**ACCESS AND RELEASE POLICY**

**Rationale**

At The Queen Elizabeth Hospital Community Child Care Centre (TQEHCCCC), we believe that children have a fundamental right to be protected and kept safe whilst they are in an approved service.

The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 requires that the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm and ensuring that children are only released to authorised person; is a key aspect of children’s safety.

Inform families of the policy and procedures and provide guidance in completing forms and records and oversee and guide staff to ensure adherence to policy.

Both educators and families are to be aware there is a shared legal responsibility, commitment and accountability in ensuring that each child being dropped off or collected from the service experiences a smooth, safe transition and all attendance records are completed accurately.

**NQS**

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| QA2 | 2.2.1 | Supervision - At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard. |
|  | 2.2.3 | Management, Educators And Staff Are Aware Of Their Roles And Responsibilities To Identify And Respond To Every Child At Risk Of Abuse Or Neglect. |

**Education and Care Services National Regulations**

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| Regulations | 99 | Children leaving the education and care service premises |
| 158 | Children’s attendance record to be kept by approved provider |
|  | 168 | Education and care service must have policies and procedures |

**Related Policies**

Child protection Policy

Code of Conduct Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Supervision of Children Policy

Enrolment and Orientation of new Families Policy

Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy

**Strategy**

**In regards to the access and release of children TQEHCCCC will ensure that:**

Safe and documented arrival and departure of children at the centre is conducted.

Families are made aware of the centres Access and Release of Children Policy and the requirement for all authorised persons to digitally sign their child/ren in and out of the centre.

Each room will have their own sign in and out sheets which they will use to record children’s daily attendance and departures.

Once the child/ren have been signed out, the children become the responsibility of the parents or legal guardians.

**Keypad**

The Centre’s front door is secured by a keypad; the code is issued to parents upon enrolment and is not to be given to other persons.

The keypad code is changed yearly or as required by the Nominated Supervisor.

**Arrivals**

Every child who arrives at the centre and is collected at the end of the day, must be acknowledged by an educator to ensure their attendance is noted.

Children are supported in settling into the service each day and experience quality education and care through continuity of educators and positive interactions within the community.

**Collection**

Educators must be notified personally when the child is leaving the centre and the child must be signed out when collected.

Once the child/ren have been signed out, the children become the responsibility of the parents or legal guardians, even if the educators are still on the premises.

The child may only leave the centre, without parent authorisation, if they require medical, hospital or any emergency treatment.

**Authorisation for collecting children**

The names, addresses, and emergency contact numbers of all persons authorised to collect children from the service must be documented and signed, by the enrolling parent, on the enrolment Form.

Any changes to these authorities must be advised in writing to the service by the enrolling parent or legal guardian as soon as possible.

Children will be released only to the parent(s) or legal guardian who enrolled the child/ren or to the person(s) who have been listed as ‘Emergency contacts and collection authorities’ or have been added in writing.

In the case of an emergency situation verbal notification from parents or legal guardians will be accepted. The person nominated by the parent must be able to produce photo identification.

Children will not be released to persons under the age of eighteen years.

Photo identification must be sighted if the person is unknown to staff.

Children **WILL NOT** be released into the care of persons not authorised to collect the child e.g. court orders concerning custody and access and if notice is not provided **AND** the parents cannot be contacted.

Changes to Authorisation for Collection will be updated annually or as required.

**Parents or Legal Guardians have a responsibility to ensure that:**

Their child is signed in upon arrival and at departure from the centre and the times are recorded.

Ensure an educator is aware of your child’s arrival and departure.

Notify the centre or educator of any changes in the person collecting the child/ren on a day to day basis.

Where written permission cannot be given, the parent or legal guardian will notify via a phone call, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person, in their absence, to authorise another person to collect their child from care and they will be required to bring identification with them when collecting the child.

It is the responsibility of parents or legal guardians to collect their child/ren from the centre prior to the centre’s closure. Children become distressed when a parent or legal guardian is late in collecting them.

They have read the Access and Release of Children Policy and abide by the procedures.

**Sole Custody**

If there is a sole custody order in place, the custodial parent or legal guardian must inform the centre as to the degree of authorisation of collection procedures of the non-custodial parent or legal guardian. This will be documented on the enrolment form.

**Non-custodial Parents**

Unless a custody order with a prohibition clause is sighted, by the Nominated Supervisor, both parents are entitled to information about the child’s progress.

If there is a restraint order against a particular person, a copy of the order must be provided to the centre.

All educators will be informed and the person nominated with the order will not have access to the child.

Confidentiality will be respected.

If a non-custodial parent attempts to take a child from the centre without the knowledge of the custodial parent the Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person or educator will:

* Verify the identity of the person.
* Clarify the Access and Release Policy, that the child may only be released to the parent who enrolled the child, unless written or verbal notification is received.
* Telephone the custodial parent for clarification and direction.
* If the person becomes abusive or violent, tell the person the child is being released under demand and notify the custodial parent and call the police.
* Ensure the safety of the other children and call the police as soon as it is safe to do so.
* Implement Emergency lock down procedures if required.

**Procedure for late collection of children**

**Educators will:**

* Contact parent or legal guardians.
* Contact all emergency contact numbers to arrange for the collection of the child
* Contact the local Police Station to seek information about any incidents or accidents that may have delayed the parents or person collecting the child.
* If a contact person has been arranged to collect the child, check the identity of the contacted person before releasing the child and leave a message with the parent or person authorised to collect the child.
* If no contact is made after 30 minutes inform the Nominated Supervisor to advise on the situation and course of action to be taken.
* Call Crisis care 131611 to arrange collection of the child.
* It may be possible to supply Crisis Care with possible emergency care contact numbers e.g. educators, staff members, known friends of family.
* Identification of the Crisis Care Worker will be required before the child is released to the Crisis Care Worker.
* Placements of children must be made by Crisis Care Worker.
* Leave a sign on the front entry door to the centre informing Crisis Care after hour’s number: **131611** andany information regarding the child and the situation.
* It is recommended that an educator accompany the child to ensure their emotional well-being in an unfamiliar situation and where possible, remain with them until settled.
* Two educators must remain at the centre with the child until the child has been collected.
* Nominated Supervisor will completean Incident Report.

**Late Fee**

* A late collection fee will apply to any parent or legal guardian that has not collected their child before the designated closing time.
* The charge will be at $30 for the first 10 minutes and $10 accrued every 5 minuted thereafter.
* The late fee is reflective of the cost of keeping the centre open until the child is collected.
* The centre’s insurance does not cover incidents that occur outside normal operating hours and TQEHCCCC has a responsibility to staff that cease employed hours, at the closing time of the service.
* Parents who are habitually late will be advised in writing that any further infringement of this rule may mean cancellation of the childcare place.
* **Under no circumstance is a staff member to transport a child in their own vehicle to any destination.**

**References**

**Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011**

<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2011-0653>

**Guide to National Quality Standards**

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Guide-to-the-NQF-September-2020.pdf>

**Child Protection Act 1993 Statues Amendment (Children’s Protection) Act 2009**

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| **Reviewed**  | **Reviewer** | **Approved**  | **Next review**  |
| November 2020 | Daina Prosser, Senka Jelic | The Board | November 2022 |
|  |  | January 2021 |  |