

2.25 Statement of Intent for Children's Play Policy

The service acknowledges and recognises the importance of play for children's physical development and social and emotional wellbeing, as well as the benefits of allowing children of all ages and abilities to experience challenging opportunities in a variety of environments. The service understands and accepts that children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger and will work proactively with all stakeholders to minimise those risks.



Relevant Laws and other Provisions

The laws and other provisions affecting this policy include:

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and Regulations 2011*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *'My Time, Our Place' Framework for School Age Care in Australia*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice*
- *Policies: 2.1 – Respect for Children, 2.3 – Educator Ratios 2.6 – Behaviour Support and Management, 2.9 – Inclusion and Anti-bias, 2.11 – Including children with Special/Additional Needs, 2.13 – Use of Photographic and Video Images of Children, 2.24 – Children's Participation and Decision Making, 3.1 – Educational Program Planning, 3.2 – Program and Documentation Evaluation, 3.3 – Educators Practice, 3.7 – Physical Activity, 3.9 – Creative and Expressive Arts, 6.2 – Provision of Resources and Equipment, 8.1 – Role and Expectations of Educators, 8.2 – Educational Leader.*



Procedures

Definition

" Play is a freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behavior, normally associated with recreational pleasure and enjoyment"

Play is often interpreted as frivolous; yet the player can be intently focused on their objective, particularly when play is structured and goal oriented. Accordingly, play can range from relaxed, free-spirited, and spontaneous through frivolous to planned or even compulsive. Not only does play promote and aid in physical development, such as hand-eye coordination, but it also aids in cognitive development and social skills.

Service Responsibilities

The service will ensure there are a variety of play spaces, inside and outside where children can play, either in groups or alone.

The service program will be designed and facilitated to ensure children are able to move freely between relevant play spaces, both inside and outside.

Equipment, resources, and materials that can be used for a variety of purposes will be provided to encourage children to guide their own play.

Activities offered as part of the service program will be carefully considered in relation to the risk benefit for children with opportunities for play planned to develop children's risk awareness.

The Coordinator/Responsible Person will ensure a comprehensive risk assessment is conducted prior to any elevated risk activities being undertaken. All educators involved in such activities will read and sign the risk assessments and /or be briefed on their responsibilities prior to the activity.

Educator Responsibilities

Educators will ensure that materials, resources, and equipment are set up in such a way as to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences.

Educators will design and develop the program to ensure children can be involved in a variety of types of play including socio-dramatic, creative, exploratory, imaginative, physical, and rough and tumble.

Educators will ensure children are playing in an approved area of the service with supervision suitable for the type of activity, the age and developmental stage of the children participating.

When planning play opportunities for children, educators will:

- Be thoughtful and deliberate in their planning ensuring the interests, needs and abilities of the children are known and catered for;
- Empower children to make decisions about their play and leisure-time experiences;
- Ensure all children are have equal opportunity for inclusion in play;
- Provide opportunities for both indoor and outdoor play experiences, and that will include both 'built' and 'natural' elements;
- Provide resources that are accessible, varied, age and ability appropriate, culturally diverse, open-ended, and sufficient in number.
- Collaborate with the children and be open to change and spontaneity.
- Encourage children to make decisions and to take responsibility for their own needs.
- Empower children to be creative and seek out possibilities and solutions.
- Encourage children to try and experience new things and experiences; and
- Play with the children noticing cues, seizing 'teachable' moments and ways to scaffold children's learning.

Children 's learning outcomes are facilitated through educator observation and evaluation of children's play. The outcomes articulated in 'My Time, Our Place' version 2.0 are:

- Children and young people have a strong sense of identity.
- Children and young people are connected with and contribute to their world.
- Children and young people have a strong sense of wellbeing.
- Children and young people are confident and involved learners; and
- Children and young people are effective communicators.

Educators will use positive communication such as body language, praise, and encouragement to assist children in developing the necessary skills and capabilities in managing risky play situations and new experiences.

References

Unicef. (n.d.). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from Unicef: <http://www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Our%20work/childfriendlycrc.pdf>

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