

## HEALTH & SAFETY – Epidemic and Pandemic Policy

### 1. Introduction

From time to time, infectious diseases develop into epidemics or pandemics and create increased risks for the community. These occasions require specific policies targeted at the particular disease in question and general efforts at preparedness.

- 1.1 Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative wishes as far as possible to protect its clients, its staff, its Educators, its volunteers, and the general public from infection or contagion by epidemics and/or pandemics.
- 1.2 Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative will facilitate, through its policies and procedures, strategies designed to reduce risks to its clients, its staff, its Educators, its volunteers, and the general public.
- 1.3 Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative will comply with all directions from authorised public health officers and recognised medical authorities concerning the Epidemic or pandemic.

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this Policy is to outline the strategies and actions that Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative intends to take to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases that are epidemics or pandemics, and control the transmission of infectious diseases when a case/s is identified.

**For the purpose of this Policy, infectious diseases** mean diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another. This Policy is focused on infectious diseases that are declared to be an epidemic or pandemic.

### 3. Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all Stakeholders of Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative; Including all Employees, Educators, Families, Students, Volunteers and Contractors of the Cooperative.

### 4. Policy

- 4.1 Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative will as far as possible plan for and make advance preparations for the possibility that its operations will be affected by an epidemic or pandemic.
- 4.2 In the event of an epidemic or pandemic, Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative will, as far as possible:
  - 4.2.1 Assist its staff, Educators, families, volunteers and others, as relevant, to minimise their exposure to the illness concerned.
  - 4.2.2 Encourage and assist those who have reason to believe that they are at risk of contracting the Epidemic or pandemic to obtain a diagnosis.
  - 4.2.3 Support employees, families, Educators, and volunteers to take reasonable precautions to prevent infection or contagion.
  - 4.2.4 Request Educators to implement standard precautions such as personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, soap, and gloves).
  - 4.2.5 Maintain its services and operations throughout the period of concern.
- 4.3 In the event of an infectious disease being declared an epidemic or pandemic, Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative requires people covered by this Policy to take the following precautions:

- 4.3.1 Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
- 4.3.2 Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, or shaking hands with others.
- 4.3.3 Make sure you follow good hygiene and encourage others to do the same. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze and disposing of used tissues immediately.
- 4.3.4 Advise all employees, children and families to stay home if you feel unwell. If you are well enough to work but would like to minimise the risk of infecting others, ask whether you can temporarily work from home.
- 4.3.5 Keep up to date on the latest hotspots (cities or local areas where the pandemic or Epidemic is spreading widely). If possible, avoid travelling to places - especially if you are more at risk.
- 4.3.6 If you are or are likely to be contagious, notify either the Assistant Director or Director as soon as possible. It may be possible or necessary for you to self-isolate by temporarily closing your FDC service until you recover.
- 4.3.7 Seek medical advice promptly and follow the directions of your local health authority.

### 5. Leave and Flexibility

- 5.1 Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative recognises that Educators may request or require unpaid leave when they are unwell, at risk of or vulnerable to infection, and at risk of infecting others.
- 5.2 Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative may, at its discretion, direct those affected or reasonably at risk of being affected by the pandemic or Epidemic, to remain away from the workplace or temporarily close.

### 6. Note

In carrying out the procedures listed below, Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative will be guided by the information and directions provided by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and its occupational health and safety obligations.

### 7. Related Documents

- 7.1 Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza ([AHMPPI](#))
  - [ACT - Australian Capital Territory](#)
  - [NSW - New South Wales](#)
  - [NT - Northern Territory](#)
  - [Qld - Queensland](#)
  - [SA - South Australia](#)
  - [Tas - Tasmania](#)
  - [Vic - Victoria](#)
  - [WA - Western Australia](#)

## 8. Legislation & Industrial Instruments

*This Policy & procedure is not intended to override any industrial instrument, contract, award or legislation.*

- *Biosecurity Act 2015 (Commonwealth)*
- *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
- *Fair Work Regulations 2009 (Cth)*
- *Staying Healthy in Childcare*

### 1. Responsibilities

- 1.1 The Director is responsible for:
- Nominating the Epidemic Officer. The normal expectation will be that the Workplace Health and Safety Officer shall be appointed as Epidemic Officer, but the Director may override this if they see fit.
  - Ensuring that the organisation's Leave and Workplace Health and Safety policies are consistent with the intention of the Epidemic Policy
  - Assessing the organisation's vulnerabilities, in the light of the Epidemic or pandemic, to:
    - Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative's own human resources
    - Castlemaine Childcare Cooperative's stakeholders
- 1.2 In the event of an epidemic or pandemic, the Director/Assistant Director is responsible for:
- Giving notice to staff, Educators, volunteers, clients, and any persons likely to be affected that Epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect
  - Ensuring the Epidemic Officer must bring into operation the Epidemic or pandemic management procedures specified below
  - Instituting any administrative measures necessary to reduce the impact of the vulnerabilities detailed above
- 1.3 **Directors** are responsible for:
- Ensuring that staff, Educators and volunteers are aware of the epidemic procedures in effect at any time.
  - Abiding by the epidemic procedures specified below, when informed by authorised staff that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect
- 1.4 **Employees, Educators and volunteers** are responsible for:
- Abiding by the epidemic procedures specified below, when informed by authorised staff that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect
- 1.5 The **Epidemic Officer** is responsible for:
- Working with the Assistant Director on the preparation of a comprehensive epidemic plan
  - Advising the Director/Assistant Director on when epidemic procedures should be activated

### 2. Procedures

The following procedures apply in the event of the Director giving notice that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect.

#### 2.1 Service Operations

- The Director, with the advice of the Management Committee, will consider on a continuing basis whether daily operations should be changed to minimise the risk of infection.

### 2.2 Work procedures

- The Director/Assistant Directors' will consider on a continuing basis whether:
  - it is necessary or appropriate for nominated staff/volunteers to work from home.
  - Staff/volunteer travel, (or other activities that may cause them to come into contact with other people in Australia or overseas) should be modified or terminated.
  - arrangements for staff/volunteers who work with clients or the public should be modified to minimise risks for all parties.
- The Director/Assistant Directors' may require any member of staff to not attend the workplace, and/or to work from home, or, if this is not feasible or appropriate, to take paid/un-paid Epidemic Leave / Personal Leave/ Annual Leave.
- The Director/Assistant Directors' may require any member of staff to provide satisfactory evidence that they are fit to return to work.

### 2.3 Contractors and suppliers

- The Director/Assistant Directors will consider on a continuing basis whether arrangements with existing contractors and suppliers need to be modified or supplemented to ensure uninterrupted service delivery.

## 3. Health Messaging

- 3.1 The Epidemic Officer shall familiarise staff/volunteers and others, as relevant, with recommended procedures on epidemic avoidance guidelines (e.g. handwashing, soap, drop off/pick-up policy) as appropriate.

Source: Vic Health guidelines  
Department of Education and Training, Department of Education, Skills & Employment  
National Law, Regulations and Standards (ACECQA 2011)

Reviewed: June 2020