

Early Learning

Safe Travel (Children) Policy

Overarching 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:

- ensuring children are adequately supervised to protect their wellbeing and safety during any excursion or journey from or to the service that involves travel in a vehicle organised by the service;
- meeting duty of care and legal requirements to minimise risk and protect children from harm and hazard at all times;
- providing appropriate information to parents/guardians about vehicle and road safety;
- providing an educational program that encompasses educating children in road safety.

Executive Summary

Obligations regarding the safe travel of children are dependent upon whether the organised arrangements are part of the provision of the education and care of the children or separate from the provision of education and care for children and the operation of the service. The potential for harm is greater outside of the safety of the education and care environment and risks must be assessed contingent upon whether children travel by service bus, school bus, hire bus, public transport or travelling in a family day care educator's private vehicle.

Transport used for any excursion, the delivery and collection of children or regular outing must meet travel safety standards. This means that all vehicles must be registered, insured, maintained, and have restraints approved by the Roads and Traffic Authority. Any driver of a vehicle must have a current approved license. All adults must have a current Working with Children Check. Proper restraint systems are to be used in vehicles according to current Australian Standards.

Educators are expected to follow appropriate procedures when children are transported by bus, public transport or family day care educator's private vehicle to ensure safety at all times, which includes undertaking regular head counts/identity checks and cross-checking against the current attendance record to ensure no child is left behind. Children are never to be left unattended in any vehicle. Supervision and communication are key strategies used by educators to ensure smooth, safe and enjoyable travel arrangements for all.

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Educators and volunteers are required to understand their roles and responsibilities when a parent or authorised nominee fails to collect a child, after arriving at their destination, or a child is confirmed missing. A documented emergency plan that minimises risks, is essential in the unexpected instance of a vehicle breakdown or crash, or transport-related injury involving children, staff or volunteers. All adults must understand their roles and responsibilities at these times.

Current Environmental Context

As the risks are greater when children travel outside of the service environment, a final risk assessment will be required on the day of travel. Unforeseen and or unexpected circumstances on the day may include: unexpected weather changes, dynamic of group, type of bus, change in collection and/or drop off points and destination conditions.

Duty of care is the responsibility of everyone and the driver of the vehicle must have a Working With Children check and not be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any medication that will alter their perceptions or make them drowsy.

On the day, educators must ensure that all vehicles used to transport children have seatbelts fitted and child restraints that are suitable for a child's age/size and that these are properly adjusted, fastened and correctly used. The number of children that can be safely transported by a vehicle should not be exceeded.

To ensure the safety of children while travelling, it is essential that all staff; educators, family day care educator assistants and volunteers, involved, communicate regularly and acknowledge this communication. For example, when undertaking headcounts, ensure everyone knows exactly how many children are accounted for and the identity of each and every child. A charged and functioning mobile communicating device is required for safe travel. Staff are to ensure that the device is charged operating and taken on the journey.

Where transport is provided that is not directly part of the education and care service, a parent or authorised nominee named in the child's enrolment record needs to provide a written authorisation to allow the children to leave the education and care service premises.

Attachment 6a: Children travelling by service bus

Attachment 6b: Children travelling by school bus

Attachment 6c: Children travelling by bus

Attachment 6d: Children travelling by Family Day Care educator private vehicle

Attachment 6e: Emergency Procedures

Attachment 6f: Procedures for the late collection of children

Attachment 6g: Transportation not part of the education and care service

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Reference/Sources

- *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved June 2015: <https://www.victas.uca.org.au/UCA%20Resources/Documents/Keeping%20Children%20Safe%20Policy.pdf>
- *Delivery and Collection* policy
- *Excursion, Regular Outing and Service Event* policy
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*: Section 165, 167, 169, 174
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulation 99, 123, 124, 126, 127, 136, 158, 168, 172
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety*
- School Bus Program Policies and Procedures www.education.vic.gov.au/studenttransport
- Starting Out Safely: <http://childroadsafety.org.au/>
- *Transporting Children in Centre Based Services*. NQF Fact Sheets. Department of Education and Training: (Updated October 2015)
- *Transporting Children in Family Day Care*. NQF Fact Sheet. Department of Education and Training: (Updated October 2015) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/nqffactsheets.aspx>

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on: 15th May 2017

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by: 15 June 2018

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Attachment 6a - Children travelling by service bus

When children are travelling to and from the service by service bus undertake the following procedures to ensure that children are kept safe and that no child is left behind.

