EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION POLICY GUIDELINES

The approved provider must ensure emergency and evacuation policies and procedures are developed and regularly reviewed. They must also be regularly rehearsed. This will assist educators and staff to handle emergencies calmly and effectively, reducing the risk of harm or injury.

To comply with legislation and to be effective, your policy and procedures must:

- be informed by a risk assessment that identifies potential emergencies relevant to your service
- set out instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency
- include an emergency and evacuation floor plan (in Queensland, a copy of the plan and instructions must be displayed prominently near each exit that forms part of an evacuation route)
- be rehearsed and documented every three months.

In addition, educators and staff must have ready access to a telephone or similar means of communication.

Your policy and procedures will need to consider different types of emergencies.

If directed by your jurisdiction, you must consult with relevant authorities, such as a fire safety adviser or emergency services authority, for advice about evacuation plans and emergency exits when developing your policy and procedures. For those jurisdictions where it is not a requirement, it is still recommend that you consult relevant authorities. (NQS 2.2.2)

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations,* education and care services must have policies and procedures in place for emergency and evacuation. These guidelines are part of a series and are intended to assist in the development of your *Emergency and evacuation policy.* They have been designed to guide you in the development of your policy and are not an exact format.

1. Title

Emergency and evacuation policy

2. Policy statement

The policy statement will reflect your service's philosophy about planning and implementing emergency and evacuation procedures.

For example:

We are committed to ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending our education and care service by identifying the risks and hazards of emergency and evacuation situations.

Children, educators and staff will regularly rehearse our emergency and evacuation procedures to maximise their safety and wellbeing in the event of an emergency or event requiring evacuation.

3. Background

Your policy needs to include a statement of why this requirement is in place.

For example, the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* require policies and procedures are in place for *Emergency and evacuation* to minimise risk of harm to children.

4. Legislative requirements

Your policy should refer to legislative requirements for emergency and evacuation. Examples include, but are not limited to:

Reg 97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
Reg 98	Telephone or other communication equipment
Reg 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
Reg 169	Additional policies and procedures - family day care
Reg 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Reg 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
Reg 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

When writing your policy you will need to break down what is required under each regulation and how your service will meet these requirements. How these work in practice will be contained in your procedures.

As you reflect on the *Emergency and evacuation policy*, it might highlight the need to split the various areas into different policies and procedures that can be readily accessed by all educators and staff to follow in relation to the service's philosophy and their roles and responsibilities. For example, you may wish to have separate policies for *Lockdown emergency, Lockout emergency, Responding to natural disasters,* and a *Bomb threat.*

5. Principles to inform your policy

All decision-making should be carried out in accordance with the principles of your service's *Emergency and evacuation policy.* Examples include, but are not limited to:

- The safety, health and wellbeing of children is a paramount consideration for our service. Therefore we conduct rehearsals and reviews of our emergency and evacuation procedures.
- Our educational program promotes opportunities for children to learn and develop in all aspects of the program. Key skills such as gross motor, coordination and language can be practiced during evacuation rehearsals.
- We are committed to regular communication with families about all aspects of the educational program, their child's development, and the service. This includes information about emergency and evacuation procedures.
- Our educators and staff are key to our service's effective operation. Part of the training and development they receive focusses on our emergency and evacuation policy and procedures. This includes conducting and documenting evacuation rehearsals in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Additional consideration for approved providers with multiple services

Where an approved provider has multiple services, the *Emergency and evacuation policy* should note that separate procedures will need to be developed and customised to each service. For example, each service requires a site-specific risk assessment (Reg 97(2)) and site-specific evacuation plan (Reg 97(4)). These will consider site-specific factors such as: its location, configuration (including multi-storey), identified assembly points, needs of the children, and staffing (including ancillary staff such as cooks, etc).

Additional considerations for multi-storey buildings

Services and family day care (FDC) educators operating in multi-storey buildings present a unique set of circumstances which must be taken into account to ensure a safe and effective environment for children, particularly in relation to the development and implementation of safe and effective emergency and evacuation plans. Your policy principles must reflect the nature of the particular multi-storey building. For example, during an emergency there is significant risk to children evacuating via stairwells at the same time as others, significant heights may be involved, non-ambulant children may be present, and enhanced ratios may need consideration.

