

The Early Childhood Regulatory Authority

6 reasonable steps to ensure staff follow policies and procedures

It is an approved provider's responsibility to ensure staff* follow their service's policies and procedures, and they must take reasonable steps to meet this obligation under Education and Care Services National Regulation, Regulation 170.

There are 6 steps, described as broad outcomes, the Regulatory Authority (RA) considers reasonable.

This guide breaks down the 6 reasonable steps with suggested strategies and examples of documented evidence of practice or observable practice that may assist an approved provider to ensure and demonstrate their compliance with Regulation 170.

The strategies an approved provider uses, particularly where it holds many service approvals, will vary and are influenced by local factors such as the:

- service type, size, location, and availability and use of technology
- staff and family needs including cultural, language and access needs.

These strategies and examples are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive, and unless required by law, retaining the listed evidence is not mandatory.

Documentation such as staff training records that is recorded at the time of the event and contains sufficient details including the date and names of relevant parties is the most reliable evidence of practice. Approved providers may use this documentation to demonstrate compliance when authorised officers conduct monitoring or investigations. However authorised officers can also gather evidence through discussions with staff and observing practice.

* The requirements of Regulation 170 capture a range of staff of centre-based and family day care (FDC) services, whether engaged as employees or contractors, including nominated supervisors, educators, assistant educators, FDC coordinators, FDC educators, FDC educator assistants, volunteers and other staff members. This includes temporary staff engaged through labour hire or recruitment agencies.

These steps will ensure that staff follow a service's policies and procedures:



1. Accessibility

Policies and procedures are readily available and accessible to staff as required.



2. Induction and training

Staff are given adequate onboarding and ongoing support to ensure up-to-date knowledge and skills.



3. Quality assurance and governance

Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and maintained.



4. Monitor and audit compliance

Implementation of policies and procedures is regularly monitored to ensure staff are following them correctly.



5. Remedial action

Non-compliance with policies and procedures is promptly addressed.



6. Resourcing and support

Adequate resources and time are allocated to enable staff to comply with policies and procedures.





1. Accessibility

Policies and procedures are readily available and accessible to staff as required.

Suggested strategies

- As it is a regulatory obligation to ensure staff can access current policies and procedures (refer to National Regulation 171), consider a process for monitoring compliance at each service operated under your provider approval.
- Ensure staff know where and how to readily access the latest versions of policies and procedures and any supporting tools or documentation such as checklists or templates. How staff access these documents will vary depending on the service type, size and systems, and the staff member's role.
- Assess the needs of your staff and families and, where required, provide policies and procedures in multiple languages or an appropriate alternative such as online translation software and/or in audio versions.
- Consider the needs of any temporary or casual staff and how they will access the policies and procedures.

Example evidence

- An FDC service's register of educators, coordinators and educator assistants shows that during support visits, the coordinator provided educators with advice and written materials on how to access policies and procedures. This may have included instructions on how to download the documents from the service's websites or portals.
- Staff members can show an authorised officer how they independently and readily access the latest version of their service's policies and procedures, whether in hardcopy or from the service's software system.
- Documents demonstrate a needs assessment of staff and families has occurred at induction or enrolment on accessing policies and procedures. Documents are provided in languages other than English or via audio or other forms as necessary.
- Physical or electronic records, including version numbers show that the service is reviewing, updating and following current policies and procedures, particularly after operational and legislative changes have come into effect.

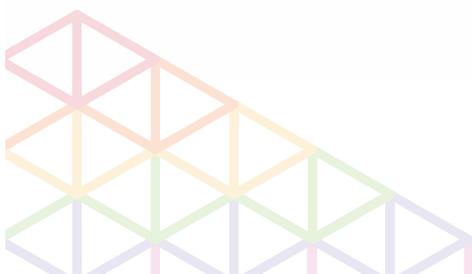


2. Induction and training

Staff are given adequate onboarding and ongoing support to ensure up-to-date knowledge and skills.

Suggested strategies

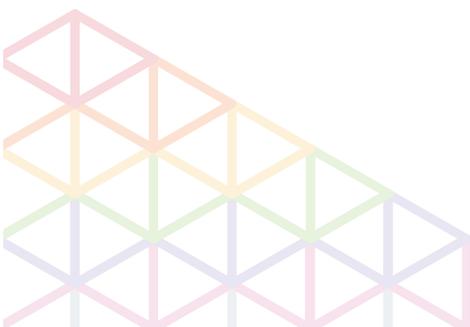
- Design an onboarding process for staff that supports a thorough understanding of the service's policies and procedures. This includes induction to provide and introduce policies and procedures, orientation to contextualise information to the service and role, and role-specific training on following policies and procedures.
- During onboarding, take the time to explain policies and procedures in detail, including links to the National Quality Framework so that new staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and how procedural steps meet the objectives of the policy and relevant legislative obligations.
- Allow time for staff to process information, ask questions and discuss. Consider staggering onboarding processes over a sufficient period to support staff to engage with and digest the information.
- When considering training needs, reflect on staff's individual roles and responsibilities to ensure the training is relevant and effective. Consider what training will be required or recommended, reflective of staff position descriptions and legislative requirements.



