

Safe sleeping and resting for infants and young children policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this policy must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

1. Overview

The purpose of this policy is to support and protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending Department for Education (department) early childhood education and care services.

This policy addresses obligations of the department under the [Education and Care Services National Law \(South Australia\)](#) (National Law) and the [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) (National Regulations). Under the National Regulations, the department must ensure that education and care services for which it is the approved provider has policies and procedures in place in relation to sleep and rest for children (regulation 168) and must take reasonable steps to ensure that services follow sleep and rest policies and procedures (regulation 170).

This policy also addresses certain obligations of the department under the [Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011 \(SA\)](#) (EECS Act) and the [Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Regulations 2011 \(SA\)](#) (EECS Regulations), which regulate residual early childhood services. It is also consistent with recommendations by [Red Nose](#), which is considered the recognised national authority on safe sleeping practices for infants and children.

Compliance with this policy will ensure early childhood education and care services provide appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following department services that are responsible for education or care to infants or children:

- preschool services
- occasional care
- rural care
- long day care.

This policy also applies to OSHC services delivered on a department site where the approved provider of the service is either the governing council or a third-party provider.



FDC staff, registered FDC educators and approved FDC educator assistants must comply with the [family day care health and safety policy \(PDF 295KB\)](#). Educators can also access further guidance materials to meet the National Regulations via the FDC Hub.

While this is not a mandated policy for the long day care component of an integrated service, where the department is not the approved provider, for consistency it is recommended the child care management committee adopts this policy.

While crèche and playgroup services are out of scope of the National Law and the National Regulations, these services are expected to promote and model best practices for safe sleep and rest.

3. Contents

Safe sleeping and resting for infants and young children policy	1
1. Overview.....	1
2. Scope	1
3. Contents	3
4. Detail	4
4.1. The legislative and policy context	4
4.2. Policy principles.....	5
4.3. Safe sleep and rest procedure	6
4.4. Risk assessment for sleep and rest.....	7
5. Roles and responsibilities	7
5.1. Child Care Management Committees (long day care)	7
5.2. Early Childhood Education and Care Services.....	7
5.3. Lead Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services.....	7
5.4. Out of School Hours Care	7
5.5. Family Day Care.....	7
5.6. Quality Preschools.....	7
6. Definitions	8
6.1. infant	8
6.2. integrated service.....	8
6.3. Sudden and Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI).....	8
6.4. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)	8
7. Supporting information.....	8
7.1. Related legislation	8
7.2. Related policies	9
8. Record history.....	9
8.1. Approvals	9
8.2. Revision record.....	9
9. Contact	9

4. Detail

4.1. The legislative and policy context

Education and care services must comply with provisions related to children's sleep and rest under the EECS Act. This includes the National Law and the National Regulations (including the National Quality Standard (NQS)), which are elements of the National Quality Framework (NQF).

The NQS sets a benchmark for the quality of education and care services. Standard 2.1 (element 2.1.1) of the NQS requires education and care services to ensure each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.

The department is an approved provider of education and care services that fall within the NQF. The department also provides residual early childhood services which are regulated under the EECS Act and the EECS Regulations. The EECS Regulations provide that Chapter 4 of the National Regulations applies to certain residual early childhood services E.g. occasional care, including the requirement for services to have policies and procedures in place under regulation 168 of the National Regulations.

Under the National Regulations:

- the approved provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the sleep and rest of all children are met, having regard to the ages, developmental stages and individual needs of the children (regulation 84A)
- the approved provider must ensure that education and care services have policies and procedures in place for sleep and rest (regulation 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure the service follows the policies and procedures (regulation 170)
- a service's sleep and rest policies and procedures must address the matters set out in regulation 84B, and risk assessments for sleep and rest must consider the matters set out in regulation 84C(2) (these matters are detailed in the [safe sleeping and resting for infants and young children procedure \(PDF 237KB\)](#))
- the approved provider must ensure that a sleep and rest risk assessment is conducted at least once every 12 months, and as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the safety, health or wellbeing of children during sleep and rest (regulation 84C(1))
- as soon as practicable after conducting a risk assessment, any necessary updates must be made to services' policies and procedures for sleep and rest (regulation 84C(3)), and a record of each risk assessment must be kept (regulation 84C(4)).