6. Key terms

To make it easier for your audience, provide definitions of key terms that may not be used every day. For example:

Term	Meaning	Source
ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority	The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.	
Emergency	An incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person at the service. For example, a flood, fire or a situation that requires the service premises to be locked down.	Guide to the NQF
Emergency services	Includes ambulance, fire brigade, police and state emergency services.	https://www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/public-safety-and-law/emergency-services
Evacuation plan	An evacuation plan is used where it is deemed necessary to evacuate the immediate area or building to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and adults.	https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/managingn-emergency-situations-in-education-and-care-services.pdf?sfvrsn=8
Evacuation route	Path of travel to a place of safety outside the building.	Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008 Queensland
Fire safety adviser	May co-ordinate fire safety management plans, fire and evacuation plans, procedures, review and practice, and give or arrange instruction to staff on evacuation and the operation of firefighting equipment.	

Lockdown plan	A lockdown plan in used in situations such as the threat of a violent person or a police operation in the vicinity that may require the service to go into lockdown. This means that the service locks all doors and windows and, where possible, removes children, educators and other adults from view.	https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/managingn-emergency-situations-in-education-and-care-services.pdf?sfvrsn=8
Lockout plan	A lockout plan is used for events such as a severe storm, smoke haze or toxic gases, where a full lockdown may not be required. In a lockout, the building is well secured with external doors and windows closed, entry doors cleared, and access for families is ensured.	https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/managingn-emergency-situations-in-education-and-care-services.pdf?sfvrsn=8
Multi-storey building	You will need to include the definition of what is considered a multi-storey building in your jurisdiction.

For example, the Queensland Regulatory Authority describes education and care services operating in multi-storey buildings as those services operating from premises that contain three or more storeys, with any part of the premises located above ground. | Guidance for approved providers – early childhood education and care services operating in multi-storey buildings (Queensland Government) |
| Risk assessment | A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking. | |

7. Links to other policies

Refer to related policies and procedures, for example:

- Providing a child safe environment
- Dealing with medical conditions in children
- Enrolment and orientation
- Excursions
- Incidents, injury, trauma and illness
- The administration of first aid

8. Induction and ongoing training

State information about induction training and frequency of ongoing training and information sharing to assist managers, coordinators, educators and staff to fulfil their roles effectively.

9. Policy created/reviewed

Include the date the policy was created, reviewed or changes were made.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and review

State when the policy will be reviewed and who will be responsible for this.

11. Checklist

- ☐ Have you referenced the relevant Regulations and are these reflected in the policy?
- ☐ Does the title provide a clear and concise statement identifying the intent of the policy?
- ☐ Have you checked the policy requirements and referenced related legislation that applies to your service type?
- ☐ Does your policy statement provide a framework for decision-making and ensure consistent practice?
- ☐ Does your policy statement reflect your service philosophy?
- ☐ Is it clear why this policy exists?

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES GUIDELINES

The approved provider must ensure emergency and evacuation procedures are developed and regularly rehearsed. This will assist educators and staff to handle emergencies calmly and effectively, reducing the risk of harm or injury.

Emergency and evacuation procedures must:

- set out instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency
- clearly state what is to happen in an emergency and who is responsible for each step
- include an emergency and evacuation floor plan specific to the service (in Queensland, a copy of the plan and instructions must be displayed prominently near each exit that forms part of an evacuation route)
- be rehearsed and followed by all educators, staff and children at the service
- be informed by a risk assessment including all possible types of emergencies and evacuations that may be required.

It is recommended - and in some jurisdictions required - that you consult with the relevant authorities when developing your emergency and evacuation procedures. (NQS 2.2.2)

Your procedures should be written in clear and concise language, making them easy to read, understand and implement.

Every service is different so it is not sufficient to apply generic emergency and evacuation procedures to multiple services.

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations,* education and care services must have policies and procedures in place for emergency and evacuation. These guidelines are part of a series and are intended to assist in the development of your *Emergency and evacuation procedures*. They have been designed to guide you in the development of your procedures and are not an exact format.

1. Title

Emergency and evacuation procedures

2. Reference to policy and philosophy

Here you refer to your *Emergency and evacuation policy* as seen in your policy documents. You can reference where you will find the policy to help those looking for it.

Your procedures will also reflect your service's overall philosophy.

3. Procedures

This is where you discuss the way you will implement the *Emergency and evacuation policy.*

It is the 'How to' in your service and includes specific step-by-step procedures for dealing with emergencies and evacuations.

