

OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

QUALITY AREA 2 & 7

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PURPOSE

Whittlesea Family Day Care is committed to the provision of a safe and healthy work environment and safe work procedures that protect educators and other persons at the service from the risk of occupational violence and aggression (OVA) (*refer to Definitions*). This policy outlines the minimum requirements and responsibilities of Whittlesea Family Day Care in supporting educators to have a safe workplace where educators children are not subjected to aggression and violence.



POLICY STATEMENT

The safety, health, wellbeing, rights and best interests of every child are the paramount consideration and must guide all decisions, actions and practices of educators within the education and care service.

VALUES

Whittlesea Family Day Care is committed to:

- promoting a no tolerance approach to any form of aggression or violence, including verbal abuse against educators
- educators and other persons at Whittlesea Family Day Care will be protected as far as reasonably practicable from all forms of OVA (*refer to Definitions*).
- following a risk management approach to eliminate or minimise the risks of OVA (*refer to Definitions*)
- regularly consulting with educators and to discuss OVA (*refer to Definitions*). concerns and the factors likely to increase the risk of OVA (*refer to Definitions*).



SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, educators, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Whittlesea Family Day Care, including during off-site excursions and activities and online (i.e. during an online meeting).

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Educators	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
	R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted				
Building and maintaining an environment and culture that supports a commitment to a service that is free from violence and aggression	√	√	√	√	√

Promoting a safe environment where educators are not exposed to hazards	R	√	√		
Identifying, assessing, and controlling environmental risks in each service to reduce the potential for harm to educators (refer to Attachment 1)	R	√	√		
Implementing a risk assessment (refer to Definitions) approach in the management of service aggression and violence (refer to Attachment 1)	R	√			
Promoting a no tolerance approach to any form of aggression or violence, including verbal abuse against educators (refer to Code of Conduct Policy)	√	√	√	√	√
Support training programs specific to the needs of educators, relative to the degree of risk faced within their working environment	√	√			
Supporting educators to actively report all incidents and hazards related to aggression and violence	R	√	√		
Informing educators and other persons at Whittlesea Family Day Care about unacceptable behaviours in the service	√	√	√		
Ensuring all incidents and near misses of violence or aggression are reported to the Coordination Unit. External reporting to WorkSafe may also be required, in the case of notifiable incidents (refer to Definitions)	R	√	√		
Support educators, volunteers and students are given an induction to learn relevant skills and strategies on conflict and aggression management	√	√	√		
Taking appropriate action after any incidents of violence and aggression, in terms of support and follow-up	√	√	√		
Keeping a record of persons who have exhibited past behaviours of violence and aggression and sharing amongst appropriate educators	√	√	√		
Ensuring that all allegations or acts of violence or aggression will be thoroughly investigated, and where appropriate may be referred to the Police	√	√	√		
Notifying Work Safe Victoria within 48 hours of a notifiable incident (refer to Definitions)	R	√	R		
Notifying DE within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint (refer to Definitions) or allegation regarding the safety, health and/or welfare of a child at the service	R	√			
Evaluating the effectiveness of this policy to minimise violence and aggression	√	√			
Immediately reporting any incidents or near misses of occupational violence or aggression which affect their own health or safety, or that of others in the service		√	√	√	

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

The approved provider has a duty under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to eliminate risks to the health and safety of educators and other persons so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks, they must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

This means that approved providers must do all that they reasonably can to manage the risk of violence and aggression occurring at Whittlesea Family Day Care services.

They must also, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- give educators the necessary information, instruction, training or supervision to provide care safely and without risks to health, and
- consult with educators about health and safety issues that may directly affect them.

Service violence and aggression is any incident where a person is abused, threatened or assaulted at work or while they are carrying out the program. The approved provider has occupational health and safety duties to ensure educators and others are not exposed to risks to their health and safety, including violence.