Sleep and rest provisions in the National Regulations were introduced in the context of concerns around the death of infants due to sudden and unexpected death in infancy (SUDI). Safe sleep and rest practices are also important for the development, wellbeing, health and safety of young children and older children, whose sleep and rest needs should be considered separately to the needs of infants.

Educators who care for infants under 12 months of age must comply with the [South Australian Safe Infant Sleeping Standards \(PDF 732KB\)](#) in all circumstances unless medically indicated reasons dictate otherwise.

The standards are informed by available evidence about risk factors in the infant sleeping environment and outline essential safe infant sleeping practices to reduce the risk of SUDI.

4.2. Policy principles

The following principles must be applied by education and care services for the safe sleep and rest of children at the service.

4.2.1. Sleep and rest practices

- Approaches to sleep and rest practices will consider child safety as paramount.
- Sleep and rest practices will follow best practice guidelines and information to reduce the risk of SUDI, including Red Nose guidelines and guidance from ACECQA (as the national authority under the National Quality Framework).
- Best practices for sleep and rest will be adopted and maintained through induction and ongoing training for educators.

4.2.2. Meeting sleep and rest needs

- The ages, developmental stages and individual needs of children will be considered to inform how each child's sleep, rest and relaxation needs will be met.
- Services use the department's Culturally Responsive Framework to ensure that cultural protocols are followed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- All children will be given choices and opportunities for sleep, rest and relaxation to ensure their individual comfort and wellbeing.
- The circumstances and needs of each child at the service will be assessed to determine any risk factors that may impact the child's safety and wellbeing while sleeping and resting.

4.2.3. Physical environment and sleep and rest equipment

- All children will have the opportunity to sleep and rest in a safe environment, including adequate ventilation, with safe and suitable bedding equipment which is appropriate to the age, developmental stage, and meets the individual needs of the child.
- Children will be dressed appropriately for the room temperature ensuring they are comfortably warm but not hot eg remove all beanies and hats for sleeping. Note: there is no specific room temperature recommended for safe sleep and rest.
- Every reasonable precaution will be taken to protect children from harm and hazard while sleeping and resting.
- In relation to services caring for infants, relevant Australian standards for cots (AS/NZS 2172), portable folding cots (AS/NZS 2195) and testing sleep surface firmness (AS/NZS 8811.1:2013) will be met.

- In compliance with the National Regulations, there will be no bassinets present at the service.
- The physical environment in the service will cater for non-resting children as well as sleeping and resting children.

4.2.4. Supervision and monitoring

- Processes for supervision and monitoring of children during sleep and rest at the service will accommodate the needs of individual children (ie where children are ill or are at higher risk of harm).
- There will be adequate lighting in the sleep and rest environment of the service to ensure children are effectively supervised. Children who are sleeping or resting will be within sight and hearing distance of educators.
- Active supervision will be maintained by visually checking the child's breathing and the colour of the child's lips and skin tone at appropriate regular time intervals and making appropriate records.

4.2.5. Partnership with families

- Services will engage with parents and carers to understand a child's sleep and rest routine at home, their family's cultural preferences, and the child's health care needs to support the child's sleep and rest needs at the service, noting the prevailing safe sleep practices advocated by Red Nose and ACECQA.
- Services will communicate sleep and rest policies and procedures with parents and carers, and model and promote safe sleep and rest practices to support families' understanding and adoption of safe sleep and rest practices for their children.
- Support for families to adopt safe infant sleeping practices will be culturally responsive.
- Families' requests relating to sleep and rest arrangements for their child at a service will be reasonably accommodated unless they are inconsistent with current recommended safe sleep practices advocated by Red Nose, SA Health and ACECQA.

4.3. Safe sleep and rest procedure

Services must develop their own local (site-specific) procedures for safe sleep and rest which address the requirements in the National Regulations and the service's specific context. A [template for sleep and rest local procedures \(DOCX 166KB\)](#) (staff login required) is available to support early childhood services' compliance with the National Regulations.