- Assess and determine how often policy and procedure refresher training is needed for all staff. This will depend on factors including the level of risk associated with a policy and procedure, the extent of knowledge and specialised skills needed, and the frequency of changes or updates to best practice in the relevant subject.
- Offer training in a variety of formats, catering for all learning styles such as face to face, discussions at staff meetings, video demonstrations/ vignettes, guest speakers/authorities delivering specific topics or online modules for individuals or groups. This may include staff presentations, practical demonstrations in real-time situations (where appropriate) and interactive discussions with the approved provider, nominated supervisor, FDC coordinator or a senior staff member.
- Request staff feedback on training to help ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Regularly evaluate the outcomes of onboarding to identify and rectify any gaps in the service/s' systems, processes or materials, and whether the processes have met the individual needs of the staff members. Ensure these processes include opportunities for both the staff member and their supervisor to evaluate their progress.
- Provide staff with ongoing support and supervision as required, based on the extent they have demonstrated competence at carrying out their responsibilities under the policies and procedures. Some staff may need more time, longer supervision and/or support such as a contact person (or buddy) until they understand the links between relevant policies, procedures and practices, and their supervisor is confident they can carry out tasks independently.
- Provide ongoing and regular training and other opportunities for professional development to all staff.
- As soon as updates are made to policies, procedures or other supporting documentation, advise staff of the content and consider whether re-training is required. Conduct training as soon as possible to ensure staff can understand and follow any new requirements before the new version begins.

Example evidence

- Records of formal training (individual or group participation) or formal performance development conversations and assessments of educator knowledge on individual staff files or the register of FDC educators, coordinators and FDC educator assistants. Records may include copies of educator training plans, staff meeting minutes, training attendance records, training certifications or copies of emails sent to staff about implementing policies and procedures.
- Informal training documented on staff files or in coordinator monitoring and support visit records, including notes of informal conversations between staff or management or evidence of any formal performance development conversations.
- Copies of educator training plans, staff meeting minutes, training attendance records, training certifications or copies of emails sent to staff about changes to, and implementing policies and procedures.
- Records of the training content, any staff feedback on content or delivery, and training reminder systems that support staff maintaining their skills and knowledge. This may also include any changes to the policies and procedures that have been made as a result of staff feedback.





3. Quality assurance and governance

Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and maintained.

Suggested strategies

- Keep informed of any relevant legislative amendments (not limited to the National Law) and revisions to evidence-based guidelines, such as Red Nose advice on safe sleep practices, and update policies and procedures accordingly.
- Consider whether policies or procedures need to be reviewed and updated following any accidents, complaints, near misses or other events.
- Ensure reviews and updates to policies and procedures include all associated forms, tools or templates.
- When a service-specific policy and/or procedure is updated, consider whether these changes should apply to any other, or all, services the approved provider operates. When policies and procedures are developed at the approved provider level, reflect on how they are applicable for each service and its context.
- Consider and encourage staff (in a variety of roles) to participate in reviews and seek regular feedback about the adequacy of policies, procedures and associated documentation. Support reflection on how current practice aligns with policies and procedures. If there is a discrepancy, support reflection on why and whether the practice, or the policy and procedure, needs to be adjusted.
- Consider a review schedule to support regular review and maintenance of policies and procedures such as annually for a full policy and procedure review.

Example evidence

- Copies of policies and procedures which meet current legislative requirements, particularly if recently changed.
- Documented procedures for carrying out, and copies of, reviews or investigations into incidents or complaints occurring at the service, in particular, examples where such a process has resulted in change to a policy and/or procedure.
- Documentation of any engagement with staff about policy and procedure reviews including meeting notes, staff meeting minutes, online conversations, mind mapping or email conversations.
- Evidence of the service's systems for monitoring policies and procedures such as document version control and review strategies and schedules.
- Evidence of opportunities for staff to provide feedback on and review policies and procedures and how any feedback has been considered, addressed and incorporated.



4. Monitor and audit compliance

Implementation of policies and procedures is regularly monitored to ensure staff are following them correctly.

Suggested strategies

- Regularly discuss the requirements, personal responsibilities and importance to the health, safety and wellbeing of children of policies and procedures with staff members. This may include during conversations while they are providing education and care, attending staff meetings or training, conducting home visits (for family day care services), participating in online forums (emails or group chat pages/sites) or during individual performance reviews. These discussions should provide a forum outside of training and review processes for staff to refresh their knowledge and clarify their understanding of requirements. Staff discussions may also identify any gaps between what the policy/procedure requires and what is occurring in practice.

