

**Clothing and Comfort Policy**

**Policy statement**

* Effective clothing and comfort strategies, including sun protection clothing, are important factors in ensuring a child feels secure and safe in a child care service environment.
* The service endeavors to consult with families about their child’s individual needs and to be aware of the different values and parenting beliefs, cultural or otherwise that are associated with clothing and footwear.
* The service defines ‘comfort’ as a state of reassurance, satisfaction, ease, and freedom from anxiety or pain. For example, children are more at ease, reassured, satisfied and less anxious when they are: dressed for warmth during winter or not over-dressed during summer, or wearing safe footwear when climbing outdoor play equipment.
* In this service the term ‘clothing and footwear’ encompasses:
* Safe sleepwear
* Sun protective clothing, including hats
* Clothing for messy play, including art and craft aprons
* Appropriate clothing for changing weather conditions and
* Temperature of play environments
* Clothing to facilitate self-help, including role play props and clothing
* Safe footwear for play experiences such as climbing and running.
* It is understood by staff/carers, children and families that there is a shared responsibility between the service and other stakeholders that the Clothing and Comfort Policy and procedures are accepted as a high priority.
* In meeting the service’s duty of care, it is a requirement that management and staff implement and adhere to the service’s Clothing and Comfort Policy.

**Rationale**

**This policy has been developed in order to guide parents and staff in their endeavours to provide a comfortable clothing environment for the children at the Centre.**

* The service refers to the Cancer Council’s position statements on sun protection clothing and practices.
* The service refers to SIDS & Kids’ position statement on safe sleepwear.

**Strategies and practices**

**Clothing and footwear**

*Sleepwear (Please refer to the service’s Safe Sleeping Policy)*

* Staff/carers will monitor the temperature of the rest environment and address

children’s clothing needs.

* Children’s sleepwear should meet Australian Standards.
* Children resting in jumpers with hoods and cords are at higher risk of choking and will be encouraged to not wear these garments when resting.

Sleepwear will take into consideration the:

* Child’s age
* Safe resting practices established by the service
* Temperature of the rest environment
* Bed linen used for resting
* Individual needs.

**Sun safe clothing, including hats and swimwear**

Please refer to the service’s Sun Smart Policy.

**Clothing for messy play, including art and craft aprons**

The service will identify when protective clothing for messy play is required.

For example, aprons may be worn during:

* Painting and collage experiences
* Clay or water play
* Cooking.

The service will communicate to families about the importance of appropriate clothing choices that promote and do not inhibit play experiences through this policy, via email and through regular newsletters to families.

**Clothing and the indoor/outdoor environmental conditions/temperatures**

The service will identify the types of clothing and footwear suitable for different weather conditions, or at different times of the year.

**Summer months:** Children must be dressed in appropriate clothing for outdoor play. Singlet tops and strappy dresses are not encouraged. These do not protect the child’s back, shoulders and neck from the sun. Singlets may be worn inside on hotter days but a T-shirt must be provided for outdoor play. Hats are to be worn as per the Sun Smart Policy. Baseball caps are not appropriate.

**Winter months:** In cooler months, a warm coat or jumper must be provided for outdoor play. We also encourage families to provide gumboots for wet weather play. Scarves are not encouraged as they are a safety hazard and can cause strangulation. Sun hats are not required during this time but a warm hat or beanie may be used. Refer to Sun Smart Policy.

**Toilet training:** Children who are toilet training and those who are able to use the toilet unassisted require clothing that can easily be removed. Track pants, press stud, button or elastic waist trousers or jeans are best. Clothes to be avoided are belts and overalls and hard buttons, these are difficult for children to manage, discouraging their independence skills. Skirts or dresses are appropriate for warmer months. Extra sets of clothing are also required for accidents.

**Hair:** Hair clips, bobby pins and small hair accessories are not appropriate for children as they provide a choking hazard for those children who may place objects in their mouths. Staff will remove hair items that are unsafe.

**Safe footwear for play experiences such as climbing and running**

Footwear that is appropriate for children in care includes runners, buckle sandals, boots with non slip soles and lace up shoes as they support children’s feet and are safer for climbing and running.

The types of footwear the service identifies as being inappropriate includes rubber shoes such as “Crocs”, thongs and any sort of slip on shoe.

Footwear is required when the children are outside.

**Clothing and footwear not permitted in the service**

The following clothing is not recommended by the service because it:

* Poses a potential health and safety risk (for example hooded jumpers with cords increase the risk of choking)
* Restricts movement, the child’s ability to play or inhibits the development of self-help skills (for example overalls are often difficult items of clothing for children to remove when they are toilet training)
* Is too revealing and may potentially place a child at risk (for example, some styles of midriff tops)
* Offends others (for example shirts or baseball caps with slogans, images or language that may potentially provoke a negative response or offend a particular cultural group).

