

What is supervision?

Supervision involves more than ensuring child-to-educator ratios meet minimum requirements. It is a crucial skill and key responsibility of all educators.

Educators must be aware of hazards and the potential for injury in the physical environment while being attuned to children's needs, not only in their present location but throughout the centre.

The Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations require children to be adequately supervised at all times and are protected from harm and hazards. It is an offence under National Law to fail to adequately supervise for children.

Supervision, along with thoughtful design and arrangement of the learning environment, can prevent or reduce injury within a centre, facilitate children's learning and foster meaningful interactions. Careful planning of rosters and a high level of co-operation and communication between staff ensures educators are available to respond to children.

Supervision is determined by a range of factors, including but not limited to:

- The number of children
- The age, strengths, and abilities of children
- The mix of children's ages
- The number and positioning of teacher/educators
- Routines and experiences
- The accessibility and visibility of areas
- Known environmental hazards
- Teacher/educator knowledge of children and the group
- Teacher/educator experience, skill, and qualifications.

Director/Responsible Person in Charge Responsibilities

- Document and display a centre specific *Supervision Plan*.
- Review (with centre educators) the *Supervision Plan* at least annually or when the following occurs:
 - When directed by Early Childhood Education Manager/Committee.
 - The needs/dispositions of the group significantly change.
 - Building or playground changes are scheduled or have been completed.
 - A new educator joins the team.
 - A serious child injury or near miss occurs.
 - Introducing a new experience that poses significant risks.
- Ensure all educators (including casuals) are aware of and consistently implement the *Supervision Plan*. All educators are required to sign and date the *Supervision Plan* when developed and review to acknowledge their understanding and compliance. Include *Supervision Plan* in induction materials.
- Provide guidance and direction to further develop educator supervisory skills.
- Ensure supervision is a regular team meeting agenda item. Consider:
 - *Do teachers and educators know and implement supervision plan strategies, including minimising distractions, to actively supervise children?*
 - *Do teachers and educators effectively communicate with each other about supervision?*
 - *Are teachers and educators distracted by activities? Does this impact their ability to maintain adequate and constant supervision?*
 - *Is there anything about the centre premises that hinder supervision?*

Educator responsibilities and supervision strategies

Proximity

- Proximity/being close-by children enables educators to foster children's learning and respond appropriately to support interactions and intervene when children may be in danger. This should be balanced with promoting children's agency, independence and risk taking.
- Proximity is required when experiences and routines involve some risk e.g. cooking experience; toddlers playing at a water trough or washing hands in the bathroom; climbing, younger children accessing older children's play equipment or children attempting experiences for the first time. Document these activities and their control measures via the *Supervision Plan*.
- Proximity enables early detection of illness, especially for children with medical conditions.

Positioning of educators

- Careful positioning enables active supervision of large areas through direct observation and interaction.
- Active supervision involves moving with children as they move, facing areas where children are playing and positioning your back towards a fence or wall.

Listening

- Effective supervision does not necessarily mean educators must always 'see' children. Sounds or the absence of sound may be a reason for concern and to adjust supervision accordingly.
- Areas not in the direct line of sight are considered high risk and must be considered and documented in the *Supervision Plan*. In some circumstances and environments, centres may consider installing high convex mirror, using a monitor when children are sleeping or installing a bell on a gate or door to support supervision.

Scanning

- Teachers/educators must regularly scan all areas of the environment and ask themselves "Who can I see?" and "Who can't I see?". This allows supervision of surrounding areas while engaging with small groups.
- Conduct regular head counts and check against child attendance records during busy routine times e.g. 'drop off and pick up', early morning/late afternoon routines, transitions between indoors/outdoors.

Maintaining a safe environment

- All educators (including casual staff) must be aware of control measures (supervision strategies) as outlined in *Supervision Plan*.
- Ensure the physical environment, premises and resources are safe for children. Complete the *Daily Safety Checklist* prior to children's arrival or use of area. Immediately report identified hazards to centre Director/Responsible Person in Charge.
- Maintain children's engagement through programs that address their needs and interests.

Knowing children

- Educators who know what to expect are better able to protect children from harm.
- Develop a good understanding of children's strengths, abilities and peer relationships and which children require closer supervision during certain experiences, routines, and interactions. For example, an educator may 'join' a group of children who had previously experienced conflict whilst playing together.
- Information provided by families at arrival (e.g. illness, poor sleep, eating) should be shared with relevant educators, as this will inform an educator's ability to effectively supervise and support children's behaviour and learning.

Positioning of equipment and furniture

- Mindful positioning of equipment and furniture can assist educators to effectively supervise and monitor children.
- Position activities, to see and/or hear children.
- Whenever possible, purchase furniture that enables supervision.
- Arrange equipment and furniture to enable educators to move around the environment with ease and monitor areas from several different angles. Ensure there are clear pathways where children are playing, sleeping and eating.
- Ensure viewing windows into sleep rooms and bathrooms are not obstructed e.g. do not display children's art, posters, etc.

Routines

- Additional supervision strategies must be implemented during busy routine times (e.g. 'drop off and pick up', early morning/late afternoon routines, transitions between indoors/outdoors e.g. transition from kindergarten program to the extended hours kindergarten program. Such routines are considered high risk and must be considered and documented in the *Supervision Plan*.
- Be vigilant during departure times and be aware of children's custodial arrangement and authorised persons/emergency contacts.
- Avoid distractions such as administrative tasks or taking phone calls during busy routine times.

Communication

- When information is communicated, educators can adjust their supervision practice. To ensure effective supervision, educators must advise colleagues if they are attending to a child, leaving an area or supervising a small group of children that requires their full attention.
- Involve children in decisions and discussions regarding safety and expected behaviour. Such discussions and planning, promotes children's independence and ability to self-regulate, discover and connect, while acting responsibly. For example, setting limits and consequences, managing conflict and the development of personal protection skills.

Parent/ guardian responsibilities

- Inform educators of their child's arrival and departure.
- Ensure all doors and gates are closed after entering / exiting the centre or the playground.
- Be aware of the movement of others near gates and doors and ensure children do not exit the centre unaccompanied.
- Support educators with their supervision responsibilities by arranging to speak with them outside program hours.
- Supervise their child before and after the program, and siblings while attending or volunteering at the centre.

References

- ACECQA (2018) *Active Supervision: Ensuring Safety and Promoting Learning*
- QLD Government (2022) *Adequate Supervision*