

RELAXATION AND SLEEP POLICY

Best Practice – Quality Area 2

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

Overarching Policy Statement:

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy statement:

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- providing a positive and nurturing environment for all children attending the service;
- recognising that children have different requirements for relaxation and sleep, and being responsive to those needs to ensure that children feel safe and secure at the service;
- consulting with parents about their child's individual relaxation and sleep requirements/practices, and ensuring practices at the service are responsive to the values and cultural beliefs of each family;
- its duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) to all children at the service;
- ensuring that adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*) is maintained while children are sleeping, resting or relaxing;
- complying with all legislative requirements, standards and current best practice, including recommendations by SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe

Purpose:

This policy will provide clear guidelines for the implementation of safe relaxation and sleep practices that meet the individual needs of children attending the service.

Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

Sleep/rest and relaxation needs of children at the service should always be considered, having regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs. Parents should be consulted in relation to appropriate relaxation and sleep practices for their child; parents in turn are responsible for informing the service about any specific sleep/rest requirements for their child.

Staff at the service must be familiar and comply with WorkSafe Victoria's *Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit*, as well as SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe information in relation to safe sleeping practices for children. Attachment 3 contains specific information about cots and the standards applying to them.

Staff should consider SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe information when developing relaxation and sleep practices. These should be responsive to:

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- the individual needs of children at the service
- parenting beliefs, values, practices and requirements
- the length of time each child spends at the service
- circumstance or events occurring at a child's home
- consistency of practice between home and the service
- a child's general health and wellbeing
- the physical environment, including room temperature, lighting, airflow and noise levels

Scope:

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents, children and others attending the programs and activities of the service.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.

Background and legislation:

“The early years of life are a peak period for growth and development, and quality sleep is essential during this period. Early childhood educators can support parents to establish and maintain good sleep habits in children through the environment provided for sleep and rest:

- Provide a separate, supervised area that is reserved for sleep and rest. This supports the distinction between awake time and sleep time and helps to minimise distractions.
- Direct children who do not want to sleep into quiet, restful activities instead.
- Maintain good levels of communication with parents and other caregivers to ensure that you know of anything that might have disturbed the sleep of children in your care.
- Let parents and caregivers know about the rest that their child has had that day at your setting” (from *Grow & Thrive* – refer to *Sources*).

The *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (VEYLDF) include a focus on social, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing and health. Development Outcome 3 in both framework documents refers to a child's ability to take increasing responsibility for their own wellbeing. One of the indicators for this capacity is that children “recognise and communicate their bodily needs (for example thirst, hunger, rest, comfort, physical activity)”. The EYLF suggests that to promote this, educators should:

- consider the pace of the day within the context of the community;
- provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day, and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation.

Employers have a responsibility under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to provide a safe and healthy working environment. This duty extends to others present in the workplace, including children and volunteers. Providing a safe environment for children at the service includes complying with current Australian/New Zealand standards in relation to equipment, such as cots and mattresses (refer to *Sources*).

Attachment 2 contains a list of the legislation and sources relevant to this policy, including Acts and Regulations.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness;
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required;
- notify parents at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Definitions:

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) **supervision** entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Duty of care: A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury.

Relaxation/rest: A period of inactivity, solitude, calmness or tranquillity.

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome): The unexpected and unexplained death of an infant, usually occurring during sleep.

SIDS and Kids: The National SIDS Council of Australia, dedicated to eliminating SIDS and providing support for bereaved families. SIDS and Kids is considered to be the national authority on safe sleeping practices for infants and children. A branch of SIDS and Kids is located in each state and territory, and can provide resources and assistance (see Att. 2, *Sources*).

Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited on: 1/7/2017

Review date: August 2017**This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:**

- *Child Safe Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

Attachment 1: Responsibilities relating to the Relaxation and Sleep Policy

Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents/ Guardians
Take reasonable steps to ensure the sleep/rest needs of children at the service are met, with regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs (Regulation 81(1))	x	x		
Ensure parents are consulted about appropriate relaxation and sleep practices for their child	x			
Protect children from hazards and harm (Section 167)	x	x		
Ensure cots provided at the service comply with the most current Australian/New Zealand Standards (refer to Attachment 2, Sources and Attachment3 – Cots)	x			
Ensure that hammocks, prams and strollers are not used to settle children to sleep	x			
Consult with staff in relation to OHS issues when purchasing new equipment for the service	x			
Ensure compliance with WorkSafe Victoria's <i>Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit</i> (refer to Attachment 2 Sources), including in relation to staff lifting children into and out of cots	x	x		
Ensure compliance with the recommendations of SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe in relation to safe sleeping practices for children (refer to Attachment 2)	x	x		
Ensure adequate supervision of children at the service at all times, including during relaxation and sleep	x	x		
Ensure that rooms used for sleep and relaxation are well ventilated	x			
Ensure that there is adequate space to store bedding in a hygienic manner	x			
Ensure the educational program provides opportunities for each child to sleep, rest or engage in appropriate quiet play activities, as required		x		
Inform the Approved Provider, as soon as practicable, of any hazards identified in the child's resting or sleeping environment		x		
Store items such as bedding in a hygienic manner to prevent cross-contamination		x		

