

Safe use of digital technology in early childhood education and care settings - information sheet

The safe use of digital technology in early childhood education and care settings policy suite

Making sure children are safe while they are in the care of the department is crucial. This policy suite will ensure additional safeguards are in place that prevent inappropriate images and videos of children being taken and that Department of Education and Training (department) early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings are complying with National Regulations introduced from 1 September 2025. Regulation 168(2)(h) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations) requires education and care services to have policies and procedures in place related to the safe use of digital technologies and online environments.

Embedding these types of child safe practices within our early childhood and school environments also make NT schools a less desirable employment option for potential offenders.

National Model Code

The National Model Code was introduced as an interim measure while governments developed and introduced further regulatory reform in response to recommendations from the Review of Child Safety arrangements under the National Quality Framework. The National Model Code is no longer required now that legislation has been amended.

The Department of Education and Training considered the National Model Code when developing the policy suite for the department's early childhood education and care settings.

Safe practices

The child safe practices consist of three parts:

- Only school-issued devices are to be used to take images and videos of children while providing education and care.
- Personal devices are to be 'off and away' while providing education and care.
- Schools must follow the department's procedures for taking, sharing and securely storing images and videos of children in early childhood education and care settings.

Personal devices

A personal device includes tablets, phones, digital cameras and smart watches with the ability to take images and videos.

Who this policy suite applies to

The policy and procedures apply to all NT Department of Education and Training early childhood education and care settings, including:

- All preschools (regulated and unregulated)
- Family as First Teachers (FaFT) programs
- Connected Beginnings programs
- Child and Family Centres (CFC)
- Any other early childhood program that is delivered by government schools.

Parents and families visiting the service

The policy suite does not apply to parents and families who are visiting.

While the use of personal devices by parents and families attending a teaching and learning environment is not encouraged, parents and families are permitted to take images and videos of their own child/ren.

However, if parents are volunteering in an ECEC setting, they must comply with the policy requirements.

Assemblies and carnivals

Parents and families visiting an ECEC setting are not required to comply with the policy and procedure. Visiting includes attending school performances and other events in the ECEC setting. Families are permitted to take images and videos of their own children when visiting, and where appropriate, their child's peers with the permission of their parents. This permission can be obtained from the parent verbally. It is encouraged that individual ECEC settings communicate these expectations regarding the use of personal devices while they are visiting an ECEC setting.

Multi-level classrooms – Preschool – Year 1

The policy and procedures will need to be applied in a multi-level classroom setting where preschool children are attending.

School issued devices

Principals are responsible for ensuring that their preschools, CFCs and FaFT programs have a device for taking images and videos that appropriately and adequately support program delivery.

The device could be a tablet or smart phone, depending on individual teaching, learning and operational needs. More than one device may also be required.

Principals have the financial delegation to procure mobile phones and tablets. Guidance on how to order devices can be obtained on the [ICT Resource Hub on eLearn](#). Use of the ICT Resource Hub is encouraged, but not mandatory.

Schools can also procure electronic devices with their school-held funds, provided they are planned for in the school-held budget and endorsed by the School Body.

Staff access to phones during breaks

Teachers, educators, staff and volunteers can use their phones when not providing education and care to children. This includes non-contact time, breaks, before and after school hours.

While this differs slightly from the [Mobile phones and personal digital devices - student use in NT Government schools policy](#) where primary school students must have mobiles off and away all day, it does align with the policy by modelling the same behaviour while working directly with children.

Smart watches

Smart watches which have the capacity to take images and videos, can be worn but must be turned off while education and care is being provided.

Special circumstances

There are certain circumstances where a person may need to have their personal device on and easily accessible while educating and caring for children. This could be to manage a medical condition. Principal or assistant principal approval must be received for staff to have their personal devices. Refer to page 10 of the policy for more examples of when approval may be granted for staff to have their personal devices during teaching and learning.

Emergency situations

Schools may choose to provide a smart phone to their early childhood services for the purpose of taking images and videos that can also be used for communication during an emergency involving a lost child, injury to child or staff member, or other serious incident, or in the case of a lockdown or evacuation.

Principal or assistant principal approval must be received for staff to have their personal devices during emergency situations. Refer to page 10 of the policy for more examples of emergency situations when a personal device may be used.

Assessment of educational purpose

Images and videos can offer a powerful lens to view children's learning and development and share this with parents and family. Taking, displaying and sharing images with children can also create a sense of belonging and inclusion and allow children to reflect and talk about their experiences and learning. However, this practice should be measured, and judgement used.

Some questions which may help educators make more informed choices of when to take images and videos include:

- why are you taking the image or video
- what is the learning
- whose story does this tell
- can it be used to communicate learning and development with others
- is this photo appropriate and respectful of the child's rights.

Sharing images with parents using a digital app

Digital applications that capture private and/or sensitive information must undergo formal assessment and receive approval from the department. Digital applications that have not been assessed and approved through the digital application assessment process must not be used to send images and videos. Furthermore, schools must obtain written parent consent when using a digital application that captures, stores, uses and discloses student data or information.

For more information on the use of digital applications go to: [Use of digital applications](#) on eLearn.

Sharing achievements with the broader school community through social media or newsletters

Schools are able to share achievements, activities, and success stories about our early childhood programs with the broader school community through social media or newsletters, however, taking images and videos of children for promotional materials, school publications, teaching and learning resources, publications, displays and websites will require written consent. This advice is provided in the [Taking and using visual and sound recordings including photographs policy](#) and the [Media and intellectual property student consent form](#)

Management of requests from external organisations to document events or educational activities

This would require written consent.

Further information about external organisations seeking to use images and videos of children is provided in the [Taking and using visual and sound recordings including photographs policy](#)

Storage of images on desktops

Storing documents or records directly on your desktop is considered high risk, as they cannot be accessed remotely if your device fails, is damaged, or stolen. To ensure security and accessibility, it is strongly recommended that all work-related records be saved in an approved records management system—such as Schools Central or TRM—or at the very least, on a shared drive such as the Managed drive. This way if anything does happen to your device, your documents have a better chance of being recovered.

Storage of images on OneDrive

While OneDrive and Teams are useful platforms for collaboration and communication, they are not recognised records management systems. It is highly recommended that final versions of documents are saved in an approved records management system, such as Schools Central or TRM. This ensures compliance with records management policies and supports long-term accessibility and accountability.