Prior to travel

1. Ensure parents have completed and signed a form authorising their child's travel on the service bus. Ensure the period of authorisation is identified. This form is to be kept with the child's enrolment record.
2. Parents to negotiate collection/delivery times for their child directly with the primary school if child is attending before school or after school care programs.
3. Parents to telephone and inform the service immediately of any change to travel arrangements (e.g. child's absence due to illness etc.).
4. Educator to compile a bus list with names of all children travelling on the service bus and days/times of travel. This list should also include emergency contact details for each child and any travel requirements (e.g. child restraint, medication and medication record) and be kept up to date with daily changes recorded (e.g. parents notifying child's absence).
5. Organise regular refuelling, maintenance and safety checks of the service bus.
6. Ensure there are a minimum of two staff on the bus – a driver and an educator with current first aid, emergency asthma and anaphylaxis training.
7. Relevant educator to child ratios and qualification requirements must be met at all times.
8. A charged and working mobile communication device is allocated to a staff member.
9. There is an agreed route and timetable that identifies time required for checking processes,(to ensure that the process is thorough and not rushed) or the bus to travel to and from the service and families have been advised of this. In the case of emergencies alternative routes would be identified where possible in consultation with bus driver and service staff.

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Children travelling to the service from home or before school care

1. Follow the scheduled bus route and timetable.
2. Ensure timetable accommodates adequate time for safe and thorough checking and identification processes.
3. Ensure bus is safely parked before each child boards.
4. Ensure that there is no other adults/person on the bus other than the driver prior to boarding the bus.
5. Parents/authorised school staff are to escort child to the bus or notify service if they will be absent.
6. Parents/authorised school staff sign child on to the service bus.
7. Educator cross checks and ticks each child's name on the bus list as they board, ensuring the accuracy of the individual identity of each and every child.
8. If a child marked on the bus list is not waiting for collection, an educator is to phone parent or before school care program to confirm their absence immediately.
9. The chaperone/educator must ensure that each child is seated and that seat belts / child restraints are fastened correctly before bus proceeds to the next stop.
10. When the last child has been collected the educator will undertake a head count and cross check against the bus list to ensure the identity of all children are accounted for.
11. On reaching the service the educator must ensure children remain seated and seat belts remain fastened until the bus has safely parked.
12. Once the educator has accounted for each and every child and cross checked with the bus list, notify the driver of the intended exit from the vehicle.
13. Once safe to do so, escort children from the bus ensuring the driver remains on the bus until all children have disembarked.
14. The educator is to undertake a further headcount to ensure all children have left the bus.
15. The driver of the bus is to check that all children have left the bus.
16. The educator is to escort the children to the service and sign the attendance record sighting each child and cross-checking against the bus list.
17. The bus is not to leave the premises, until the educator has communicated with the driver that all children are present and accounted for at the service.

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Children travelling from the service to home or after school care

1. At the end of the session the educator signs children out of the service and escorts them to the bus.
2. Driver to ensure bus is safely parked before each child boards.
3. The educator is to ensure that there are no other adults/person on the bus other than the driver prior to boarding the bus.
4. The educator marks each child's name on the bus list as they board.
5. The educator and driver make sure each child is seated and that seat belts/child restraints are fastened correctly.
6. Before departure the educator undertake a head count and cross check against the bus list to ensure all children are present, ensuring the accuracy of the individual identity of each and every child.
7. Driver to follow scheduled bus route and timetable.
8. Driver to ensure bus is safely parked before children disembark.
9. Educator to mark children off the bus list as they are collected by parents/authorised school staff.
10. Parents or authorised nominee (authorised school staff/educator) to sign child off the bus.
11. After the last stop, the educator and bus driver checks the bus and the bus list to ensure that no children remain on the bus before returning to the service.

Failure to collect

If a child is not collected by parents or authorised nominee (refer to *Glossary*) within 15 minutes of arriving at their destination:

1. Phone parent or authorised nominee.
2. If unable to reach parent/authorised nominee notify the service and continue on the bus run taking the child with you.
3. At the end of the run return to the service with the child and follow **Procedures for the late collection of children** (refer to *Attachment 6f*).

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Attachment 6b - Children travelling by school bus

When children are travelling to the service by school bus undertake the following procedures to ensure that children are safe and that no child is left behind.