Some areas that will be outlined here should include:

- the process for the different rehearsals as set out in your policy (e.g. lockdown, lockout, evacuation, bomb threat, natural disaster, etc.) and when they will be undertaken to comply with Regulation 97. Rehearsals should be carried out at different times to accommodate differing levels of attendance and configurations of age groups in attendance, e.g. carrying out some rehearsals when non-ambulant children are present

- alternative evacuation routes that could be utilised and assembly areas. Assembly areas need to be a safe space for the children to get to and easily supervised once there. Consideration also needs to be given to potential weather conditions (e.g. if a local park is selected as the assembly point, how will the children be protected when it is raining?)
- how required items such as a mobile phone, emergency contact numbers, children's footwear, a first aid kit, medications, the attendance roll, nappies, food, water, etc., are transported during evacuation. If, for example, emergency evacuation bags are used, also note who is responsible for auditing and restocking them
- how assessment and reflections will be undertaken following an emergency or rehearsal process, and any adjustments or improvements made
- consultation with relevant authorities and experts to inform and monitor evacuation procedures
- record keeping documentation or checklists associated with the procedures
- regular induction and training for educators and staff so they are confident about what they need to do should an emergency arise
- the orientation process for new families, students on practicum, volunteers and visitors
- training in the use of emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, fire blankets, etc.

Services and family day care (FDC) educators operating in multi-storey buildings will also need to include areas such as:

- details of when and how all educators and staff will be trained in first aid response upon induction and re-trained in line with refresher requirements
- details about specific evacuation procedures for any non-ambulant children and any staffing implications
- instructions for how the service assesses children's abilities to walk confidently prior to using evacuation stairwells and any staffing implications
- instructions in relation to lifts not being used during an evacuation rehearsal or emergency unless authorised by relevant emergency services.

Note that approved providers operating multiple services should have separate emergency and evacuation procedures customised to each service. For example, each service requires a site-specific risk assessment (Reg 97(2)) and site-specific evacuation plan (Reg 97(4)). These will consider site-specific factors such as: its location, configuration (including multi-storey), identified assembly points, needs of the children, and staffing (including ancillary staff such as cooks, etc). For FDC services, customised emergency and evacuation procedures are required for each FDC educator's residence or venue.

4. Roles and responsibilities

This is where you will designate specific roles and responsibilities for the different people within the service. This needs to align with the Regulations (97, 168-172).

It is important to note that it is the legal responsibility of approved providers to ensure systems are in place to minimise risk and ensure health and safety procedures are implemented by the responsible people in services and FDC home environments. Ultimate responsibility lies with the approved provider to ensure their service/s are meeting the requirements under the National Quality Framework.

An example of roles and responsibilities could include, but is not limited to:

Roles	Responsibilities
Approved provider	• ensure the *Emergency and evacuation policy* and *procedures* are in place • take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators, staff and volunteers follow the policy and procedures • ensure copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, educators, staff and volunteers, and available for inspection • ensure a risk assessment has been undertaken to identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the service. For FDC services, one will be required for each FDC educator's residence or venue • conduct a risk assessment of emergency evacuation routes and assembly points • ensure that a copy of the emergency and evacuation floor plans and instructions are displayed in a prominent position near each exit that forms part of an evacuation route (if required by your jurisdiction) • document rehearsals of the emergency and evacuation procedures • notify the regulatory authority of any serious incidents, change of circumstances and complaints • notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will: - affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or - significantly impact the service's education and care of children or - significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service • *centre-based service:* ensure that the emergency and evacuation procedures are rehearsed every three months by the educators, staff, volunteers, visitors and children present at the service on the day of the rehearsal and the responsible person in relation to the service who is present at the time of the rehearsal • *family day care service:* ensure that the emergency and evacuation procedures are rehearsed every three months by each family day care educator and the children being educated and cared for by the family day care educator on that day

