

Adventurous Play Policy

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDRENS HEALTH & SAFETY

National Quality Standards (NQS) Quality Area 2: Children's Health & Safety	
2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy Lifestyle Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety: Each child is protected
2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

Through risky play, children have the opportunity to be physically active, become more independent, confident and resilient, and learn important self-regulation skills.

(Spencer et al., 2021)

'Being adventurous is about creating opportunities for children (and adults) to explore and test their own capacities, to manage risk and to grow as capable, resourceful and resilient children and adults.'

(National Quality Standard, Professional Learning Program, 2013).

Policy Statement

We acknowledge the important developmental benefits of adventurous and risky play such as psychological, perceptual, physical/motor skills and social development, resilience, executive functioning skills, self-confidence, and risk-assessment abilities. (Sandseter, 2010).

We encourage educators to support children's curiosity by providing them with opportunities to access risks and manage situations appropriately. We aim to support and respond to children's physical development by offering an environment that provides openended, dynamic, stimulating and challenging learning opportunities for all children.

We believe that play builds a child's self-esteem, communication/social skills and confidence and we use techniques to help children to become self-motivated and willing to give things a try through demonstration, encouragement and positive feedback.

Background

What is Adventurous Play Adventurous play?

Sometimes referred to as 'risky play' is a natural part of children's play and can often be described as a thrilling and exciting activity, involving a risk of physical injury and play that provides opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury risk (Sandseter (2007); Little & Wyver, 2008). Involvement in adventurous play provides children with opportunities to explore and test their own capacity, access risks and manage situations, master new skills, extend their limits and learn life skills. Research shows that success and failure of adventurous play motivates children to try again and work out different ways of doing things, increases their physical motor skills and teaches them about their own limits. (Sandseter, 2011; Tovey, 2010). In our endeavour to create a physical environment that is safe for all children at all times, we may be creating a physical environment that inadvertently limits adventure and risk taking.

The National Quality Standard (2.1.3) aims to encourage: "the educational leader and educators to foster physical and psychological development in children by encouraging physical activity that is challenging, extends thinking and offers opportunities to take manageable risks." (2018, p: 68).

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Strategies / How will it be done?

We will continually determine whether a learning environment is dangerous, or a potential learning opportunity that may encourage risk taking. Children are faced with risks every day. Rather than trying to eliminate all risks from children's play, our services will identify the possible risks and make informed decisions about whether the benefit for children's development and learning outweighs the risks and protect children from any potential harm. We will ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury (Section 167 National Law). In addition, Educators will conduct daily safety checks to identify potential risks and hazards.

A hazard is defined as 'something that is inherently dangerous and needs to be immediately remedied'. For example, a climbing structure with sharp edges, a broken fence or gate. Educators will use positive language to support and encourage children to engage in adventurous and risky play, modify activities to ensure all experiences are inclusive and promote competence and exploration.

Intentional modeling and teaching

Educators will use intentional strategies to encourage the children to:

- Problem-solve
- Develop skills in negotiating (including risks)
- Build resilience, perseverance and persistence
- Extend their balance, orientation skills and coordination
- Become aware of their own capabilities and limits
- Make appropriate risk decisions
- Develop self-regulation
- Take acceptable risks
- Make decisions
- Learn about the consequences (positive and negative) of risk taking
- Gain confidence and independence
- Become creative and curious
- Learn how to use equipment safely

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the service including students and volunteers.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor

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- Notify the Regulatory Authorities of any serious incident within the timeframes prescribed in the regulations.
 - Parents are notified as soon as practicable within the timeframes prescribed in the regulations if their child is involved in a serious incident/situation at the service. The incident/situation is to be recorded on the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record or the current record keeping system.

Educators

- Conduct risk assessments to identify potential hazards, assess the risks and minimise any risks that could potentially cause harm or injury to children.
- Engage in critical reflection as a team and with the children about the risks and benefits of a new activity or process.
- Undertake daily inspection of the outdoor and indoor learning environment to identify any potential risk of harm to children as per our Health and Safety Policy.
- Provide adequate supervision, every child at the service should always be monitored actively and diligently; this means knowing where children are at all times.
- Provide direct, constant, and proximal monitoring of children undertaking activities that involve some risk and recognising when the ratio of educators to children needs to be increased (e.g.: carpentry, water activities, fire activities, climbing)
- Parents are notified as soon as practicable if their child has suffered a bump to the head. Parents and caregivers must, therefore, keep a watchful eye on the child for some time after they hit their head, checking for signs of possible concussion.
- Actively encourage and acknowledge children's competence to assess risks and possible consequences (It is important to involve children in the risk assessment process, as this provides added benefits of being able to talk through hazards, learn about assessing and managing appropriate risks for themselves.)
- Provide children of all ages and abilities with authentic learning experiences aimed to challenge children's capabilities, manage risk and grow as capable resourceful and resilient children (and adults).
- Encourage children to take risks through the use of positive language, guidance, and enthusiasm.
- Refrain from pushing or forcing children to do something they are not sure about.
- Provide a challenging and adventurous learning environment that supports children's curiosity, adventure, and motivation.
- Respect children's growth mindset, acknowledging them as competent and capable learners.
- Trust in children's abilities and judgement whilst scaffolding their learning.
- Allow children to learn new skills in a safe environment through supervision and adherence to the correct educator to child ratios.
- Mentor and support families' knowledge about the benefits of providing children with adventurous play experiences.
- Refrain from denying children the value of an experience because it may appear to be dangerous.
- Uphold duty of care and take it seriously.
- Ensure that at all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
- Continue to meet legal obligations and responsibilities as documented in the NQS and National Law.

Legislation

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- Legislation and standards Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:
- Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic), as applicable to the service
- Corporations Act 2001, as applicable to the service
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(l)

Sources

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Appendix A

Instead of "Be careful!" try these phrases:

Help your child **Foster Awareness** by saying:

Notice how...these rocks are slippery, the log is rotten, that branch is strong.

Do you see...the poison ivy, your friends nearby?

Try moving...your feet slowly, carefully, quickly, strongly.

Try using your...hands, feet, arms, legs.

Do you feel...stable on that rock, the heat from the fire?

Are you feeling...scared, excited, tired, safe?

Help your child **Problem Solve** by saying:

What's your plan...if you climb that boulder, cross that log?

What can you use...to get across, for your adventure?

Where will you...put that rock, climb that tree, dig that hole?

How will you...get down, go up, get across?

Who will... be with you, go with you, help you if...?

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