1. Provide parents with accurate information about the School Bus program including details of the relevant coordinating school to contact.
2. Written authorisation to allow the children to leave the service must be provided. Ensure parents or authorised nominees (refer to *Glossary*) have completed and signed a form notifying the service that the child will be travelling by school bus. This form is to be kept with the child's enrolment record and a copy provided to the coordinating school.
3. Ensure relevant criminal history, working with children check have been completed for all adults.
4. Compile a bus list with names of all children travelling to the service by school bus and the days they will be travelling. This list should also include emergency contact details for each child and any travel requirements (e.g. medical management action plan and medication, child restraint) and be kept up to date with daily changes recorded (e.g. parents notifying child's absence).
5. Provide a copy of the school bus list to the coordinating school. The coordinating school will provide a list to the bus company / bus driver.
6. Parents are responsible for transporting their children to and from designated bus stops and are responsible for their safety while waiting for the school bus.
7. The bus driver is responsible for marking each child's name on the bus list as they board the bus.
8. The bus driver is responsible for ensuring that there are no other adults/person on the bus other than the driver prior to boarding the bus.
9. Ensure an educator is waiting for the school bus at the scheduled arrival time and marks children off the bus list as they exit.
10. The educator is to ensure children wait in a designated safe place until all children have disembarked.
11. The bus driver completes a physical check of the bus for any children and communicates findings to the educators.
12. The educator is to escort children to the service and sign them in on the attendance record. The child's record of attendance must record the time the child arrives or departs the service and must be signed by the Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee, an educator or the person delivering or collecting the child.
13. If a child does not exit the bus and has not been recorded as boarding the bus, contact parents immediately to confirm their absence. Record this on the bus list and attendance record.
14. If a child does not exit the bus but has been recorded as boarding the bus, ensure the driver checks the length of the bus, including under seats if necessary, to locate the child.
15. The bus does not leave the service until all checks are completed and communication confirms between the driver and the educator that all children are accounted for either present or not having boarded the bus as per the bus list.
16. If a child is confirmed missing follow procedures, including reporting procedures (refer to *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*). This includes notifying the Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee and Approved Provider/Licensee as soon as possible after the event and the Department of Education and Training to inform them of a serious incident within 24 hours. The bus driver will contact the School Bus Coordinator and follow emergency procedures.

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Attachment – 6c Children travelling by bus

When transporting children by bus undertake the following procedures to ensure that children are kept safe and that no child is left behind.

1. Ensure correct educator to child ratios and educator qualification requirements are adhered too.
2. Before each child gets on the bus check the attendance record and ensure the child is recorded as present and sight the authorisation form for each child.
3. Cross check attendance with the identity of each and every child.
4. When the bus is parked and is safe to access escort children to the bus.
5. Prior to boarding the bus ensure that there are no other adults/person on the bus other than the driver.
6. Make sure each child is seated and that seat belts / child restraints are fastened correctly.
7. Before departure do a head count to ascertain that the number of children on the bus matches the attendance record and cross check the identity of each and every child.
8. On reaching the destination ensure children remain seated and seat belts remain fastened until the bus has safely parked.
9. Once safe to do so escort children from the bus maintaining educator to child ratios and adequate supervision and ensuring one educator remains on the bus until all children have disembarked and completes and physical check of the length of the bus.
10. Undertake a headcount and cross check each and every child's identity against the attendance record, before proceeding to ensure all children have left the bus.
11. Undertake regular head counts, inclusive of the time that the check was made, particularly when on excursions.
12. If children are returning by bus, escort them safely back to the bus.
13. Prior to boarding the bus ensure that there are no other adults/person on the bus other than the driver.
14. Make sure each child is seated and that seat belts / child restraints are fastened correctly.
15. Before departure undertake a head count and cross check against the attendance record to ensure all children are present.
16. On returning to the service premises ensure children remain seated and seat belts are fastened until the bus has safely parked.
17. Escort children from the bus when safe to do so, maintaining ratios and supervision with one educator remaining on board until all children have disembarked and completes and physical check of the length of the bus.
18. Before the bus departs check each child against the attendance record to ensure all children have returned to the service.
19. Following procedures, including reporting procedures, if a child is confirmed missing (refer to *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*). This includes notifying the Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee and Approved Provider/Licensee as soon as possible after the event and the Department of Education and Training to inform them of a serious incident within 24 hours.

