

Sick & Carers Leave Guidelines and Procedure

Introduction

School Age Care services operate within strict staffing requirements to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children. It is a legal responsibility to maintain educator-to-child ratios at all times, which means that when an educator is unwell, their absence must be covered to meet these obligations. Failure to replace absent staff not only places the Service at risk of breaching legal requirements but also creates additional stress for co-workers who are left to manage children without adequate support. This policy outlines the procedures for educators when requesting paid or unpaid sick leave, ensuring that staff, children, and families are supported while legal obligations are met.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the processes to follow when an educator is unwell and unable to attend work. It aims to minimise disruption to the Service, reduce stress on co-workers, and ensure that staffing requirements are always met. This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Service's Staffing Arrangements Policy and Sick Leave Entitlements Policy.

Understanding Personal and Carer's Leave

Personal and carer's leave covers any time away from work due to illness, injury, or the need to care for an immediate family or household member who is unwell or experiencing an emergency. Sick leave applies when an employee is unable to attend work because they are personally ill or injured. Carer's leave applies when an employee needs to care for a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or step and adoptive relations, as well as the immediate family of a spouse or de facto partner. These provisions ensure that educators are supported in meeting both their personal health needs and family responsibilities while maintaining professional responsibilities to the Service.

Accumulation of Sick Leave

Sick leave entitlements are accrued progressively throughout the year. Full-time educators are entitled to ten days per year, while part-time educators accrue a pro-rata entitlement based on their contracted hours. Sick leave can be accessed as soon as it is accrued, including during probation. Unused sick leave is not paid out when employment ends. Casual educators are not entitled to paid sick leave but do have access to paid Family and Domestic Violence leave as legislated. Where paid sick leave entitlements have been exhausted, educators may apply for unpaid sick leave or request to use annual leave. Sick leave cannot be claimed on rostered days off. In addition, paid compassionate leave of two days is available when a member of an educator's immediate family or household passes away or is seriously ill. Part-time educators receive this entitlement on a pro-rata basis, and casual educators are entitled to two days of unpaid compassionate leave.

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Evidence Requirements

To ensure the integrity of the sick leave system, educators are required to provide medical evidence when accessing paid sick leave. This may take the form of a medical certificate or a statutory declaration. Evidence must be provided for all periods of paid sick leave, or if requested by the Nominated Supervisor or Director.

Documentation must be submitted within seven days of the leave being taken. Where evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unpaid leave.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Centre Director is responsible for ensuring that this policy is followed, communicating with families and schools, and managing re-entry procedures. Educators maintain a safe environment and support children with behaviour guidance strategies. Parents and guardians must notify the Centre Director of any school suspensions and participate in re-entry discussions when required. Children are expected to follow the behaviour expectations outlined by both the school and OOSH.

Sick Leave Procedures

When an educator is unable to attend work due to illness or injury, they must notify the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person as soon as possible, preferably before the start of their shift. Notification by phone is required, as emails and social media messages are not considered suitable due to the urgency of arranging replacement staff. If the educator is unable to make direct contact, a member of their immediate family or household may notify the Service on their behalf.

Where an illness requires more than one day of leave, educators should inform the Nominated Supervisor after attending a medical appointment and indicate the likely length of absence. If circumstances change, and the educator is able to return earlier or later than initially expected, they must update the Nominated Supervisor immediately.

Leave requests that are known in advance, such as planned medical procedures, should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the expected absence. Approval will be subject to operational requirements and ensuring staffing ratios can be maintained. In some cases, the Nominated Supervisor may request medical evidence that an educator is fit to resume full duties before returning to work.

If an educator becomes unwell while at the Service, they must immediately notify the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person so that suitable cover can be arranged to ensure child-to-educator ratios are maintained. Similarly, if the Nominated Supervisor or Director has concerns about an educator's ability to perform their duties safely, they may request the educator obtain medical clearance before resuming work.

These procedures also apply to the Director. Where the Director requires access to sick or personal leave, the same expectations apply, and leave requests are to be submitted to the OSHC Coordinator or a member of the P&C Executive Committee for approval.

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Child Safe Standards and Paramountcy Principle

The Service is committed to upholding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and embedding a strong child safe culture across all practices. In accordance with the Paramountcy Principle, the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child are the primary and overriding consideration in all decisions, actions and practices undertaken by the Service, including staffing arrangements and the management of sick and carer's leave.

This requires that all decisions relating to staff absences and leave management prioritise the safety, supervision and wellbeing of children above all other considerations. Educators, staff and management must exercise sound professional judgement and take all reasonable steps to ensure that appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times, including replacing absent educators to meet required ratios and maintain a safe environment for children.

The Service will ensure that all sick and carer's leave processes are managed in a way that supports both staff wellbeing and continuity of care for children. Clear procedures, timely communication and effective workforce planning will be implemented to minimise disruption to the Service and ensure children continue to receive consistent, safe and high-quality care.

All practices relating to staffing arrangements and leave management must prioritise the protection of children from harm, uphold their dignity and wellbeing, and ensure that every child is safe, supported and cared for at all times.



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Alignment with the National Quality Framework

This policy is consistent with Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (Regulations 122 and 123) and the National Quality Standard Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements. In particular, it supports Element 4.1.1, which requires that organisation of educators ensures the safety and wellbeing of children, and Element 4.1.2, which requires that every effort is made to replace staff who are absent. This policy also reflects the My Time, Our Place Framework and the ECA Code of Ethics, which emphasise professional responsibility, collaboration, and respect for colleagues, children, and families.

Review

Date:	Changes:	Reviewed by:
22/06/22	New policy	Travis Broadhurst
14/02/2023	No changes - reviewed	Travis Broadhurst
18/09/2025	Policy was updated, information was condensed.	Charmayne Nathan
30/04/2026	Child Safe Standards & Paramountcy Principle was implemented in align with new laws and regulations	Charmayne Nathan