

Infectious diseases – exclusions from school – policy

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This document should be read with the Centre for Disease Control's Time Out fact sheet.

1. Policy

Schools must take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

Schools must follow the Centre for Disease Control's Time Out minimum periods of exclusion from school, preschool and childcare facilities for children or staff with, or exposed to, infectious diseases. The Time out advice is consistent with the Communicable diseases network Australia's series of national guidelines 2019.

The minimum periods on the Time Out fact sheet may be altered if a written letter is provided by a medical practitioner stating the child or staff member is able to return to school.

It is recommended that parents and staff report these conditions to the school to ensure proper care of students and staff and to identify situations where there is potential for transmission. Confidentiality or privacy of medical information about an infected person should be observed at all times and in all situations.

In relation to contact or collision sports, Sports Medicine Australia's Infectious disease policy addresses the issue of infectious diseases and may be a useful guide for principals.

Where a school operates a preschool service or other education and care service regulated under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, they will provide notifications and display notices as outlined in the roles and responsibilities section of this policy.

2. Business need

Schools have a duty of care to protect students and staff and reduce the likelihood of the spread of infection through the school and wider community.

In consultation with the Department of Health and the Centre for Disease Control, the Department of Education adopts the Time out information on minimum periods of exclusion from school, preschool and childcare facilities for children or staff with, or exposed to, infectious diseases.

Where a school operates a preschool service or other education and care service regulated under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, the department is obliged to ensure regulatory requirements are maintained at all times in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all government schools in the Northern Territory.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. Inclusion, Wellbeing Programs and Services

Inclusion, Wellbeing Programs and Services is responsible for:

- communicating the policy to school communities
- facilitating professional learning in association with relevant allied health associations and professionals for schools that require assistance.

4.2. School Operations

Director School Operations is responsible for:

- ensuring schools comply with this policy.

4.3. Principals

Principals are responsible for ensuring school staff are aware and comply with this policy. Principals responsible for preschools shall also ensure that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at a preschool which requires that the person with the disease be excluded from the preschool:

- all parents of students attending the preschool are notified of the occurrence of an infectious disease in the preschool
- a notice is displayed within the preschool stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises.

4.4. Parents and staff

Parents and staff are responsible for:

- following the specified period of time outlined in the Time out factsheet that children and staff must remain away from school if diagnosed with an infectious disease
- supply a medical certificate to cover the time the student or staff member will be absent from school.

5. Definitions

Term	Definition
Exclusion period	Exclusion period is a specified period of time that a student or staff member must remain away from school.
Infectious diseases	Infectious diseases are those diseases that are caused by an infectious agent, including those that can be transmitted by human to human contact, such as the conditions listed on the Centre for Disease Control's Time out factsheet.
Parent	Parent means a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.

6. Related legislation, policy and resources

6.1. Legislation

- *Education Act 2015* - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>
- *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>

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (NSW) - <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2011-0653>
- *Notifiable Diseases Act 1981* - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/NOTIFIABLE-DISEASES-ACT-1981>
- *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

6.2. Policy

- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority - National Quality Framework - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework>
- Communicable diseases network Australia’s series of national guidelines - <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/cdna/publications>
- Health of students policy - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety>
- Sports Medicine Australia’s Infectious disease policy - <https://sma.org.au/resources-advice/policies-and-guidelines/>

6.3. Resources

- Blood Rules OK Booklet and Pamphlet - to understand blood-borne viruses and other infectious diseases, how they are transmitted, and what actions can be taken to prevent their spread through participation in sport refer to the Sports Medicine Australia - <https://sma.org.au/resources-advice/policies-and-guidelines/infectious-diseases/>
- Centre for Disease Control - Time out - <https://digitallibrary.health.nt.gov.au/prodjspui/handle/10137/1011>
- Staying Healthy in Child Care 2013 - to find out more information on preventing infectious diseases and fact sheets for childhood diseases for parents, child care centres and preschools refer to the National Health and Medical Research Council’s - <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>

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1	November 2011	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion	First release
2	26 August 2020	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion	Update to new template, include legislative provisions for preschools
3	2023	Inclusion, Wellbeing Programs and Services	Administration amendments to align roles and responsibilities to the structural alignment in effect from 1 July 2022, including NTG template and minor formatting