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Attachment – 6d Children travelling by Family Day Care educator’s vehicle

- Ensuring parents/guardians have access to this policy and that its contents are communicated to them.
- Ensuring that all Family Day Care authorised drivers (refer to *Definitions*) hold a current full Australian Drivers Licence.
- Assessing and documenting how many children can be transported in an educator/authorised driver’s vehicle.
- Ensuring that educators follow appropriate procedures in the event of a vehicle crash or transport-related injury involving Family Day Care children or staff (refer to *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*).
- Maintaining a register of vehicles and authorised drivers that includes motor vehicle registration, insurance and licence details, and details of any driving offences, and updating this annually or more frequently as required.
- Ensuring that educators/drivers are aware that they are not to leave children unattended in a vehicle at any time, including when refuelling.
- Ensuring that children are not transported in additional/dickie seats (refer to *Definitions*) due to safety concerns with these types of seats in the event of a crash.
- Ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed in the event of a vehicle crash or transport-related injury involving Family Day Care children or staff (refer to *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*).
- Ensuring that child restraints and booster seats, with at least a four-star crash protection rating as determined by the Child Restraint Evaluation Program (CREP) (refer to *Definitions*), are used by the Family Day Care service. Booster cushions (refer to *Definitions*) do not meet the Australian/New Zealand Child Restraint Standard AS/NZ 1754 2010, 2013 and are no longer allowed to be manufactured in Australia.
- Ensuring that educators use child restraints and booster seats in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Ensuring that child restraint accessories, including child safety harnesses (refer to *Definitions*), are not used unless prescribed by a health professional such as an occupational therapist.
- Ensuring that ‘type of restraint’ is included on all excursion authorisation forms under *Method of transport to be used for the excursion*.
- Ensuring that children under the age of 12 years do not travel in the front seat of a vehicle if there are rear seats available, due to the increased risk of injury to child passengers in the event of a crash. If all rear seats are being used by children aged under 7 years, children aged 4 years to under 7 years are permitted to travel in the front seat, provided they use a booster seat. (If the car has frontal air bags, the seat should be moved back as far as possible.) If a child under 12 years needs to travel in the front seat, parents/guardians must provide informed consent (refer to *Definitions*).
- Ensuring that parents/guardians of children with disabilities or medical conditions are aware that a health professional, such as an occupational therapist, can prescribe a child restraint appropriate for their child’s needs, and may be able to provide guidance on accessing and using special restraints.
- Ensuring that educators, coordinators, authorised drivers, Family Day Care educator assistants and staff members receive training on how to correctly install and use child restraints and booster seats, and professional development on other road safety topics.
- Ensuring that educators check that child restraints and booster seats are safe, clean and in good repair, and are no more than five years old.
- Ensuring that any child restraint that is involved in a crash is replaced.
- Ensuring that bicycle helmets are available and fitted correctly when bicycles or wheeled toys (refer to *Definitions*) are used.
- Ensuring that bicycle helmets are in good condition and meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard 2063 (refer to *Legislation and standards*).

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In the case of when a child is observed to be at risk of harm while being transported to or from a Family Day Care premises

Service providers have a duty of care to ensure the safety of children is paramount. Service providers must also comply with their obligations under state or territory child protection laws.

Where a parent/guardian or authorised nominee is observed not using a child restraint, using the wrong child restraint, using a child restraint inappropriately or engaging in other unsafe behaviours such as parking illegally or not using a bicycle helmet, the Family Day Care educator should:

- Talk with the parent/guardian/authorised nominee about the importance of safe transport procedures, including the correct use of child restraints and/or relevant road safety behaviours.
- Provide/refer the parent/guardian/authorised nominee to relevant information regarding safe transport.
- Provide the parent/guardian/authorised nominee with a copy of this policy.
- Offer/provide assistance to the parent/guardian/authorised nominee with the choice/purchase/installation/fitment of the correct restraint or bicycle helmet for their child.

If the parent/guardian or authorised nominee persists with unsafe behaviours, the Family Day Care educator must notify the service coordinator, who should:

- Contact the parent/guardian/authorised nominee directly and discuss the importance of child restraint use and/or safe road user behaviour, including legal requirements and implications.
- Follow up with the parent/guardian/authorised nominee, where required, to ensure that they have the most appropriate restraint for their child and that it is being used correctly.

If a parent/guardian or authorised nominee appears to be impaired or intoxicated when arriving to collect their child, the Family Day Care educator should:

- Encourage the parent/guardian or authorised nominee to use an alternative form of transport or contact another authorised person to collect the child. If the parent/guardian or authorised nominee is not willing to use an alternative form of transport, the educator cannot prevent the parent/guardian or authorised nominee from taking the child.
- Notify the police and/or child protection authorities immediately if the educator is of the opinion that the child may not be safe in the care of the parent/guardian or authorised nominee.

