

Creating a child safe environment

A guide for early childhood educators



Creating a child safe environment can feel overwhelming, whether you're a new educator or a seasoned professional.

The responsibility of safeguarding children is a significant ethical and legal obligation that requires a deep understanding of how to create and maintain a child-safe environment.

As educators, it's crucial to grasp the importance and benefits of child safe practices and to be well-versed in your role as a Mandatory Reporter.

This guide aims to provide clarity on how to ensure a child safe environment in your daily practices and why it is essential to do so. We have included some practical tips and scenarios, as well as links to the relevant regulatory and legislative requirements.

If you have any further questions after reading this guide, please do not hesitate to contact our Kath Dickson Institute Trainers or speak with your Service Director.



Questions? Comments?

We'd love to hear from you!

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Identifying Potential Risks

To effectively protect children, start by considering any potential risks that might arise from 'things,' 'situations,' or 'people.' Each of these categories represents different aspects that could jeopardise a child's safety:

- **'A Thing':** This could be faulty or unmaintained equipment, or resources that are inappropriate for the child's age. For example, broken toys or unsafe playground structures fall into this category.
- **'A Situation':** This includes scenarios such as being exposed to harsh weather without proper clothing, or a room that is inadequately supervised. For instance, children left unsupervised in a classroom or outside area can be at risk.
- **'A Person':** This encompasses individuals who may be verbally abusive, belittling a child, or neglecting their caregiving responsibilities. This could be an adult who is not providing adequate supervision or a peer who is not following appropriate behavioural guidelines.

Your Role as an Educator

In your role within an early childhood setting, it's imperative to understand and accept your duty as an advocate for children. You have a moral and ethical responsibility to act as a protector, facilitator, and negotiator. This means:

- **Recognising child safe practices:** Identify and implement practices that promote a safe environment for children, such as ensuring all staff are trained in child protection, regularly reviewing and maintaining safety equipment, and fostering an atmosphere where children and educators feel safe and comfortable. There are lots of examples of child safe practices below.
- **Acting on Concerns:** If you observe anything that raises concerns about a child's safety or notice factors indicating that a child may be highly vulnerable, you must act. This involves monitoring the child, documenting observations, and recording relevant information over time.
- **Seeking Support:** You are not alone in this responsibility. If you feel uncomfortable or uncertain about a situation involving a child, it's important to discuss your concerns with your workplace supervisor. They can offer guidance and support in determining the appropriate course of action.



Utilising Available Resources

To assist you in navigating your responsibilities, your service will have a 'providing a child safe environment' policy. This policy will guide you in understanding how to contribute to a culture of safety and support and the safe use of online environments.

By utilising available resources, you can better fulfill your role in creating a safe and nurturing environment for children. Your vigilance and proactive approach play a crucial part in their protection and well-being.

[Speak to your Kath Dickson Institute Trainer if you need more clarification.](#)

For more ideas and tips, follow us on Facebook:



Kath Dickson
Family Centre

In practice: What do child safe practices look like?



More child safe practices

Read and understand your sign in/out procedures. Know who is picking the child up, and how/where to check if you are not sure.

WHY? Children may only leave the service with the authorised nominees named in the enrolment record.

Keep open communication with families. Always be warm and welcoming even if it is one-sided.

WHY? You never know when families may need to confide in you.

Have a family library with information and support resources that families can easily access.

WHY? Not all families will ask for help, network with community such as maternal child health to keep resources current.

Supervise properly, observe, listen and engage with the children.

WHY? You can support children's emotional needs, recognise their emotions and meet

their needs for comfort when you are paying attention to their play and interactions with others.

Don't overlook an upset child. Be warm and nurturing and acknowledge the child's feelings.

WHY? By providing the comfort a child needs they learn to feel safe, secure and supported by you. Trust is built into your relationship with the child.

Incorporate the culture of each child into the learning environment. Try a yarning circle each morning to discuss the children's interests and allow them input into their program.

WHY? Children will feel safe and comfortable in the environment when it reflects them and their home lives.

Attend child protection training.

WHY? Regular professional development ensures you are aware of your role and responsibility to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

Legislative child safe requirements

QUALITY AREA 2: Children's Health & Safety

2.2 Safety: Each child is protected

2.2.1 Supervision: At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

2.2.3 Child protection: Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

3.1.2 Upkeep: Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.

Education and Care Services National Law

Section 162A Child protection training

Section 167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Regulation 84 Awareness of child protection law