**Protective behaviors and practices**

*Children undressing and dressing*

* The service will maintain a safe environment for children and staff/carers when children are dressing and undressing. Refer also to Child Abuse/Child Protection Policy.
* The service will identify in which situations children need to be supervised when dressing and undressing, depending upon age and abilities. Most children at the Centre will generally require assistance when undressing and dressing, especially when toilet training.
* Staff/carers will be aware of when and where children are dressing or undressing and understand that children have a right to privacy.

**Staff/carers, students and volunteers as role models**

* Children learn through example and role modeling is an important strategy in children’s services to maintain quality standards.
* The service has provided guidelines for appropriate clothing and footwear that staff/carers, students and volunteers should comply with and adhere to when caring for children. Refer to Staff Handbook.

**Communicating with different stakeholders**

**Children**

The service will use appropriate care giving strategies when a child is non-compliant to the Clothing and Comfort Policy (Refer to the Behaviour Guidance Policy).

For example,

* A child refusing to wear a hat when playing outdoors may need to stay indoors or play only under covered areas. The service does have spare hats which are washed daily.
* A child refusing to wear appropriate clothing, such as a jumper/jacket, when playing outdoors in cold weather conditions. The staff may elect to remain indoors, they may negotiate with the child over the wearing of the jumper/jacket, they may elect to respect the child’s choice but prompt the child to reconsider their choice after a period of outdoor play, as some children cannot understand that while it is warm indoors it may not be when they go outside.
* The service can provide some clothing and comfort requirements for children while they are in care, if they arrive without certain appropriate clothing items. Alternately the parents may be phoned and asked to bring in the appropriate clothing.
* Some art, craft and messy play can make the child’s clothes dirty even when wearing protective clothing. As such children are asked not to be dressed in their best clothes as the service will not guarantee that these can be totally protected from becoming dirty or stained.

**Families**

* Clothing and Comfort strategies and practices are outlined in the Parent Handbook, Policies and Procedures, enrolment forms and newsletters.
* When a family is non-compliant with the Clothing and Comfort Policy, a copy of the policy will be provided as well as explaining to the family why the strategies are important, and the ramifications of non-compliancy. Refer to Making a Parent/guardian Complaint.

**Staff/Carers**

Refer to Staff Handbook.

**Experiences**

The service will endeavour to protect children’s home clothing during art and craft experiences but as detailed previously will not take responsibility for damaged, dirty or stained clothing due to these experiences. Role play clothing will be available to assist in developing self-help skills and will be laundered regularly as required.

**Policy review**

The service will review the Clothing and Comfort Policy and procedures, and related documents annually. Families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review the policy and procedures. Staff/carers are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

**Procedures**

**The service conducts the following procedures as part of this policy**

* Laundering items of clothing daily as required.
* Staff Employment Information.
* Policy development and review procedure. Annually.
* Procedure for non-compliance of Clothing and Comfort Policy and procedures by:
* Child; Refer to Behaviour Guidance Policy
* Staff/carer; or
* Student/volunteer. Refer to Internal Grievance Policy.
* Student and Volunteer Policy.
* Parent Refer to Making a Parent/guardian Complaint.

**Measuring tools**

The service will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by staff noting the general level of adherence to the policy by the appropriateness of the clothing worn by the children. If many children are found to be breaching the policy guidelines then an education campaign will be conducted to highlight the importance of this policy to the children and parents.

**Links to other policies**

* Child Protection Policy
* Enrolment of new children and families to the service
* Sun Smart Policy
* Safe Sleeping Policy

**Link to CCQA Principles**

* Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)
* Quality Practices Guide (2005) – Principle 6.5

**Referenced National Quality Standards**

* **Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health & Safety**
  + **2.1** Each child’s health is promoted.
  + **2.3** Each child is protected.
* **Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment**
  + **3.1** The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service.
  + **3.2** The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.
* **Quality Area 4 – Staffing arrangements**
  + **4.2** Educators, coordinators and staff have the skills and knowledge to support children’s learning, health, safety and wellbeing.
* **Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**
  + **6.1** Respectful supportive relations with families are developed and maintained.
  + **6.2** Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.
  + **6.3** The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children’s learning and wellbeing.
* **Quality Area 7 – Leadership & Service Management**
  + **7.1** Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community.
  + **7.2** There is a commitment to continual improvement.
  + **7.3** Management & administrative systems enable the effective provision of a quality service.
  + **7.6** Information is exchanged with families on a regular basis.

**Sources and further reading**

• SIDS & Kids. (2006). *Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants (SUDI) frequently asked questions: SIDS & Kids: Safe sleeping in child care kit*. NSW: Author.

• The Cancer Council NSW. (2006). *Sun Smart childcare: A policy guide for service providers*. Sydney: Author.

• UNICEF (n.d.). *Fact sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved January 18, 2007, from

http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\_overview.pdf