



Guidelines for Early Childhood Education services with their own Drinking Water Supply

Legislation

Providing safe drinking water is essential for protecting people from illness. Outbreaks of gastroenteritis can occur as a result of people drinking contaminated water from un-treated or un-maintained drinking water supplies. This resource sets out to explain all of the current information that applies to ECE with their own drinking water supply. Firstly, there are a number of different pieces of legislation which relate to Early Childhood Education (ECE) services:

Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008: each licensed service provider must comply with the health and safety practices standard: general, which requires providers to:

- take all reasonable steps to promote the good health and safety of children enrolled in the service
- take all reasonable precautions to prevent accidents and the spread of infection among children enrolled in the service
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that the premises, facilities, and other equipment on those premises are—
 - (i) kept in good repair; and
 - (ii) maintained regularly; and
 - (iii) used safely and kept free from hazards; and
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to deal with fires, earthquakes, and other emergencies.

Licensing Criteria for ECE and Care Centres HS21: requires “An ample supply of water that is fit to drink is available to children at all times, and older children are able to access this water independently.” The Guidance Criteria notes in the Licensing Criteria state that guidelines concerning the provision of potable water should be available from your District Health Board.

Building Act: The Building Code (Approved Document G12 – Water Supplies) requires premises to be provided with water that is suitable for drinking and for tooth brushing, washing up and food preparation.

Health Act (as amended by the Health (Drinking Water) Amendment Act 2007): The Health (Drinking Water) Amendment Act 2007 came into force on 1 July 2008. It aims to protect public health by improving the quality of drinking water supplied to communities and community purpose buildings. The Health Act requires that all community drinking water supplies are included in the Ministry of Health Register of Community Drinking-water Supplies in New Zealand. Community drinking water supplies include:

Water suppliers who own their own water supply and supply water to **community purpose buildings** owned by them (called ‘**specified self-suppliers**’). This category includes ECE services not on town or community reticulated drinking water supplies.

The Ministry of Health Register of Community Drinking-water Supplies in New Zealand

Inclusion on the Register is required regardless of the population served by the drinking water supply. To register your supply, or check if you are on the register, please contact a Health Protection Officer or Drinking Water Assessor at the MidCentral Public Health Service (below).

The Ministry of Health Annual Review of Drinking Water Supplies

The Ministry of Health undertakes an annual drinking water quality survey where drinking water monitoring/sampling information is collected from all drinking water supplies on the *Register of Community Drinking-water Supplies in New Zealand*. Registration as a ‘self-supplier’ on the *Register* means that your ECE will be included in the annual review. Information gathered in the review is checked for compliance with the Drinking Water Standards and forms part of the annual Ministry of Health publication *Annual Review of Drinking-Water Quality in New Zealand*.

Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand

Under the Health Act specified 'self-suppliers' are not legally required to take all practicable steps to comply with the current Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand 2005 (Revised 2008) (the Standards). **However, meeting the requirements of the Standards is strongly encouraged by this office and is a way of proving that the drinking water supply is safe or potable.**

Section 10 of the Standards has an alternative section for small supplies serving less than 500 people. Your ECE service may wish to investigate this compliance option. Among other things, this involves developing and implementing a Public Health Risk Management Plan (PHRMP). Supplies that have a PHRMP may be able to comply only with section 10 of the Standards in relation to small water supplies. Sampling (which is usually less onerous) can be carried out as per the approved PHRMP, i.e. 4 bacterial distribution/reticulation samples per year and relaxed plant monitoring.

If you choose not to comply with section 10 of the Standards then the supply will be assessed using the compliance requirements in sections 4, 5 and 7 to 9 (bacterial, protozoal, cyanotoxin, chemical and radiological compliance criteria) of the Standards. This involves taking monthly drinking water samples for testing at a Ministry of Health recognised Laboratory (testing of 11 samples per year is usually acceptable where the centre is not operating over the long Dec/Jan school holiday period).

Public Health Risk Management Plans (PHRMPs)

The Ministry of Health advocates the use of Public Health Risk Management Plans (PHRMPs) to provide adequate assurance of safe drinking water. A PHRMP is a written document that aims to assess and manage risks to the safety of a drinking water supply. Risks are identified from the water supply catchment (i.e. roof) right through when the water is supplied to the consumer at the tap. The PHRMP should aim to identify improvements that are necessary to protect public health.

A PHRMP must be approved by a Drinking Water Assessor located at MidCentral Public Health Services. To help drinking-water suppliers to develop PHRMPs for their drinking-water supplies, the Ministry of Health has developed the Drinking Water Assistance Programme.

Drinking Water Assistance Programme

Drinking water supply assistance can be obtained through the Ministry of Health's Technical Assistance Programme (TAP), free of charge. This programme is aimed at small suppliers to help them to understand and improve the technical operation of their supplies and provide assistance in the preparation of PHRMPs. Further information can be obtained by contacting Hira Paurini, Drinking Water Assistance Program Facilitator, at the MidCentral Public Health Service (below).

Resources

The Ministry of Health booklets - *Household Water Supplies*, *Water Collection Tanks*, and *Secure Groundwater Bores and Wells* are useful for ECE services with their own water supply. The *Small Drinking-water Supplies: Preparing a public health risk management plan* and the *Small Drinking-water Supplies: Public Health Risk Management Kit* publications are useful for the preparation of PHRMPs. These resources can be obtained from the Ministry of Health drinking water website www.moh.govt.nz/water, or from the MidCentral Public Health Service (below). The Ministry of Health website also has useful information on drinking water legislation, the annual review, the drinking water assistance programme, PHRMPs, other drinking water publications and resources (including the Standards), and the latest drinking water updates.

Contact us

Please don't hesitate to contact a Health Protection Officer, Drinking Water Assessor or Drinking Water Assistance Program Facilitator at the **MidCentral Public Health Service** if you have any questions.

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