

2.22 Risk in Play

Policy Statement

We acknowledge and recognise the importance of play for children's physical development and emotional wellbeing as well as the benefits of allowing children of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities in a variety of environments. We understand and accept that children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger and we will work proactively with all stakeholders to minimize those risks.

Definition

'Play is a freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour, normally associated with recreational pleasure and enjoyment'

'Play is often interpreted as frivolous; yet the player can be intently focused on their objective, particularly when play is structured and goal-oriented. Accordingly, play can range from relaxed, free-spirited and spontaneous through frivolous to planned or even compulsive. Not only does play promote and aid in physical development, such as hand-eye coordination, but it also aids in cognitive development and social skills.'

Procedures

Service Responsibilities

We will ensure there are a variety of play spaces, inside and outside where children can play, either in groups or alone.

Our program will be designed and facilitated to ensure children are able to move freely between relevant play spaces, both inside and outside.

Equipment, resources and materials that can be used for a variety of purposes will be provided to encourage children to guide their own play.

Activities offered as part of the Service program will be carefully considered in relation to the risk benefit for children with opportunities for play planned to develop children's risk awareness. The Coordinator and staff will ensure a comprehensive risk assessment is conducted prior to any high-risk activities being undertaken. All educators involved in such activities will read and sign the risk assessments and be briefed on their responsibilities prior to the activity.

Educator Responsibilities

Educators will:

- ❖ Ensure that materials, resources and equipment are set up in such a way as to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximize their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences.
- ❖ Design and develop the program in order to ensure children have opportunity to be involved in a variety of types of play including socio-dramatic, creative, exploratory, imaginative, physical and rough and tumble.
- ❖ Ensure children are playing in an approved area of the Service with supervision suitable for the type of activity, the age and developmental stage of the children participating.

When planning play opportunities for children, educators will:

- ❖ Be thoughtful and deliberate in their planning ensuring the interests, needs and abilities of the children are known and catered for;
- ❖ Empower children to make decisions about their play and leisure-time experiences;
- ❖ Ensure all children are have equal opportunity for inclusion in play;
- ❖ Provide opportunities for both indoor and outdoor play experiences, and that will include both 'built' and 'natural' elements;
- ❖ Provide resources that are accessible, varied, age and ability appropriate, culturally diverse, open-ended and sufficient in number;
- ❖ Collaborate with the children and be open to change and spontaneity;
- ❖ Encourage children to make decisions and to take responsibility for their own needs;
- ❖ Empower children to be creative and seek out possibilities and solutions;
- ❖ Encourage children to try and experience new things and experiences;
- ❖ Play with the children picking up on cues, seizing 'teachable' moments and ways to scaffold children's learning.
- ❖ Use positive communication such as body language, praise and encouragement to assist children in developing the necessary skills and capabilities in managing risky play situations and new experiences.

References

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and Regulations 2011
 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 'My Time, Our Place' Framework for School Age Care in Australia
 Relevant Policies: Respect for Children, Educator Ratios, Behaviour Support and Management, Inclusion and Anti-bias, including children with Special/Additional Needs, Use of Images of Children, Children's Participation and Decision Making, Educational Program Planning, Program and Documentation Evaluation, Educators Practice, Physical Activity, Creative and Expressive Arts, Provision of Resources and Equipment, Role and Expectations of Educators, Educational Leader.

Date of Development	Reason for Modification	Date Ratified	Date of Review