

Evening and overnight care

Overnight care refers to care provided in a licensed child care service between the hours of 10pm and 5am. In order to provide the extended hours of care, a licensee must apply to the department for an amendment to include overnight care on their licence. Licensed child care services must continue to meet the requirements of *the Child Care Act 2002* and *Child Care Regulations 2003* at all times. Additional licensing conditions may be imposed.

Introduction

Section 62(3) of the *Child Care Act 2002* provides the authority to request additional requirements in relation to overnight care. *Schedule 1* of the *Child Care Regulation 2003* outlines the requirements for groups in child care centres.

Key principles

- Overnight care may be offered in response to community need.
- Care should be provided in a comfortable and safe environment.
- The wellbeing of children is paramount.
- Availability of the service ie. the hours and nights of operation may be adjusted periodically according to local need.
- Overnight enrolments should be assessed on an individual basis.

General information

Enrolment and attendance

- A completed enrolment form must be held by the service prior to the commencement of a child in overnight care.
- A written attendance record must be kept for each child in the service on a daily basis, and should reflect when individual children arrive and leave the child care service.
(See Section 101 of the Regulation)

Collection time

- Consideration should be given to children's need for an undisturbed evening sleep when arrangements are made for their collection.
- Collection at specified time is desirable so that staff may have children ready with a minimum of disruption to other children in care.

Arrival and collection policy

- An Arrival and Collection Policy for extended hours care should be included in the Parent Handbook for each service.

- A procedure for responding to late collection of children should be established and adhered to.

Suspected parent intoxication

- The safety of children is of paramount consideration at all times.
- Licensees should develop a policy to guide staff management of the collection of children if they suspect parent intoxication.

Privacy

Bathing and showering

- The privacy and safety of children should be ensured at all times.
- Parent's must be aware of and agree with the services bathing arrangements for children.

Toileting

- Consideration should be given to toilet routines to ensure age-appropriate supervision at all times.

Facilities for overnight care

Bedding and linen

- Age appropriate sleeping facilities must be provided.
- Sleeping facilities must be spaced to allow safe movement between children and assist emergency evacuation if necessary.
(See Section 46 and 47 of the Regulation)

Overnight accidents and medication

- Licensees must develop accident and injury policies to include extended overnight care.
- Refer to the service policy for administration of medication.
(See Section 76 of the Act)

Overnight sickness

- Please refer to the guideline in “Staying Healthy in Child Care”, for procedures to follow in the event of sudden illness of a child in overnight care.
- Emergency contact numbers must be included on enrolment forms, and regularly updated.
- Licensees must develop a policy to ensure immediate medical treatment of children in the event of an emergency.

Overnight security

- A torch should be available in each room.
- Secure access to the premises must be ensured when overnight care is provided.
- Keypad locks with confidential PIN numbers for each parent, intercom systems and security patrols are some methods to ensure the safety of staff and children at all times.

Overnight fire drill

- A policy must be established to ensure fire drill is held regularly with children and staff who attend overnight care.
- The evacuation plan for fires and other emergency should be posted at strategic points throughout the centre.
- Exit signs should be clearly marked.
- Evacuation drills should be documented. (See Section 76 of the Act)

Sleep monitoring

Children should be formally checked regularly. Depending on age for example, every 15 minutes, every 30 minutes every 45 minutes. They should be checked for reflexes and movement of the chest.

- These regular checks should be documented and kept on file.
- Monitoring may need to be increased if children are not well.

Programming and equipment

- Age appropriate activities for babies and younger children must emphasise establishing security and usual bedtime experiences eg. soft music and quiet language experiences.

- Age-appropriate facilities, including furniture, indoor equipment, and utensils for eating and drinking and sleeping, that are adequate for the children provided with extended hours care must be provided. (See Part 2 of the Regulation)

Meals and snacks

- Age appropriate meals and snacks must be provided with consideration to the hours the child is in care.
- A written meal and snack plan must be provided to parents. (See Section 63 of the Regulation)

Personal hygiene

- The personal hygiene of children must be maintained at all times.
- Separate clean linen and toiletries must be provided for each child.
- Licensees must ensure children’s needs are met throughout the hours of operation of the service, including bathing and sleep routines. (See Division 6 of the Regulation)

Round the clock continuous care

Check Australian Government 24-hour requirements. Continuous care should only be considered in extreme circumstances to assist families with no alternatives.

Staffing

(See Section 62 of the Regulation & Schedule 1)

Age groups

- Children should be divided into age groupings similar to long day care settings.
- Staff supervision must be age appropriate at all times. (See Section 15 of the Regulation & Schedule 1)

Extended hours staff: child ratios

- If a centre based service is conducted between 10pm on a day and 5.00am on the next day the requirements applying to the service are those stated on the licence ie. the staff: child ratio requirements must be specified in the licence conditions.

- The Guiding Principles of the *Child Care Act 2003*, section 9(a) to (e), must be adhered to and address the specific needs and requirements of any children with special needs who are cared for at the service. This may require additional staff members if the needs of the child are significant.
(See Section 62 of the Act)
- Staff should be encouraged to take their break when most children are asleep.
- Staff must remain awake and alert and actively supervising children at all times.
(See Section 112-114 of the Regulation)

Other considerations

Overnight care staff qualifications

- The licensee must ensure that at least 2 staff members are present at the centre.
- The licensee must ensure that at least 1 staff member with the prescribed first aid competency is present at all times.
(section 66 of the *Child Care Act 2002*).
- Application for an Amendment to a Licence (Form 7) applied for.
- Local council approval may be required to conduct business overnight.
- Notify insurers of extended hours.
- Care for children with special needs should be provided with consideration of the care needs for all children at the centre.

This fact sheet has been prepared by the Department of Communities to assist users of the *Child Care Act 2002* and the *Child Care Regulation 2003* in understanding the requirements of important provisions. If there are any inconsistencies between this document and the legislation, the legislation must be followed. You should refer to legislation to properly understand its requirements.

For a list of Department of Communities regional office contacts please call the Child Care Information Service on 3224 4225 or freecall outside of Brisbane 1800 637 711.

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