Violence and aggression can be:

- physical assault – such as biting, scratching, hitting, choking, kicking, pushing, grabbing, and throwing objects
- coughing or spitting on someone on purpose
- sexual assault or any other forms of indecent physical contact
- harassment or aggressive behaviour that creates a fear of violence, such as stalking, sexual harassment, verbal threats and abuse, yelling and swearing

Violence from a family or domestic relationship when this occurs at the service. Violence may come from anyone in the service, including any other educators, parent/guardian, authorised nominee, Authorised Provider, visitor, a student on placement, service provider, allied health provider or child.

Violence and aggression can have significant short and long-term impacts on a person's physical and psychological (mental) health. It's not just violent incidents like physical assault which can cause harm, being exposed to lower level but frequent forms of aggression, like yelling, name calling and challenging behaviours, can also have a lasting effect on a person's health.

Violence and aggression can lead to:

- feelings of isolation, social isolation or family dislocation
- loss of confidence and withdrawal
- physical injuries
- stress, depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- illness such as cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, immune deficiency and gastrointestinal disorders e.g. as a result of stress, and
- suicidal thoughts.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Framework: Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

Notifiable Incident: (In the context of this policy) An incident that is required, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, educators must notify WorkSafe immediately after becoming aware a notifiable incident has occurred. Failure to report an incident to WorkSafe is an offence and may result in prosecution.

Workplaces must report incidents resulting in

- death of a person
- a person needing medical treatment within 48 hours of being exposed to a substance
- a person needing immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital
- a person needing immediate medical treatment for one of the following injuries: amputation, serious head injury or serious eye injury, removal of skin (example: de-gloving, scalping), electric shock, spinal injury, loss of a bodily function, serious lacerations (example: requiring stitching or other medical treatment)

For more information about obligation to notify visit: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/report-incident-criteria-notifiable-incidents>

Occupational Violence and Aggression: OVA involves incidents in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. This definition covers a broad range of actions and behaviours that can create a risk to the health and safety of educators and other persons attending the program.

Examples of work-related violence can include:

- biting, spitting, scratching, hitting, kicking, choking
- pushing, shoving, tripping, grabbing
- throwing objects
- verbal threats
- threatening someone with a weapon
- armed robbery
- sexual assault
- emotional abuse



SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- 1800Respect: www.1800respect.org.au
- Fair Work Ombudsman: www.fairwork.gov.au
- Our Watch: www.ourwatch.org.au
- Safe Work Australia: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- Work Safe Victoria: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

RELATED POLICIES

- Code of Conduct
- Workplace Health and Safety

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required



- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk ([Regulation 172 \(2\)](#)).



ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Managing Risks
- Attachment 2: Responding to Incidents

AUTHORISATION



This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Whittlesea Family Day Care on 30 June 2026

REVIEW DATE: 30 June 2029

Review History		
Version	Date	Responsible Person
1.0	30/10/2024	FDC Coordination Unit
1.1	30/06/2026	FDC Coordination Unit

ATTACHMENT 1. MANAGING RISKS

Risk Management

Risk management of OVA is an approach that involves:

1. identifying OVA risks;
2. assessing the likelihood of those risks causing injury or illness;
3. implementing risk control measures to eliminate the risk/s (or, where that is not reasonably practicable, reducing the risk so far as is reasonably practicable); and
4. reviewing and improving the effectiveness of risk control measures over time.

This needs to be done in consultation with educators.

Identifying hazards and assessing risk

To identify the potential for violence or aggression gather information about the hazards in the service and assess the associated risk.

Factors that can increase the likelihood and risks of educators being exposed to violence or aggression include:

- providing care or services to people who are distressed, confused, afraid, ill, affected by drugs or alcohol, or receiving unwelcome or coercive treatment
- enforcement activities e.g. the activities of Police, prison officers or parking inspectors
- working in high crime areas
- handling valuable or restricted items e.g. cash or medicines
- the physical work environment e.g. poor lighting or visibility
- working alone, in isolation or in a remote area with the inability to call for assistance
- working offsite or in the community
- working in unpredictable environments e.g. where other people may pose a risk to educator's safety
- interacting with people including face-to-face, on the phone or online
- in relation to gendered violence
- service methods or policies that cause or escalate frustration, anger, misunderstanding or conflict

It is important to consider that educators may be more likely to experience violence and aggression, and/or be differently or more severely affected by it, because of their sex, gender, sexuality, age, migration status, disability and literacy - the risk of experiencing harm rises when a person faces multiple forms of discrimination.

