be used to meet children's individual sleep and rest needs.

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.