

# Relaxation and Sleep Policy

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## PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for the implementation of safe relaxation and sleep practices that meet the individual needs of children attending NERPSA services.

## POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. VALUES

NERPSA is committed to:

- providing a positive and nurturing environment for all children attending the service
- recognising that children have different requirements for relaxation and sleep, and being responsive to those needs to ensure that children feel safe and secure at the service
- consulting with parents/guardians about their child's individual relaxation and sleep requirements/practices, and ensuring practices at the service are responsive to the values and cultural beliefs of each family
- its duty of care to all children and ensuring that adequate supervision is maintained while children are sleeping, resting or relaxing
- complying with all legislative requirements, standards and current best practice, including recommendations by SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe (refer to *Sources*).

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to NERPSA, individual services, their committees and staff and parents/guardians with an enrolled child or who wish to enrol a child at a service managed by NERPSA.

### 3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

The *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)* include a focus on social, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing and health. Development Outcome 3 in both framework documents refers to a child's ability to take increasing responsibility for their own wellbeing. One of the indicators for this capacity is that children "recognise and communicate their bodily needs (for example thirst, hunger, rest, comfort, physical activity)". The EYLF suggests that to promote this, educators should:

- consider the pace of the day within the context of the community
- provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day, and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation

Employers have a responsibility under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to provide a safe and healthy working environment. This duty extends to others present in the workplace, including children and volunteers. Providing a safe environment for children at the service includes complying with current Australian/New Zealand standards in relation to equipment, such as cots and mattresses (refer to *Sources*).

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- *Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012*
- *Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Regulations 2012*
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010)
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

#### 4. DEFINITIONS

**Adequate supervision:** (In relation to this policy) **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).

**Duty of care:** A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury.

**Relaxation/rest:** A period of inactivity, solitude, calmness or tranquillity.

**SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome):** The unexpected and unexplained death of an infant, usually occurring during sleep.

**SIDS and Kids:** The National SIDS Council of Australia, dedicated to eliminating SIDS and providing support for bereaved families. SIDS and Kids is considered to be the national authority on safe sleeping practices for infants and children. A branch of SIDS and Kids is located in each state and territory, and can provide resources and assistance (refer to *Sources*).

#### 5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

- Australian/New Zealand Standards: (at the time of printing) the current relevant standards are:
  - Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010), and
  - Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998)

Services can check current standards on the SAI Global website at: [www.saiglobal.com](http://www.saiglobal.com)

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF): <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Grow and Thrive, *Sleep*, volume 2 number 1, February 2014, Centre for Community Child Health: <http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/publications-resources/growthrive/GrowThriveSleep/>
- Kidsafe Fact Sheets at: [www.kidsafevic.com.au/resources](http://www.kidsafevic.com.au/resources)
  - *Safe Sleeping for Infants*
  - *Ages and Stages* fact sheet series ('Sleeping' section)
- SIDS and Kids, Safe Sleeping Program: <http://www.sidsandkids.org/safe-sleeping/> SIDS and Kids also produces a range of resources including the *Infant Safe Sleeping Child Care Kit*
- Product safety: a guide for businesses and legal practitioners: [www.consumer.vic.gov.au/businesses/fair-trading/product-safety](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/businesses/fair-trading/product-safety)
- WorkSafe Victoria, *Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit*: <http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/childrens-services-occupational-health-and-safety-compliance-kit>

- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF):*  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/pages/veyladf.aspx>
- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*

## PROCEDURES

### NERPSA is responsible for:

- Taking reasonable steps to ensure the sleep/rest needs of children at the service are met, with regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs (Regulation 81(1))
- Ensuring parents/guardians are consulted about appropriate relaxation and sleep practices for their child
- Ensuring cots provided at the service comply with the most current Australian/New Zealand Standards (refer to *Sources* and Attachment 1 – Cots)
- Ensuring compliance with WorkSafe Victoria's *Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit* (refer to *Sources*), including in relation to staff lifting children into and out of cots
- Ensuring compliance with the recommendations of SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe in relation to safe sleeping practices for children (refer to *Sources*)
- Ensuring adequate supervision of children at the service at all times, including during relaxation and sleep
- Ensuring that rooms used for sleep and relaxation are well ventilated.

