



Sleep, rest, and relaxation and the National Quality Standard for ECEC

Children aged 3-5 years

Information for Authorised Officers

Sleep, rest, and relaxation are directly addressed in the National Quality Standard (NQS) in Quality Area 2:

2.1.2 "Each child's comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation".

However, in keeping with the spirit of the NQS, and a holistic approach to ECEC, all quality areas are relevant to sleep, rest, and relaxation.

Sleep, rest, and relaxation are part of the curriculum and require ongoing planning and reflection to support quality practice and to achieve balance between the rights of children and families and the capacities of educators and services.

The NQS and underpinning regulations emphasise:

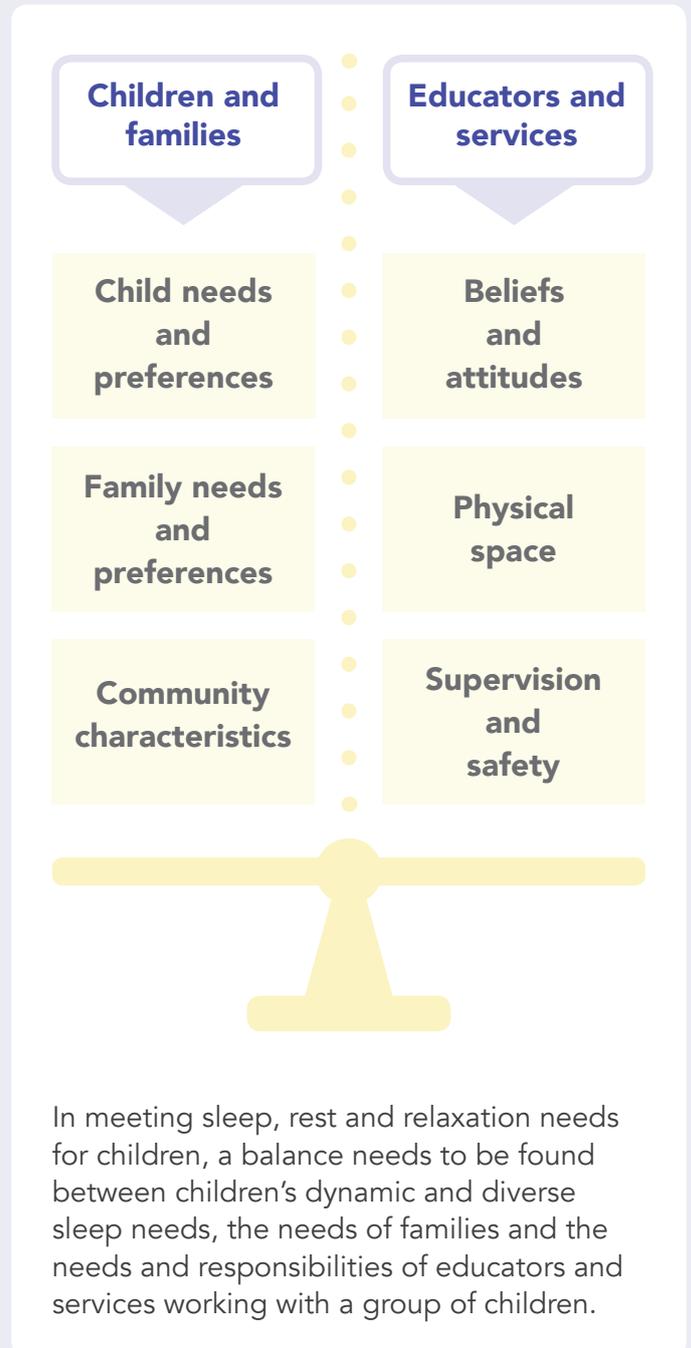
1. The need to meet **individual child needs**;
2. The need to provide opportunity for **rest and relaxation as well as sleep**.

Education and Care Services National Regulations:

"The approved provider of an education and care service must take reasonable steps to ensure that the needs for sleep and rest of children being educated and cared for by the service are met, having regard to the ages, development stages and individual needs of the children" (r81).

Sleep, rest and relaxation is not just about providing timeout from the busyness of the day, but is critical for children's health, learning and behaviour. Sleep, rest, and relaxation also provide important opportunities for children to discuss and learn about self-regulation and recognising the needs of their bodies.

Children's sleep needs are diverse and dynamic. Within any one service there will be a large range of sleep, rest and relaxation needs and preferences and these needs can change from day to day. In addition, a services' ability to appropriately provide for sleep needs will be impacted by a range of factors including staffing constraints, physical space, attitudes about sleep and rest, and pressure to undertake other duties (e.g. planning, documentation, cleaning).



Reference:

Staton, S., Irvine, S., Pattinson, C., Smith, S., & Thorpe, K. (In Press). The sleeping elephant in the room: Practices and policies regarding sleep-rest time in ECEC. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*.

10 questions for reflection

Below are 10 key questions for consideration and reflection when assessing and identifying appropriate and optimal sleep, rest, and relaxation under the National Quality Standard, focusing on children aged 3-5 years.

Quality Area 1 Educational program and practice

- 1 Are alternative opportunities for learning provided to children not requiring sleep?
- 2 Are children presented with opportunity for choice and learning regarding sleep, rest, and relaxation?

Quality Area 2 Health and safety

- 3 Are practices responsive to the diverse and dynamic sleep, rest, and relaxation needs of each child?

Quality Area 3 Physical Environment

- 4 Is the physical environment utilised to provide a calm and safe environment for children to sleep, rest or relax?
- 5 Is the physical environment utilised to provide non-sleeping children opportunities for activity and learning?

Quality Area 4 Staffing Arrangements

- 6 Is a reduction in staffing at this time appropriate to provide supervision of sleeping and non-sleeping children?
- 7 What educator activities are appropriate during sleep, rest, and relaxation times?

Quality Area 5 Relationships with children

- 8 Do sleep and rest practices impact on the relationship between children and educators?

Quality Area 6 Partnership with families and community

- 9 Are parents' views and requests about their children's sleep and rest respected and accommodated?

Quality Area 7 Leadership and Service Management

- 10 Do service policies recognise and support the diverse and dynamic nature of children's sleep, rest, and relaxation needs?