- Proactively assess staff knowledge and skills including whether staff are complying in full with policies and procedures through activities such as:
 - confirming staff knowledge and understanding individually or in groups during daily conversations, staff meetings, training courses
 - discussing the implementation of policies and procedures at individual performance appraisals
 - observing staff practices regularly in real time during routine or monitoring and support visits.
- Provide feedback at the same time as assessing and observing staff, including to acknowledge and encourage compliant and quality practice.
- Regularly audit compliance with (correct implementation of) policies and procedures by carrying out activities such as:
 - reviewing samples of CCTV footage where available
 - auditing access to, and the timely and accurate completion of, any required records about matters such as incidents, administration of medication, enrolment, transportation or excursions.
- Provide timely feedback to relevant staff following the outcomes of audits, including where no issues are identified.
- If recurring issues arise, assessing whether these issues are systemic, and identifying and addressing the root cause of the issues.

Example evidence

- Records of any audits of policies and procedures including the time and date they were completed, and the outcomes.
- Copies of checklists or other evidence of staff knowledge about policies and procedures in training content or in staff meeting minutes.
- Documented discussions with educators, coaching and mentoring sessions, performance review documentation or notes recorded in educator registers (family day care).
- Copies of correspondence providing feedback on the outcomes of audits or monitoring.

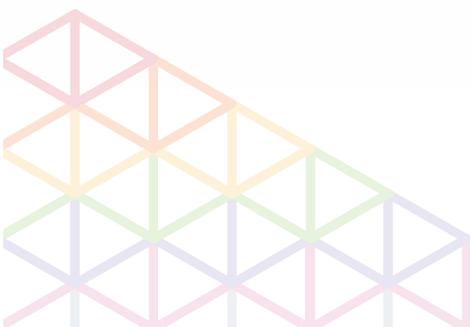


5. Remedial action

Non-compliance with policies and procedures is promptly addressed.

Suggested strategies

- Develop and maintain clear procedures for dealing with non-compliance with service policies and/or procedures, including procedures for establishing the cause of any non-compliance.
- Once the cause of non-compliance is understood, document clear pathways for remedial action and who is responsible for taking these steps. These may include education and support, retraining staff members particularly in policies and procedures, additional supervision/monitoring of educators, performance management procedures or, in high-risk circumstances, staff dismissal.
- Promptly raise any issues of concern with staff members and develop escalation strategies for persistent or repeated non-compliance.
- Encourage and support staff to proactively self-identify and report instances of non-compliance or concerns with the implementation of policies and procedures without fear of reprisal.
- Provide information at staff induction on how they may raise concerns, anonymously if desired, and remind staff of this regularly.



Example evidence

- Documented, on staff files or educator registers for FDC, any performance conversations/reviews that may include performance improvement strategies and action plans, staff undertakings, monitoring plans for educators, grievance procedures or termination processes.
- Records of any additional training or re-training conducted.
- Evidence of concerns staff members raise including anonymous feedback and how those concerns were considered and addressed.
- Evidence that staff members can discuss and raise any concerns about the implementation of policies and procedures.



6. Resourcing and support

Adequate resources and time are allocated to enable staff to comply with policies and procedures.

Suggested strategies

- For centre-based services, ensure adequate staffing arrangements (over and above ratio requirements where necessary) to allow staff enough time to carry out their duties under the policies and procedures. Responding to feedback from staff about resourcing issues or limitations and taking action to address reasonable concerns. In single educator settings, consider how to manage risks inherent to that context.
- For family day care, ensure educators are adequately supported by coordinators and the nominated supervisor as necessary and, in particular, during any higher risk activities or when responding to an incident.
- In all service types, ensure staff are not overburdened with tasks or responsible concurrently for duties which are incompatible. This is particularly important for staff responsible for transporting children. For example, if the transportation policy and procedure requires a second staff member to check the vehicle after children disembark, ensure adequate staffing allows for someone other than the driver to do so, and that children are adequately supervised.
- Ensure the equipment, resources and/or forms required to implement specific policies and procedures are available to staff at all times.

Example evidence

- Records of the dates and times that staff were participating in training sessions such as training schedules/overview documents, rosters, time stamps on online modules, approvals for training, meeting minutes that include training or educator registers listing training.
- Records of monitoring and support visits to FDC educators that show resources were assessed to ensure that policies and procedures can be complied with.
- Rosters which include educator roles and records of staff working directly with children as evidence of staffing arrangements at any time education and care is being provided.
- Evidence of discussions about resourcing limitations and actions taken to address any reasonable concerns.
- Receipts of specialised equipment purchases and maintenance schedules if required.