

Rationale

SDN is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children, families, staff members, volunteers including Board members, students, contractors and visitors based on the most relevant and up to date information. We recognise that the most effective method for preventing infectious diseases is effective hand washing and sanitising; exclusion of sick children and adults; and immunisation.

As an organisation, we have to adapt our ways of working in response to evolving health situations. So, we will continue to review our approaches and make updates to relevant policies as circumstances change. As we do this we will continue to put SDN the health and safety of our staff at the forefront of our decision making, alongside the health and safety of the children who use our services.

Scope

This policy, and its associated documents, applies to the entirety of SDN Children’s Services and the entirety of its wholly owned subsidiaries.

This policy applies to all children, families, Board members, staff members, contractors, students, trainees, casuals, volunteers and visitors

Key Terms

Infectious disease

A disease that is caused by a pathogenic microorganism such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi. The infectious disease can be transmitted directly or indirectly by an infectious agent

Exclusion

Minimising the spread of infectious diseases by preventing a person who is known to be infectious, from contact with others who are at risk of catching the infection.

Immunisation

The process of making a person immune or resistant to an infectious agent typically by use of oral or injected vaccines.

Policy

While primary responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious diseases lies with individuals, families and public health authorities, SDN has a responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in our services and sites, and to play an important role in supporting the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases.

Approved by Senior Leadership Team	Approval Date November 2021	Review Date November 2025	Page 1 of 4
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SDN has a particular legislated duty of care for the organisation’s employees, with a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to keep our staff safe. These responsibilities come under the Work Health and Safety Act, 2011.

In deciding what reasonable steps to take to prevent and control infectious diseases at our sites, SDN will adhere to recommended guidelines from recognised health authorities and relevant regulators; and SDN staff will not provide expert advice on infectious diseases where this is the role of medical practitioners and health authorities.

SDN will take all reasonable steps prevent transmission of, and control infectious diseases, including:

- excluding sick children, staff members, volunteers, students, contractors and visitors for the period directed or recommended by recognised authorities and/or regulators
- implementing effective hygiene practices
- using personal protective equipment such as gloves and/or masks where recommended
- conducting risk assessments
- releasing a notice of an occurrence of an infectious disease when this occurs at an SDN Children’s Education and Care Centre. This notice will be displayed in compliance with the *Education and Care Services Law and Regulations* and following relevant exclusion guidelines.

SDN staff members will maintain up to date knowledge of infection control and prevention practices as well as symptoms of illnesses.

SDN will provide on-the-job and/or other forms of training for staff so that their knowledge of infection prevention and control is up to date.

Vaccination: children

Only children who meet the following criteria can attend an SDN Children’s Education and Care Centre:

- meet the Department of Health’s [National Immunisation Program Childhood Schedule](#); or
- are on a suitable catch -up schedule in line with the Department of Health’s current [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#); or
- have an approved medical exemption recorded on the [Australian Immunisation Register \(AIR\)](#).

Vaccination: adults

COVID-19

All staff members, Board members, students, regular contractors and volunteers must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with vaccines approved by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration, including any boosters recommended by recognised Australian Health Authorities. SDN will require sighting of vaccination certificates.

SDN staff will maintain an up-to-date record of their COVID-19 vaccination status in their HR records.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY		WHS-OP-4.03	
Approved by Senior Leadership Team	Approval Date November 2021	Review Date November 2025	Page 2 of 4

SDN may, at the organisation’s discretion, decide to grant an exemption where a staff member, volunteer or student has a medical contraindication to the COVID-19 vaccines available for use in Australia. To be eligible to apply for an exemption based on medical contraindication, the person must:

- meet the recognised exemptions set out in relevant State or Federal medical contraindications, as listed in the Australian Immunisation Handbook. Contraindications are limited to specific medical circumstances; and
- notify Human Resources and provide appropriate medical information which meets the relevant guidance from legislation or public health directions or orders at the time, including a medical contraindication certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner certifying:
 - o that they are unable to receive the vaccination because you have a recognised medical contraindication;
 - o whether the medical contraindication will permanently or temporarily prevent the vaccination; and
 - o where the medical contraindication only temporarily prevents the vaccination, when you may be able to receive the vaccination.
- If eligible, SDN will consider the application having regard to all relevant circumstances.
- There may be some circumstances where SDN does not grant an exemption despite eligibility due to factors such as the requirements of the person’s role or COVID-19 risk factors, in which case SDN will consider what other reasonable control measures or accommodations are available before making a final decision.

All vaccination information, including medical exemption information will be handled in accordance with our Privacy Policy, kept confidential and held securely by Human Resources.

Influenza

SDN will encourage staff members, Board members, students, regular contractors and volunteers to be vaccinated annually against influenza and will cover the cost of annual influenza vaccination.

Staff members who wish to receive a flu vaccination will be responsible for arranging and paying for the vaccination and will be reimbursed by SDN on the provision of a tax invoice.

The reimbursement will not cover the cost of the consultation with the medical professional but only the cost of the vaccination.

SDN will not be held responsible for the staff member’s choice or outcome from such medical treatment.

Testing for infectious diseases

SDN may, at times require children, staff members, Board members, students, regular contractors and volunteers to be tested for the presence of an infectious disease in order to attend an SDN site or function and require evidence of that testing and the results before allowing access to SDN sites and functions.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY		WHS-OP-4.03	
Approved by Senior Leadership Team	Approval Date November 2021	Review Date November 2025	Page 3 of 4

Policies

- WHS-HLP-4.01: Work, Health and Safety
- SD-OP-2.15: Child Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness

Procedures

- SD-PRO-2.15-01: Child Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- WHS-PRO-4.03-01: Infectious Diseases
- WHS-PRO-4.03-02: Hand Washing
- SD-PRO-4.03-03: Safe Food Receipt, Storage, Handling and Preparation
- SD-PRO-4.03-04: Food Delivery Temperature Monitoring
- SD-PRO-4.03-05: Safe Food Cooling, Freezing and Defrosting
- SD-PRO-4.03-06: Storage and Preparation of Bottles
- SD-PRO-4.03-07: Nappy Change
- SD-PRO-4.03-08: Laundry Practices for Infection Control

Relevant Legislation/Regulations

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, sections 172 and 291
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, regulations 77 (1) (a) and (2) (a), 88, 168 (2)(c), and 190 (e)
 - Schedule 1: National Quality Standard, standard 2.1, element 2.1.4
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Public Health Act 1991
- ACT Health Act 1997

Other References/Related Documents

- Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th Edition), Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council (2013)
- National Health and Medical Research Council - www.nhmrc.gov.au

Immunisation Handbook Australian Government – Department of Health, updated three times per year <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/about-the-handbook/updates>

INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY		WHS-OP-4.03	
Approved by Senior Leadership Team	Approval Date November 2021	Review Date November 2025	Page 4 of 4