If services are in scope of the department's [safe sleeping and resting for infants and young children procedure \(PDF 237KB\)](#), their local procedures must be consistent with the department's procedure.

OSHC services must have a local sleep and rest policy and procedure to meet regulation 168 of the National Regulations.

4.4. Risk assessment for sleep and rest

Risk assessments for sleep and rest must be conducted at least once every 12 months and as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the safety, health or wellbeing of children during sleep and rest. The [safe sleeping and resting for infants and young children procedure \(PDF 237KB\)](#) includes procedures which address the risk assessment requirements in regulation 84C of the National Regulations. The procedure requires services to use a [template for sleep and rest risk assessment \(PDF 1MB\)](#) (staff login required) to support compliance with the National Regulations.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. Child Care Management Committees (long day care)

Child Care Management Committees (long day care) who are the approved provider of the long day care component of an integrated service are encouraged to adopt this policy.

5.2. Early Childhood Education and Care Services

Early Childhood Education and Care services in scope of this policy must comply with this policy and the [safe sleeping and resting for infants and young children procedure \(PDF 237KB\)](#).

5.3. Lead Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services

The Lead Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services has approved provider responsibilities under the EECS Act.

5.4. Out of School Hours Care

OSHC services must comply with this policy and also develop their own local policy, procedure and risk assessment to comply with regulation 168 of the National Regulations.

5.5. Family Day Care

FDC staff, registered FDC educators and approved FDC educator assistants must comply with the [family day care health and safety policy \(PDF 295KB\)](#) which addresses Safe sleep practices as per the National Regulations. FDC also has related operational guides which are available to FDC educators through the FDC Hub.

5.6. Quality Preschools

Quality Preschools must monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in accordance with the department's operational policy framework requirements.

6. Definitions

6.1. infant

A child under 12 months of age.

6.2. integrated service

A children's centre for early childhood development and parenting or a rural integrated service with a long day care service where day to day responsibility for the long day care is delegated to the department site leader by the child care management committee.

6.3. Sudden and Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI)

SUDI is defined as the death of an infant between birth and 12 months of age, which is unexpected, sudden, and not anticipated due to any known pre-existing medical conditions.

6.4. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

SIDS is a subset of SUDI. SIDS is defined as the sudden unexpected death of an infant less than 12 months of age, with onset of the fatal episode apparently occurring during sleep, that remains unexplained after a thorough investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, review of the circumstances of death and clinical history.

7. Supporting information

[ACECQA safe sleep and rest policy and procedure guidelines \(PDF 254KB\)](#)

[ACECQA information sheet on safe sleep and rest legislative requirements](#)

[ACECQA sleep and rest risk assessment template \(PDF 458KB\)](#)

[Culturally Responsive Framework \(PDF 6MB\)](#)

[Red Nose Australia: First Nations Resources](#)

[South Australian Safe Infant Sleeping Standards \(PDF 732KB\)](#)

[Template for sleep and rest local procedures \(DOCX 166KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Template for sleep and rest risk assessment \(PDF 1MB\)](#) (staff login required)

7.1. Related legislation

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011 \(including Schedule 1](#)

[Education and Care Services National Law \(South Australia\)\)](#) (including Schedule 1, sections 165 and 167)

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) (including regulations 82, 84A – 84C, 87, 103, 105 – 107, 110, 115, 168, and 170 – 172)

7.2. Related policies

[Safe sleeping and resting for infants and young children procedure \(PDF 237KB\)](#)

8. Record history

Published date: September 2024

8.1. Approvals

OP number: 330

File number: DE20/10843

Status: approved

Version: 1.0

Policy Officer: Senior Policy Officer, Preschool Policy and Advice

Policy sponsor: Director, Quality Preschools

Responsible Executive Director: Lead Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services

Approved by: Lead Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services

Approved date: 23 September 2024

Next review date: 23 September 2027

8.2. Revision record

Version: 1.0

Approved by: Lead Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services

Approved date: 23 September 2024

Review date: 23 September 2027

Amendment(s): Implementation of new policy.

9. Contact

Preschool Policy and Advice, Quality Preschools

Email: <mailto:education.PreschoolPolicyAndAdvice@sa.gov.au>

Phone: 8226 0812