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Attachment – 6e Emergency Procedures

Vehicle breakdown

In the case of a vehicle breakdown the educator in charge or the driver will:

- 1. Assess the danger.
 2. Phone the service to inform the Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee immediately.
 3. The Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee and the educator or driver will discuss suitable alternative transport and organise for this to be undertaken. (Back up Bus Contingency Plans with contact details to be displayed above office phone and a copy must also be kept on the bus.).
 4. Assess the safest place for the children to wait for a replacement vehicle, or for repairs to be carried out.
 5. Ensure that the children are kept safe at all times.
 6. The Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee will inform the Approved Provider/Licensee.
 7. The Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee will inform the parents of the breakdown if necessary.
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Vehicle accident

In the case of a vehicle accident the educator in charge or the driver will:

1. Assess the danger.
2. Check to see if any children or educators are hurt, conduct first aid and phone for an ambulance if necessary.
3. Comfort and calm the children.
4. Ensure that the children are safe at all times.
5. Take the required details of the other driver involved: name, contact, registration number, driver's licence, insurer and any damage made to either vehicle. Where possible use a camera for photographic evidence and information e.g. Mobile phone.
6. Phone the service to inform the Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee, organise alternative transport and inform the Approved Provider/Licensee.
7. Phone the police if necessary.
8. Upon return to the service complete reporting processes as required.
9. Fill in an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record (To be completed within 24 hours of accident).
10. Notify the Department of Education and Training, within 24 hours of incident.
11. Children should be instructed to stay with the vehicle until assistance arrives.
12. UnitingCare contact details should always be carried on the vehicle.
13. The Nominated Supervisor/ Primary Nominee will inform the parents of the incident, and ensure that all the appropriate accident procedures are undertaken.

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Attachment 6f - Procedures for the late collection of children

Where the parent or authorised nominee (refer to *Glossary*) is late collecting their child and has not notified the service, the responsible person is required to:

1. Ensure at least 2 educators (one with a minimum Diploma level qualification), remain on the premises with the child until collected (Family Day Care & Out of School Care services are exempt from this requirement).
2. Contact the parents or the authorised nominee to request collection, at service closure time and/or at 15 minute intervals.
3. Continue attempts to contact parents and authorised persons if unreachable, and document contact attempts, including time, name and telephone number of person.
4. After 30 minutes, and all reasonable attempts have been made to contact authorised persons to collect child without success, inform the Early Years Manager/Approved Provider/Licensee.
5. Contact Child FIRST where the parents or authorised nominees are unable to be contacted 2 hours after the end of the session.
6. Document the late occurrence. Details to include: the date, time and reason for failure to collect the child, attempts to contact authorised person, and names and titles of persons spoken with at Child First.
7. Determine if a late collection fee is to be charged (refer to *Fees Policy*).

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Content Owner	Uniting Early Learning – Head of Early Learning		Page No. Page 12 of 13	
Document Author	P. Silveira	Document Version	V 1.0	Policy No. 06
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Each Founding Agency Policy, Procedure, Practice Manual or Form continues to have effect on and after the Date of Establishment as Uniting to the extent that it is not inconsistent with a Uniting Level 1 & 2 Policy and until such time as Uniting replaces it.

The latest version of this policy can be found at <https://vtuniting.sharepoint.com/Uniting%2oPolicies>

Attachment – 6g Transportation not part of the education and care service

Whatever the arrangements made for the transportation of children, the relevant criminal history requirements must be met. Further information is available at:

www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/about+the+check/who+needs+a+check/

Where transportation is provided that is not part of the education and care service, for example on a charter bus, school bus, or as part of the School Bus Program, services must ensure the policies and procedures for the delivery and collection and for excursions include the following information:

- The roles and responsibilities of parents, the service and educators.
- Procedures for ensuring children are safely delivered to and collected from the transportation provided, including accounting for each child and recording children’s arrival and departure at the service.
- A minimum of two people are present on the bus (i.e driver and educator/chaperone) and both are to have current first aid qualifications, WWC and criminal history check.
- A portable first aid kit must be carried at all times on the vehicle.
- Communication protocols between the parents and the service where a child does not arrive at the service or at home at the expected time or where a child expected to be transported but is not travelling on a particular day.
- Arrangements for children being transported for the first time.
- Written authorisation by the parent to an authorised nominee named in the child’s enrolment record to collect the child from the premises.
- Written authorisation of the child’s parent or authorised nominee named in the child’s enrolment record, to allow the child to leave the service.
- In addition, the child’s record of attendance must record the time that the child arrives or departs the education and care service and must be signed by the nominated supervisor, an educator or the person delivering or collecting the child.
- Parents of the children being transported to and from the service should be made aware of the policies for delivery and collection of children and excursions and must be notified of any changes to the policy.

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