

INFORMATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES ON HEALTH & SAFETY ASSESSEMENTS

Health and safety assessments are undertaken by Health Protection Officers at the MidCentral Public Health Service (MidCentral PHS) at the request of early childhood education services (ECEs) as one of a number of necessary steps before acquiring an opening licence from the Ministry of Education (MoE), or in some cases at the time of re-licensing for existing licensed centres or at the request of the MoE.

Health Protection Officers at the MidCentral PHS have the mandate to perform health and safety assessments as designated officers for the Ministry of Health (MoH). This legislative mandate comes from the MoE as stated in the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008. Health and safety assessments cover compliance with legislative requirements, including health and safety standards required by the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations.

The Ministry of Health also have their own set of expectations of ECE services to ensure the health and safety of staff and children attending the centre which are separate from the Ministry of Education's Licensing criterion. These requirements are listed below and will be checked during the Health Protection Officer's assessment for the health report.

Food safety and Nutrition

Food preparation areas and facilities are assessed for compliance with hygiene and safety requirements and to ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to provide for the hygienic storage and preparation of foods and the effective cleaning of utensils.

Water Supply

Each service must have access to an adequate and safe drinking water supply. Supplies and monitoring programmes, where applicable, are assessed in relation to the Drinking-water Standards for New Zealand 2005 (Revised 2008).

Sanitary Facilities

Services are assessed for the adequacy and maintenance of toilet, nappy changing, hand washing/drying, bathing and laundry facilities. Hot water storage and use temperatures will also be examined to ensure minimum requirements are met.

Communicable Disease Control

A facility must be available for the temporary isolation and care of at least one sick child. Illness and exclusion policies will be checked in terms of MoH requirements.

Sleeping Facilities

Where a sleeping facility is required this is assessed in terms of safety and communicable disease control.

Hygiene Laundering

Linen used by children and adults is hygienically laundered. A procedure for the hygienic laundering of linen used by the children or adults is required.

General safety and hygiene

Designated Officers will assess the centre's policies in respect of a range of general health and safety matters including:

- Food safety
- Animal hygiene
- Heating, lighting, ventilation and noise
- Refuse and Sewage disposal (non-reticulated)
- General hygiene and cleanliness
- Outdoor environment
- General safety and maintenance for premises, furniture, fittings, equipment and materials.

Health and Hygiene policies and procedures

It is anticipated that centres will have a range of policies and procedures dealing with health and hygiene issues. Examples may include policies on routine cleaning, infection control, food hygiene training, infant formula preparation and the handling of soiled clothing.

Immunisation Records

The Health (Immunisation) Regulations 1995 require centres to maintain registers of each child's immunisation status. Health Protection Officers and Medical Officers of Health are authorised to examine these records.

Health and Safety Assessment – Where to from here?

After you contact a Health Protection Officer at the MidCentral PHS you will be sent relevant information and resources to assist with:

- knowing the relevant MoH standards that ECE services need to meet
- the development and review of health policies and procedures
- the public health and safety issues that commonly affect ECE services.

You will also be sent a copy of the Public Health Service Health and Safety Assessment Checklist which lists all the areas in terms of health and safety that will be checked during the Health Protection Officer's assessment visit.

To prepare as much as possible for the assessment visit we would recommend that you read all of the information you are sent, so that you can address health, safety and hygiene in the design and management of your centre prior to the assessment visit.

Health and Safety Assessment - What you can expect from us

1. A Health Protection Officer is available for advice and information on any health, safety or hygiene issue/risk.
2. A Health Protection Officer will carry out a health and safety assessment of the premises, that covers the issues outlined in the Health and Safety Assessment checklist. It also includes review of any applicable health and safety procedures and policies in place for your centre.
3. A Health Protection Officer will aim to work with the centre to undertake the assessment at a date and time suitable for both parties (providing the premises are ready to be assessed – see below).
4. At the conclusion of the assessment the Health Protection Officer will discuss the findings with the centres representative.

5. The Health Protection Officer will endeavour to provide a health and safety report within **7 working days** following the assessment. This report, which will include recommendations to the centres contact person regarding health and safety issues, will also be sent to the MoE as part of its requirement for consideration of the centre's licence. The MoE will consider MidCentral PHS recommendations and determine what (if any) actions must be undertaken by the centre before granting an ECE licence.

Health and Safety Assessment - What we expect from you

1. MidCentral PHS information and recommendations are referred to for developing or reviewing relevant policy and procedures.
2. The Health Protection Officer is kept up-to-date with progress on any building work and informed of changes to assessment visit appointment times as soon as possible.
3. At the time of the assessment it is expected that the centre will be, as it is on the opening day:
 - **All building work and renovations etc must be completed** (e.g. a Code Compliance Certificate has been issued, and a current Building Warrant of Fitness has been issued (for premises that require a compliance schedule under s100 of the Building Act);
 - All facilities must be operating, i.e. water temperatures have been tempered, fridges are operating etc;
 - Fixtures, fittings and furniture must be in place; and
 - Health and safety policies and procedures must be available for review (alternatively you may supply these for review prior to assessment day).
4. We require someone with detailed knowledge of the centre and its operations (e.g. Manager or supervisor) to be available to assist us during the assessment.

It is important that your centre is ready for the health and safety assessment when we visit. We will not be able to perform a health and safety assessment if a centre is not ready as outlined above.

Should you have any queries regarding the forthcoming assessment of your centre, please do not hesitate to contact a Health Protection Officer at the MidCentral PHS below.

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