



Quality Area

2

Introduction

Quality Area 2 - Health and Safety

Reflect on what a healthy and safe lifestyle means to you. Does it include eating nutritious food, regular physical activity, sleeping well, spending quality time with family and friends, meeting your hygiene needs and feeling safe and secure? These are all integral to and impact on your wellbeing and, in turn, how well you function as a person.

The Approved Learning Frameworks recognise that 'wellbeing includes good physical health, feelings of happiness, satisfaction and successful social functioning. It influences the way children interact in their environments. A strong sense of wellbeing provides children with confidence and optimism which maximise their learning potential' (EYLF, p.30; FSAC, p.29).

As you can see, living a healthy lifestyle is equally important for children. There are many ways you and your team already promote the health and safety of the children in your service. After all, ensuring your children feel safe and protected from harm, as well as providing for their comfort and wellbeing, has a positive impact on their learning, confidence and self-growth.



Quality Area 2 of the NQS also recognises the importance of supporting children's wellbeing.

It invites you and your team to consider the practices and procedures in your service that support each child's healthy lifestyle, comfort, safety, protection and wellbeing.

It reminds you that focussing on health and safety is crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children because:

- It is the right of every child to be healthy, safe and protected.
- A child's growth, competence, confidence, independence and learning is impacted by their health, comfort and wellbeing.
- Effective management of injuries, illnesses, emergencies and incidents and adequate supervision is vital for children's safety and their engagement in the program.

National Quality Standard

Concept		Descriptor
QA2		Children's health and safety
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

What does meeting the NQS look like in QA2?

Quality Area 2 reinforces children's right to participate in an environment that provides for their **health**, ensures their **safety**, and supports their growing competence, confidence and independence. Looking at the Approved Learning Frameworks, Outcome 3: 'Children have a strong sense of wellbeing', also highlights that a child's wellbeing is fundamental to their sense of belonging, being and becoming (EYLF, p.30, FSAC, p.29). When children feel safe, secure, well-rested and happy, they are better able to fully participate in, and learn from, the routines and experiences you provide.

Health and safety policies and practices

Encourage your team to read and be guided by your service's health and safety policies and procedures. Regularly review and update them to reflect current information from recognised authorities. Consider your policies and procedures for promoting wellbeing, managing accidents, emergencies, incidents, illnesses and injuries, and use these to inform best practice.

If you are an FDC service, support your educators to be mindful of how they can manage injuries and illness as they are working in isolation.

If you are an OSHC service, consider ways you could involve the children in the development and review of the policies and procedures.





Records

Remember to promote awareness among your team, of the service's current records for each child's health issues, allergies, medical management plans, and procedures for the administration of medication.

First aid kits

Check that your first aid kits are fully stocked, up to date and readily available in the service, as well as for excursions and emergency evacuation. (Element 2.1.2)

Wellbeing and comfort

Guide your educators to work in partnership with the children and families to ensure each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for. Include them in decisions made about the routines, such as sleep/rest and toileting, and preferences for food, clothing and comfort. (Elements 2.1.1, 2.1.3)

Sleeping practices

Remember that ensuring safe sleeping practices for younger children is paramount, including the supervision of babies and children who need to sleep when others do not. Negotiate arrangements for relaxation and 'downtime' with older children.

Red Nose recognises continuous supervision, in which an educator is in sight and hearing of a sleeping child at all times, represents best practice. There may be exceptional or extenuating circumstances or certain service settings where continuous supervision is not achievable at all times, for example, if an educator working alone is attending to another child's needs. As part of the new sleep and rest risk assessment requirements (from 1 October 2023), approved providers must assess and mitigate risks to address such circumstances to ensure children are adequately supervised. In all cases, safe sleep practices and regular physical checks must continue to be implemented.



If you are an OSHC service, consider how your environments allow for the rest and relaxation of children, as well as providing children with the choice of safe and comfortable sleep requirements. (Element 2.1.1)

Cleaning

Take a moment to consider the practices you have in place for consistently maintaining cleaning, and how this is evidenced. Regular cleaning schedules will include the indoor and outdoor environments, toilets, bedding, toys and equipment. Also consider the safe and hygienic storage, handling, preparation and serving of all food and drink consumed by children. (Elements 2.1.2, 2.1.3)

Hygiene

Educators who model and reinforce good health and hygiene practices support children to become responsible for their own health and wellbeing.

Children learn good hygiene practices which contribute to their independence and self-confidence. (Element 2.1.2)



For school age children, it is especially important to support increasing responsibility in self-help and health routines, providing for privacy where appropriate.

Physical activity and healthy eating

These are essential for a child's development, and contribute to the child's ability to participate, concentrate and learn. Consider the ways you support your families to better understand the importance of physical activity and healthy eating. In addition to involving children in the process, also consider how your families contribute to the program and mealtime planning. This may be through sharing their child's food preferences, dietary requirements, allergies and culturally appropriate foods. (Element 2.1.3)

For early childhood services, have you also considered ways to support mothers who are breastfeeding to continue to do so at the service?



Healthy eating is promoted when educators sit with children during mealtimes and role model, discuss and reinforce healthy eating and nutrition practices, while encouraging children to serve themselves. (Element 2.1.3)

For OSHC, you can use opportunities to inform families and children about healthy and sustainable choices when packing lunches for children.

Children can also be actively involved in choosing and sourcing ingredients for cooking experiences that support healthy eating.

Children can demonstrate their sense of agency when they are involved in the planning and setting up of the indoor and outdoor environments. Reflect on how your service, or FDC educators, foster children's capacity to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing. When you plan for, and encourage children to participate in, physical activities that encourage them to problem solve, manage risks, and build skills it contributes to their sense of wellbeing and agency.

For OSHC, when children participate in team sports and physical activity outside of school hours, they are being given opportunities to take responsibility for their wellbeing, as well as developing confidence, resilience and negotiation skills.

Supervision



Adequate supervision requires planned staff rosters which ensure all children are actively supervised at all times, hazards and dangers are eliminated, risks are assessed and managed, and children are supported to learn the necessary skills to keep themselves safe.

While engaged with individuals or small groups of children, educators can position themselves to ensure adequate supervision of

all children, including those who wish to play alone.

For school age children, consider how you ensure adequate supervision and also provide for children's needs for privacy and autonomy.

Child protection

All members of the team are required to be knowledgeable, vigilant and able to act confidently, in identifying and responding to any indicators of children at risk of harm. You and your team must be aware of your responsibilities in relation to child protection and of any obligation under child protection laws.



More information on mandatory reporting is available at <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/resource-sheets/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>



Consider how to maintain current information and local community resources to support your team, children and their families in relation to suspected child protection issues. (Element 2.2.3)



Here's a snapshot of how services' ratings in Quality Area 2 compare across Australia: www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework-snapshots.