### Educators are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable steps to ensure the sleep/rest needs of children at the service are met with regard to the age of children, developmental stages and individual needs (Regulation 81(2))
- Complying with WorkSafe Victoria's *Children's services – occupational health and safety compliance kit* (refer to *Sources*) in relation to lifting children into and out of cots
- Ensuring parents/guardians are consulted about appropriate relaxation and sleep practices for their child
- Ensuring adequate supervision of children at the service at all times, including during relaxation and sleep
- Ensuring that rooms used for sleep and relaxation are well ventilated
- Complying with the recommendations of SIDS and Kids and Kidsafe in relation to safe sleeping practices for children (refer to *Sources*)
- Developing relaxation and sleep practices that are responsive to:
  - the individual needs of children at the service
  - parenting beliefs, values, practices and requirements
  - the length of time each child spends at the service
  - circumstance or events occurring at a child's home
  - consistency of practice between home and the service
  - a child's general health and wellbeing
  - the physical environment, including room temperature, lighting, airflow and noise levels
- Providing a range of opportunities for relaxation throughout the day
- Conducting regular safety checks of equipment used for sleeping/resting, such as cots and mattresses
- Ensuring that any hanging cords, mobiles, curtains and blinds are inaccessible to children who are resting or sleeping
- Ensuring that artificial heating, such as heat bags and hot-water bottles, is not used to provide warmth
- Supervising children displaying symptoms of illness closely, especially when resting or sleeping

- Documenting and communicating children's rest and sleep times to co-workers during shift changes
- Developing communication strategies to inform parents/guardians about their child's rest and sleep patterns, including times and length of sleep

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Discussing their child's relaxation and sleep requirements and practices prior to commencing at the service, and when these requirements change
- Providing information on the child's enrolment form if the child requires special items while resting or sleeping e.g. a comforter or soft toy
- Providing a written medical report if their baby/child is not to be placed on their back during sleep. Parents/guardians must communicate alternative resting practices to staff.

**EVALUATION**

In order to assess whether the values and purpose are met, NERPSA will:

- Assess the effectiveness of the payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- Review the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- Take into account feedback from staff and parents/guardians regarding the NERPSA Fees Policy
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the NERPSA Fees Policy
- Review the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- Monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of the non-payment of fees.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Cots

**AUTHORISATION**

Adopted: 15/05/2018

Last review date: 01/11/2020

Next review date: 01/11/2023

There are currently (at the time of printing) two standards that apply to the use of cots:

- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010), and
- Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998).

Services can check current standards on the SAI Global website at: [www.saiglobal.com](http://www.saiglobal.com)

Household cots usually have a lower base and mattress, and WorkSafe Victoria have expressed concern for staff in relation to the manual handling risks posed when working with cots at a lower height.

The Institutional Cot Standard allows for cots with a higher base and mattress, but requires these cots to be made of metal, and to have a drop side that can be lowered to the level of the mattress. The early childhood sector has expressed concerns in relation to the safety of cots with sides that lower to the level of the mattress.

Services should investigate options either for:

- cots that meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2172:2010) and have a higher base and mattress, or
- cots that meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety Requirements (AS/NZS 2130:1998).

No alterations should be made to purchased cots under any circumstances, as this may have serious consequences in relation to liability in the event that an incident occurs.

ELAA **does not** recommend that services use portable or folding cots, as they present an increased risk of injury or death to a child if erected incorrectly. Portable cots also pose an increased risk of manual handling injuries to staff. If a service requires an extra cot to be available for occasional use, it is possible to purchase a cot that meets the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Cots for household use, and folds flat for easy storage.

Further information on portable or folding cots is available as outlined below:

- Red Nose: <https://rednose.org.au/article/portable-cots>
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission: [www.productsafety.gov.au](http://www.productsafety.gov.au)

ELAA's OHS website: [www.ohsinecservices.org.au](http://www.ohsinecservices.org.au)