**Water Safety Policy**

**Rationale:**

Water play is considered to be an integral part of the children's program; it provides the opportunity for social interaction, physical, language and cognitive development. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of each individual child is maintained water areas and water experiences will be thoroughly supervised by educators.

Water safety relates to access to water in the building, the playground or on excursions, and also to the availability of drinking water for children.

It is imperative that educators remain vigilant in their supervision of children in and around water and are alert to potential risks in everyday practice in the learning environment.

This policy will outline the procedures that apply to managing water safety, including safety during any water-based activities.

**Policy:**

Water use within The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten will be supervised at all times to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, educators and families is a priority.

The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten is committed to:

* providing opportunities for children to explore their natural environment including through water play
* ensuring that children are protected from the risks associated with drowning or non-fatal drowning experiences
* ensuring that curriculum planning incorporates water safety awareness
* providing information to educators, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and others at the centre about water safety

**Definitions:**

Adequate supervision: supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all

areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used. Adequate Supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

* number, age and abilities of children
* number and positioning of educators
* current activity of each child
* areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
* developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
* experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
* need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Approved first aid qualification: A list of approved first aid qualifications, anaphylaxis management and emergency asthma management training is published on the ACECQA website: www.acecqa.gov.au

Hazard: A source or situation with a potential for harm in terms of human injury or ill health, damage to property, damage to the environment or a combination of these.

Notifiable incident: An incident involving workplace health and safety that is required by law to be reported to WorkSafe Victoria. Notification is required for incidents that result in death or serious injury/illness, or dangerous occurrences. For a complete list of incidents that must be reported to WorkSafe Victoria, refer to the Guide to Incident Notification on the WorkSafe Victoria website: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Serious incident: An incident resulting in the death of a child, or an injury, trauma or illness for which the attention of a registered medical practitioner, emergency services or hospital is sought or should have been sought. This also includes an incident in which a child appears to be missing, cannot be accounted for, is removed from the service in contravention of the regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the service premises (Regulation 12). A serious incident should be documented in an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident. The Regulatory Authority (DEECD) must be notified within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Regulation 176(2) (a)). Records are required to be retained for the periods specified in Regulation 183.

Water hazard: can lead to drowning or non-fatal drowning incidences. Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, including buckets, water containers, pet water bowls and poor drainage which allow water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

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**The Nominated Supervisor/Persons with Management and Control are responsible for:**

* ensuring that children are adequately supervised at all times when near water hazards
* ensuring that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times
* conducting a risk assessment in relation to any water hazards on or near the premises that may be accessible to children
* conducting a regular safety check of the centre’s premises
* ensuring any water hazards that are not able to be adequately supervised at all times are isolated from children
* reporting serious incidents to DET
* reporting notifiable incidents to WorkSafe Victoria
* providing current information to parents about water safety
* ensuring information on water safety is incorporated into the educational program
* ensuring permission is obtained from parents/guardians for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard
* ensuring that water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities are considered in a risk assessment prior to conducting excursions and other offsite events
* ensuring increased levels of supervision for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard
* ensuring that an educator with a current approved first aid qualification is in attendance and immediately available at all times children are being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 136)
* ensuring that all educators’ current approved first aid qualifications meet the requirements of the National Regulations and are approved by ACECQA
* ensuring that details of current approved first aid qualifications are filed with each staff member’s record

**Educators and other Staff are responsible for:**

* providing adequate supervision at all times
* undertaking a risk assessment prior to an excursion to a location where there is a significant water hazard
* adjusting supervision strategies to suit the activities being undertaken
* obtaining parental permission for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard
* maintaining a current approved first aid qualification
* ensuring gates and other barriers restricting access to water hazards are closed at all times and that fences are kept clear at all times
* ensuring that containers of water (including soaking buckets and cleaning buckets) are sealed with child-proof lids or not accessible to children
* ensuring wading/paddling pools, water play containers and portable water courses are emptied immediately after each use and stored in a manner that prevents the collection of water when not in use
* checking the outdoor learning environment at the beginning and end of each day for puddles or filled containers that could pose a potential risk to small children after heavy rain
* providing water safety education as a part of the centre’s program
* informing the coordinator/2IC immediately if any serious or notifiable incidents occur at the centre

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

* supervising children in their care, including siblings, while attending or assisting at the centre
* ensuring that doors, gates and barriers, including playground gates, are closed after entry or exit to prevent access to water hazards
* informing themselves about water safety
* ensuring their children understand the risks associated with water
* recognising when resuscitation is required and obtaining assistance
* considering undertaking approved first aid qualifications, as resuscitation skills save lives.

**Volunteers and students, while at the centre, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.**

**Strategies and Practices:**

In implementing this policy, we adhere to the following key points for reference and guidance:

* Ensure that all water receptacles that can reasonably present a drowning hazard for children are supervised at all times when water is present within them.
* Water tanks will be labelled with “Do Not Drink” signage and the children will be supervised in this area to make sure they are not accessing this water for drinking purposes.
* Drinking water will always be accessible to children but hygienically stored and maintained throughout the day.
* Staff will ensure that all water receptacles used for water play will be filled to a safe level.
* Staff will follow appropriate work health and safety guidelines for back care when lifting or moving water receptacles.
* Ensure that children are encouraged to safely explore the properties of water, building water safety messages into the program
* Ensure that all water receptacles that can reasonably present a drowning hazard for children are stored in an appropriate manner at the end of the day to prevent the collection of water through natural causes like rain
* Ensure that all water receptacles are emptied at the end of the day and allowed to air dry thoroughly to prevent the build-up of potentially harmful bacteria

**Links to other policies**

* Occupational Health and Safety Policy
* First Aid Policy
* Emergency Evacuation Policy
* Excursions Policy
* General Outings Policy
* Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
* Supervision of Children Policy

**Sources and further findings**

* Royal Life Saving Society – Australia: www.royallifesaving.com.au
* Water Safety Victoria – Water Safety Guide: Play it Safe by the Water:
* [www.watersafety.vic.gov.au](http://www.watersafety.vic.gov.au)
* Kidsafe – Water Safety Fact Sheet: [www.kidsafevic.com.au](http://www.kidsafevic.com.au)
* Acecqa Website: acecqa.gov.au
* Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (Part 2: Principles for Children)
* Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
* Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 101(2), 168(2)(a)(iii)
* National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety

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