

PREVENTING ILLNESS POLICY**WHY?**

Thrive Group Tasmania acknowledges that the exclusion of children and staff/Educators with infectious diseases reduces the risk of spreading diseases to others.

Thrive is committed to implementing clear exclusion guidelines and practices which are in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

WHO?

This policy applies to families, staff and Educators enrolled with, or working in the following Thrive's Children's Services:

- Early Learning Services
- Outside School Hours Care Services
- Family Day Care Services

WHAT?

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy and Procedure, Hygiene Policy and Procedure and the Immunisation Policy and Procedure.

Guide for Practice

The infectious diseases that will warrant child/staff/Educator exclusion from Thrive early learning education and care environments, are those which the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) identify in 'Staying Healthy – Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services' manual Fifth Edition 2012. See Recommended Minimum Exclusion Periods table in Appendix A.

Criteria for Exclusion

Where a child, staff member or Educator has been diagnosed with any of the infectious diseases on the NHMRC recommended exclusion list and/or is showing symptoms of the infectious diseases on the NHMRC exclusion list.

Symptoms may include:

- Temperature and fever
- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- Skin complaints (unidentified or unusual spots or rashes, yellowish skin or eyes, frequent scratching of the scalp or skin)
- Cold and flu symptoms (runny nose, sneezing, coughing)
- Is too unwell to cope with the normal routine and activities

Length of Exclusion Period

This is based on NHMRC recommendations.

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Children's Services

Individuals to be Excluded

Whether it is only the ill child/staff member/Educator to be excluded, or others who have had contact with the ill person, the decision will be based on NHMRC recommendations and specialist advice from Tasmanian Health and Human Services – Public and Environmental Health Services Unit.

Notifiable Diseases

Some infectious diseases are of the notifiable type i.e. compulsory referral to the State Public and Environmental Health Services Unit.

Criteria for Readmission

Children/staff/Educators can be re-admitted once they have met the exclusion requirements as recommended by NHMRC.

There may be occasions where a medical clearance will be requested.

Communication

Ensuring families/staff/Educators understand the reasons behind Thrive's approach and practices regarding exclusion, which is vital, as is the need for respect and sensitivity in conveying decisions about exclusion.

Notification/Documentation

Appropriate notification and recording practices need to be followed at all times.

HOW?

Please refer to the Preventing Illness Procedure (following this Policy).

WHEN?

Children and staff/Educators are to be excluded from Thrive early childhood education and care settings:

- When they have been diagnosed with, or are showing signs of infectious disease
- Or when it is considered they are unwell to cope with normal routine and activities

Relevant notifications will be made as soon as possible.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Public and Environmental Health Services Unit will be contacted immediately where a child or staff member/Educator has been diagnosed with a notifiable disease.

Children, staff and Educators can return to early childhood education and care settings once exclusion requirements have been met.

Thrive will provide all employees covered by this Policy with the appropriate training, so they are made aware of their responsibilities and obligations.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this policy from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those that the amendments apply.

All persons covered under the paragraph 'Who' who breach this policy may be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or removal from the workplace or termination of services (workers, other than employees and other persons in the workplace).

PREVENTING ILLNESS PROCEDURE

HOW?

Upfront Information

Policies and Procedures will be available to access at the service by families/staff/Educators.

Thrive will support all parties in understanding the basis of exclusion decisions and re-admission requirements.

During Provision of Care

Where a child has been diagnosed with an infectious disease e.g. conjunctivitis, impetigo (school sores), diarrhoea, coronavirus:

- Check the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommended minimum exclusion periods document and identify the period of exclusion required for the specific diagnosed condition – see Appendix A.
- Advise the family of the period of exclusion and when the child may return to care. Offer parent/guardian information about the condition e.g. NHMRC fact sheet from the 'Staying Healthy' manual.
- Advise all families of children using the service, that there has been a case of an infectious disease in your setting e.g. post a notice, or a face to face discussion. Offer families information about the condition e.g. NHMRC fact sheet. At all times respect the confidentiality of the specific child and family (when notifying others of the diagnosed condition) i.e. do not disclose names etc.
- Report the existence of an infectious disease in the service, to Thrive's Person in day-to-day Charge.
- Record the details on the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record.
- Re-admit child to care at the end of the exclusion period.

Where a child has been **diagnosed** with a **notifiable disease** e.g. diphtheria, meningococcal, pertussis (whooping cough), measles, chicken pox:

- Immediately notify the Person with Management and Control of Centre Based Services (in the instance of child care centres) or the Person with Management and Control of Family Day Care.
- Person with Management and Control or the Person with day-to-day Charge will notify the Department of Health and Human Services – Public and Environment Services Unit (phone – 6233 3185 or 1800 671 738).
- Public and Environmental Health Services Manager will provide advice and support regarding the appropriate follow up.
- Thrive services will comply with such directions.

- Centre Person with day-to-day Charge or Family Day Care Educator will document the illness details on the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record.
- In accordance with the *Public Health Act 1997*, the Director of Public Health may order the closure of a child care service if satisfied that it is necessary to do so to limit or prevent the spread of the notifiable disease.
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- In the above situations, the Centre Based Person with day-to-day Charge or Family Day Care Educator will complete and forward a notification report to the Education and Care Unit (State Regulatory Authority) within twenty-four hours of illness and/or seven days of the services closure.

Where a child **becomes, ill or displays symptoms of an infectious disease whilst in care:**

- Contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the authorised nominee, if the parent/guardian is unavailable and request the nominee collect the child.
- Reassure the unwell child and make him/her comfortable e.g. able to rest quietly away from other children, until the parent/guardian arrives.
- Monitor and record the child's condition and update the parent/guardian on arrival.
- Record illness on the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record.
- Forward report to the relevant Thrive Person with Management and Control.
- Ensure all bedding and clothing used by the child is washed separately.

Unimmunised Children

If an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease occurs, children who **have not been immunised** against that disease, will be excluded from care until the outbreak is declared over.

There may be situations where exclusion from child care is not possible or appropriate e.g. in family day care. In such instances, the Director of Public Health will provide advice on the need to isolate or segregate children who have the disease or are at risk of acquiring the disease.

Where a Child Care Staff member or Family Day Care Educator (including a family member in the case of Family Day Care) contracts an infectious illness, they must:

- Immediately notify the Centre Person with day-to-day Charge (Child Care Centre Staff) or Family Day Care Person with day-to-day Charge (Family Day Care Educators).
- Promptly inform families of the situation.
- Cease care for the recommended exclusion period.

If the illness is classified as a notifiable disease:

- The Centre Person with day-to-day Charge or Thrive Person with Management and Control will immediately contact the Tasmanian Public and Environmental Health Service Unit of the Department of Health and Human Services on 1800 671 738 (either in or out of business hours).
- An authorised Officer will follow up as per the Departments procedures and advise the Thrive service of the action required to be taken.

Review

Instances of exclusion will be viewed as an opportunity to review all infection control techniques or strategies used in the care environment.

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These Procedures relate to legislation as detailed in the Preventing Illness Policy.

BREACH OF THE PROCEDURE

Any breach of this procedure may result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, termination of employment.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this procedure from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those to whom the amendments apply.