Roles	Responsibilities
Nominated supervisor /Family day care coordinator	• participate in rehearsals of the emergency and evacuation procedures every three months • keep a documented record of each rehearsal and reflections that occurred after • collaborate with educators and staff to develop procedures to manage all risks associated with emergency and evacuation situations • ensure the development of an emergency evacuation floor plan • ensure educators and staff have ready access to an operating telephone or similar means of communication • ensure educators and staff have ready access to emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers and fire blankets, and are adequately trained in their use • ensure that emergency equipment is tested within the timeframes recommended by recognised authorities • ensure that an up-to-date portable emergency contact list for the children is accessible and that evacuation procedures state who will carry this list during evacuation • ensure that emergency and evacuation risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly • ensure the emergency and evacuation procedures and floor plan are displayed in a prominent position near each exit on the evacuation route and that all staff and educators are aware of these (depending on your jurisdiction) • ensure that all educators and staff are trained in the emergency and evacuation procedures • ensure that all educators and staff are aware of emergency evacuation points • ensure that families are regularly reminded of the emergency procedures in place at the service • ensure children's medication is collected during an evacuation • audit and restock the evacuation bags (if relevant) • take responsibility for ensuring that all children are accounted for during an evacuation
Centre-based educator	• rehearsing emergency and evacuation procedures with everyone who is present at the service at least every three months and that the rehearsal is documented • communicating with families about emergency procedures
Family day care educator	• conduct a rehearsal every three months • involve each FDC educator and the children being educated by the FDC educator on the day of the rehearsal • ensure that a portable up-to-date emergency contact list for the children is taken on all evacuations • if evacuation bags are used, ensure they are located in an accessible place to be taken during an evacuation, as well as restocked after use • keep a documented record of each rehearsal and reflections of the process
Families	• ensure you have the service's up-to-date contact details • ensure you complete the attendance record on delivery and collection of your child • provide emergency contact details on your child's enrolment form and ensure this is kept up-to-date • be aware of the service's emergency and evacuation policy and procedures • reinforce the service's emergency and evacuation procedures with your child • if present at the service at the time, follow the directions of educators and staff in the event of an emergency or when rehearsing emergency and evacuation procedures

The following table will assist you in developing procedures specific to your needs and context. Don't forget to refer to the Regulations when you are writing your procedures to make sure you are meeting your obligations.

Areas to include in your procedures	Things to consider and outline in each area *(this will be specific to the context of your service)*	Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures	Related policy and/or procedures
Risk assessment **Reg:** 97 **QA2** **QA3:** 3.2.1 **QA4:** 4.1 **QA5** **QA6** **QA7:** 7.1.2	• Undertaking a risk assessment that considers all possible emergencies and evacuations (for FDC services, one will need to be completed for each FDC educator's residence or venue)	• Ensure risk assessments are carried out and reviewed as required	Providing a child safe environment Enrolments and orientation Incidents, injury, trauma and illness The administration of first aid
Emergency evacuation plan, including rehearsals of processes noted in the policy **Reg:** 97, 98, 170, 171 **QA2** **QA3:** 3.2.1 **QA4:** 4.1 **QA5** **QA6** **QA7:** 7.1.2	• How you intend to meet the Regulations related to emergency and evacuation • Clearly define roles and responsibilities for educators, staff and families and consider how you will inform them of their roles and specific responsibilities • In the event of an emergency, who you will contact and how • Who is responsible for checking each area of the service, including outdoor play spaces and equipment, to ensure all children are gathered and evacuated	• Make sure your policy and procedures are available for all to access. • Develop a schedule of emergency and evacuation rehearsals (at least every three months) and a template for documenting and reviewing these • Consider implementing unannounced rehearsals or conduct rehearsals on different days of the week at different times • Consider creating a role delegation flowchart outlining each role and responsibility • Regularly review supervision plans and ratio checks • Ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand each step of the procedures	Providing a child safe environment Enrolments and orientation Incidents, injury, trauma and illness The administration of first aid

Areas to include in your procedures	Things to consider and outline in each area (this will be specific to the context of your service)	Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures	Related policy and/or procedures
	• What the designated routes and assembly points are and alternatives (think about your risk management process for the different possibilities, ensuring you are reducing the risk and that assembly points outside the service allow the children and adults to meet in a safe space) • If there are locked gates on any designated exit route and, if so, where keys are stored and who is responsible for collecting them • How children are accounted for at the assembly area and actions to be taken in the event there are unaccounted for children • Considerations for when assembled after evacuating, specifically the possibility of being there for an extended period of time or in inclement weather, including summer temperatures • If the assembly area is in a car park, consider the possible attendance of emergency services and vehicles in the car park and vehicles travelling on an adjacent road. Will you need traffic mitigation equipment to separate children from vehicles? • What you may need for specific children (e.g. a medical management plan and associated medication), where they are stored, and who is responsible for collecting these during an evacuation	• Create an emergency contact list and communication tree. These will need to be updated regularly • Ensure educators and staff regularly maintain emergency contact records and that families fill out attendance records on arrival and at departure • Develop a checklist for emergency evacuation bags (if used) and regularly check they are stocked and in the designated location • Offer regular opportunities for children to practice evacuation skills as part of the educational program • Consider opportunities for families to take part in regular emergency rehearsals to ensure they are familiar with the procedures • Develop any records or checklists associated with the procedures • Include emergency and evacuation training as part of the educator and staff induction process and have it as a regular item on meeting agendas • For services with school age children, consider how to involve the children in the evaluation and reflection process after an event or rehearsal	