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Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents/ Guardians
Provide each child with appropriate opportunities for relaxation and sleep according to their needs			x	
Comply with the recommendations of SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe in relation to safe sleeping practices for children (refer to Attachment 2)			x	
Comply with WorkSafe Victoria's <i>Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit</i> (refer to Attachment 2), including in relation to lifting children into and out of cots			x	
Provide input in relation to OHS issues when new equipment is purchased for the service			x	
Develop relaxation and sleep practices that are responsive to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the individual needs of children at the service – parenting beliefs, values, practices and requirements – the length of time each child spends at the service – circumstance or events occurring at a child's home – consistency of practice between home and the service – a child's general health and wellbeing – the physical environment, including room temperature, lighting, airflow and noise levels 			x	
Minimise distress or discomfort for the children in their care			x	
Ensure that resting and sleeping practices are not used as a behaviour guidance strategy (refer to <i>Interactions with Children Policy</i>)			x	
Provide a range of opportunities for relaxation throughout the day			x	
Conduct regular safety checks of equipment used for sleeping/resting, such as cots and mattresses			x	
Inform the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider, as soon as is practicable, of any hazards identified in the child's resting or sleeping environment			x	
Ensure that any hanging cords, mobiles, curtains and blinds are inaccessible to children who are resting or sleeping			x	
Provide adequate supervision (see <i>Definitions</i>) of all children, including during sleep, rest and relaxation			x	
Supervise children displaying symptoms of illness closely, especially when resting or sleeping (refer to			x	

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Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents/ Guardians
<i>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy)</i>				
Ensure that artificial heating, such as heat bags and hot-water bottles, are not used			x	
Ensure that each child has their own bed linen, and that the <i>Hygiene Policy</i> and procedures are implemented for the cleaning and storage of cots, mattresses and linen			x	
Document and communicate children's rest and sleep times to co-workers during shift changes			x	
Provide information to families about the service's relaxation and sleep practices			x	
Develop communication strategies to inform parents about their child's rest and sleep patterns, including times and length of sleep			x	
Encourage children's independence, and assist children with dressing as needed			x	
Discuss their child's relaxation and sleep requirements and practices prior to commencing at the service, and when these requirements change				x
Provide information on the child's enrolment form if the child requires special items while resting or sleeping e.g. a comforter or soft toy				x
Provide a written medical report if their baby/child is not to be placed on their back during sleep				x
Communicate alternative resting practices to staff				x

Note: Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

ATTACHMENT 2: LEGISLATION AND SOURCES

Legislation and standards:

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012*
- *Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Regulations 2012*
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2013)
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*: Section 167
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulation 81
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
 - Standard 2.1: Each child’s health needs are supported
 - Element 2.1.2: Each child’s comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s needs for sleep, rest and relaxation
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

Sources:

- Australian/New Zealand Standards:
 - Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2013), and
 - Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998)

Services can check current standards on the SAI Global website at: www.saiglobal.com

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF): <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- Grow and Thrive, *Sleep*, volume 2 number 1, February 2013, Centre for Community Child Health: <http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/growthrive/archives/>
- Kidsafe Fact Sheets at: www.kidsafevic.com.au/resources
 - *Safe Sleeping for Infants*
 - *Ages and Stages* fact sheet series (‘Sleeping’ section)
- SIDS and Kids, Safe Sleeping Program: <http://www.sidsandkids.org/safe-sleeping/> SIDS and Kids also produces a range of resources including the *Infant Safe Sleeping Child Care Kit*
- Product safety: a guide for businesses and legal practitioners: www.consumer.vic.gov.au/businesses/fair-trading/product-safety
- WorkSafe Victoria, *Children’s services – occupational health and safety compliance kit*: <http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/childrens-services-occupational-health-and-safety-compliance-kit>

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF):

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/pages/veyladf.aspx>

ATTACHMENT 3: COTS

There are currently two standards that apply to the use of cots:

- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2013), and
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998).

Services can check current standards on the SAI Global website at www.saiglobal.com

Household cots usually have a lower base and mattress and WorkSafe Victoria have expressed concern for staff in relation to the manual handling risks posed when working with cots at a lower height.

The Institutional Cot Standard allows for cots with a higher base and mattress, but requires these cots to be made of metal, and to have a drop side that can be lowered to the level of the mattress. The early childhood sector has expressed concerns in relation to the safety of cots with sides that lower to the level of the mattress.

Services should investigate options either for:

- cots that meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2013) and have a higher base and mattress, or
- cots that meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998).

No alterations should be made to purchased cots under any circumstance, as this may have serious consequences in relation to liability in the event that an incident occurs.

It is recommended that services **not** use portable cots, as they present an increased risk of injury or death to a child if erected incorrectly. Portable cots also pose an increased risk of manual handling injuries to staff. If a service requires an extra cot to be available for occasional use, it is possible to purchase a cot that meets the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use, and folds flat for easy storage.

Further information on cots is available as follows:

- Fact Sheet – Cots: www.ohsinecservices.org.au/purchasing-factsheets
- Manual Handling Tipsheet: www.ohsinecservices.org.au/tipsheets