Also less serious, but still unacceptable behaviour such as eye rolling, sneering, swearing and name-calling. This conduct can sometimes escalate to more serious forms of aggression and may be an indication of a risk of violence.

To identify hazards at the service, it may be useful to:

- observe work practices to identify risks of exposure
- walk-through and inspect the service
- observe parents/guardians, contractors, volunteers and students' behaviour and how they interact with educators, including lower level but more frequent behaviours like incivility from parents/guardians, contractors, volunteers and students
- identify whether issues already identified between educators, parents/guardians, contractors, volunteers and students could escalate to violence
- identify the physical, psychological and emotional demands involved in being an educator
- conduct confidential educator meetings about incidents or behaviours that have caused discomfort and situations that had the potential to become more violent
- conduct surveys of parents/guardians, contractors, volunteers and students to identify problems with service delivery
- identify factors external to the service which may lead to violence or aggressive behaviour impacting the educators e.g. gatherings of people like protests or people affected by drugs or alcohol
- monitor information like hazard and incident reports

After identifying the hazards, assess the risks in consultation with the educators. To do this, think about the following:

- Do particular tasks increase or decrease the likelihood of violence and aggression? How often are particular tasks done? Do particular tasks increase or decrease the severity of potential harm?
- Has violence happened before, either in this workplace or somewhere else? If it has happened, how often does it happen?
- What are the potential impacts? Will it cause harm to the health of the worker?

Controlling the risks

The risk of violence can be affected by a number of factors, for example the:

- nature and location of work
- interactions with clients, customers and members of the public, and frequency of interaction, and
- educators levels and skills.

As these factors will vary between workplaces, the control measures that are put in place need to be tailored to context of the service and the educators. When deciding what control measures are reasonably practicable for the service consider and weigh up all relevant matters, including (but not limited to):

- the likelihood of educators and other people at the workplace being exposed to violence
- the degree of harm that might result e.g., physical assault can result in serious injury or death, which means the degree of harm is very high; violence can also result in serious psychological injuries like PTSD
- what you know about how to eliminate or minimise risks e.g., securing access to the service after hours or when educators are alone
- availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, and
- costs associated with the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk.

When thinking about control measures, it is important that educators and the Coordination Unit representatives are consulted. Engaging educators and others in developing controls will likely result in measures that are more effective and more widely used. Considering the views of educators into account when making decisions and advise them of decisions. Also consider whether the control measures introduced create new hazards or risks to health and safety.

ATTACHMENT 2: RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

If an educator or anyone at the service is in immediate danger, call 000.

Responses to violence will vary depending on the nature and severity of the incident.

Ensuring there is a response system in place to address what to do at the time of an incident and after an incident, including internal reporting and notifications required by external agencies such as Police and Occupational Health and Safety regulator.

Educators should be trained in these procedures, for example (but not limited to):

- using calm verbal and non-verbal communication, de-escalation and distraction techniques
- seeking support from other educators
- asking the aggressor to leave the premises or disconnecting the aggressor from the phone call
- activating alarms, or alerting security personnel or Police, and
- retreating to a safe location.

Immediately after an incident occurs at the service:

- address immediate safety issues and ensure that everyone is safe
- provide first aid or urgent medical attention where necessary
- provide individual support where required, including psychological support to the victim and other workers
- report criminal acts such as physical assault, sexual assault and threats to harm someone to Police on 131 444, and
- record what happened, who was affected and who was involved.

Depending on the circumstances, even if a matter has been referred to Police or another agency, the Occupational Health and Safety Regulator may still be involved. For example, notifying Occupational Health and Safety regulator and if the incident is a notifiable incident (*refer to Definitions*).

After an incident, review the risk management systems to identify and address factors that may have increased the risk of violence and aggression, evaluate what worked and what could be improved.