Areas to include in your procedures	Things to consider and outline in each area *(this will be specific to the context of your service)*	Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures	Related policy and/or procedures
	• Who has first aid training (including asthma and anaphylaxis) and if it is up-to-date • Whether you are required to consult with authorities or other experts in relation to the development, assessment and monitoring of emergency and evacuation procedures • Who is responsible for documenting and evaluating rehearsals • Any implications for staffing ratios based on the *Emergency and evacuation policy* and *procedures* • Promoting familiarity with all evacuation routes through regular rehearsals • Whether the location of the displayed emergency and evacuation floor plans meet your jurisdiction's requirements • How you intend to transport required items such as a mobile phone, emergency contact numbers, children's footwear a first aid kit, medications, the attendance roll, nappies, food and water, etc. If emergency evacuation bags or similar are used, where they are located, what they contain, who is responsible for collecting the bag, and how audits are conducted on the contents		

Areas to include in your procedures	Things to consider and outline in each area *(this will be specific to the context of your service)*	Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures	Related policy and/or procedures

	• The location of non-ambulatory children. Specific evacuation procedures for non-ambulant children and any staffing implications, including the location and use of equipment, e.g. carriers, cots, prams. Consideration of how equipment such as evacuation cots or prams are able to travel through evacuation routes given distances and any obstacles (e.g. a playground)
	
	• Consideration for children evacuating from a multi-storey building, including:
	
	  - any additional educators or staff required to assist in the evacuation
	
	  - any equipment required to ensure the safety of children evacuating via stairs
	
	  - how equipment (e.g. prams, cots) is managed should non-ambulant children need to be evacuated from above ground
	
	• Regular induction and training for educators and staff
	
	• Access to an operating phone to allow communication with families and emergency services		

Areas to include in your procedures	Things to consider and outline in each area *(this will be specific to the context of your service)*	Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures	Related policy and/or procedures
	• If your procedures include steps from start of evacuation to finish of evacuation, including assembly points • If located in a rural area or in an area that experiences natural disasters, whether there is a community response that you need to take into consideration when developing your procedures • If there are any families at your service that would be part of this community response • Have you liaised with your relevant emergency services/local council? • In the event of a lockdown in a centre-based service, how is the need for a lockdown communicated to educators and staff without alerting the person(s) responsible for the threat? How do the educators and staff know where the appropriate and safe locations within the service are to take children?		

5. Procedures created/reviewed

Include the date the procedures were created or reviewed.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

Your service, in consultation with educators, staff, families and other stakeholders, should review the effectiveness of these procedures within a set timeframe or earlier if there is a change in relevant legislation.

State when the procedures will be reviewed and who will be responsible for this.

7. Checklist

☐ Do the procedures align with your *Emergency and evacuation policy?*
☐ Have your procedures been written in plain English and can they be easily implemented by an by an educator or staff member new to your service?
☐ Is it clear who is responsible for the implementation of the procedures?
☐ Are all educators and staff aware of the procedures and can implement them if required?
☐ Do you need to develop any resources to monitor and record the procedures?

Useful Resources

Include links to useful resources that have helped inform the development of your policy.
Be mindful of any state- or territory-specific content.

Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Accidents, emergencies and first aid – https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/accidents-emergencies-and-first-aid-policies-in-practice.pdf?sfvrsn=8
- Display of emergency and evacuation floor plan and instructions – https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/legislationandguidelines/pporresources/fact%20sheets/nqf-emergency-evacuation-exits.pdf
- Emergency and evacuation policies and procedures under the National Law – https://www.vision6.com.au/em/message/email/view.php?id=1411534&a=51732&k=Qj09YLryzGzYddcRriDRmxVQkyV8fx2G3uE-tGJXmxQ
- Emergency procedures for educators in family day care and in home care – https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/emergency-procedures-for-educators-in-family-day-care-and-in-home-care.pdf?sfvrsn=6
- Guide to the National Quality Framework – https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide
- Guidance for approved providers – early childhood education and care services operating in multi-storey buildings – https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/legislationAndGuidelines/PPORresources/Fact%20sheets/NQF-Fact-Sheet-multi-storey-buildings.pdf#search=multi%20storey
- Incident and emergency management – https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/legislation-and-guidelines/health-and-safety/incident-and-emergency-management
- Managing Emergency Situations in Education and Care Services – https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/managingn-emergency-situations-in-education-and-care-services.pdf?sfvrsn=8
- Risk assessment and management - https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/29421