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33

Effective Risk Management in Family Day Care

Introduction

“We gauge risk literally hundreds of times per day, usually well and often subconsciously. We start assessing risk before the disaster even happens.”

Amanda Ripley

Effective risk assessment and management is a critical part of your role as a Family Day Care (FDC) Educator and/or Service Leader. Not only does this process keep children safe from harm, but by managing these risks, you maximise children’s learning.

This process involves carrying out risk assessments to identify potential risks and ensure children are safe from harm and hazards. To manage risks effectively, we rely on a solid understanding of children, their families and the FDC setting, combined with knowledge of the expectations of the relevant Law and Regulation. We also draw on our current understanding of how to keep children safe in our community.

However, risk management is not an end in itself. It is one of the most important tools you use to support your program

decisions, maximising learning and realising each child’s potential.

In this booklet, we will be focusing on effective risk management for children, but it is always helpful to keep in mind how you manage your own safety and maintain your wellbeing. If you’re unsure about how to do this, a conversation with your Coordination Team would be a helpful next step.



Thinking more about risk

A good way to get started or think more deeply about risk as you develop your risk management plan, is to take a tour of your own FDC setting after you have read this booklet.

Start at the road outside your FDC home and make your way through the front door around the spaces in your home where children will play and learn, ending up outside in the backyard.

As you go, look for real and potential hazards that may cause harm to children and families. It might help to do this with your Nominated Supervisor, Educational Leader, or a member of your Coordination Team.

These insights and the discussion you have will help you understand and be better prepared for managing risk and developing your risk assessment and plans. Remember to take a notebook with you!

It's important to note that before you do this, you will have already addressed any outstanding risks that impact your capacity to open a FDC service in your home. The risks you

manage in your risk management plan should not be matters that relate to safety compliance; instead, they should be matters that could present a risk, such as steep stairs leading to your front door, that can be managed by taking specific action.

Managing risk doesn't mean your FDC program needs to be limited or boring. It means that your program can provide children with challenging and engaging experiences that help them learn and grow creatively.

What is risk in Family Day Care?

Educating and caring for children will always include being aware of and managing potential risks to their safety and wellbeing. Risk identification and management can help you determine what risks are necessary to support children's growth and learning and which ones we should work to eliminate and minimise.

Risks exist in FDC in many areas, including obvious places like excursions and access to chemicals; and less obvious places, such as a damaged or broken piece of equipment. As FDC Educators, you are required to identify risks in your home and program, assess them, and decide how best to manage them.

Running a FDC service involves being alert to risk. Children can be unpredictable, and situations change. As children are learning about what is safe and what isn't safe, and how to use their bodies, the risks are greater, and we need to be more aware of how to keep them safe.

The more we can work out the possible risks for children, us,

and families, the better our chances of reducing or controlling the risk. This process is called risk identification, assessment, and management.

The aim of risk identification and management is not to remove all risks but to work out what risk is necessary to help children learn, what risk is unnecessary and harmful and how we can remove or manage it.

Many of the processes of risk identification and management you have probably done in your head for years without thinking about it. Formal risk management makes it a bit more organised and, therefore, more effective. It's also a requirement of being a FDC professional.

Hazard

A hazard refers to a situation or element that could result in an individual getting injured.

Not every hazard will have a harmful outcome. Understanding the likelihood and potential severity of harm is essential in mitigating hazards without unnecessarily restricting risk and challenge from the learning environment. Recognising the possibility and potential severity of harm will help to determine whether the hazard needs to be managed and to what extent. (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2024)

Risk

A risk is any situation where the outcome is uncertain, and there is a chance of harm. A risk of harm to someone occurs when a hazard can't be removed. If a hazard can't be eliminated, the potential for injury must be minimised, and the risk must be managed on an ongoing basis ([SafeWork NSW](#)). (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2024)

Risk Assessment and Management Cycle

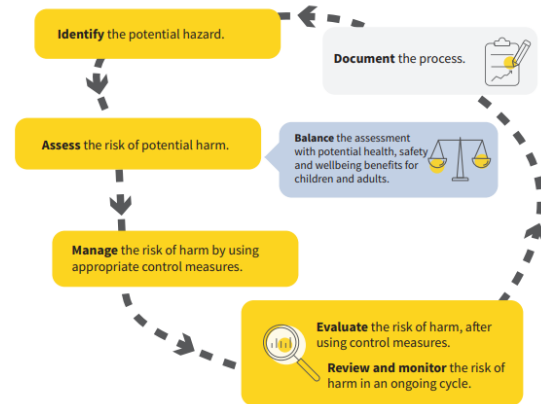
What is a hazard?

Anything that could cause harm.

What is a risk?

Any situation where the outcome is uncertain, positive or negative.

In the **risk management cycle**, you identify a hazard then determine the risk of potential harm.



How do you determine the risk of potential harm?

By asking these questions:

- How likely is it to happen?
- How often might it happen?
- How serious is the outcome?
- What could the positive outcomes be?



[Risk assessment and Management Cycle](#), ACECQA.

What do the National Laws, Regulations and the National Quality Standard say about risk?

Risk is mentioned many times in the [National Law](#), [National Regulations](#) and the [National Quality Standard](#). These expectations centre on your duty of care and the supervision required to keep children safe.

It is expected that FDC educators become familiar with all elements of the Law, Regulations, and Standards that require risk management in everyday practice.

The National Quality Standard

The main element of the National Quality Standard that impacts risk is Element 7.1.2 Management systems. It states that systems must be "in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service."

Under this element, our service must have "efficient and effective management systems which allow it to identify and manage organisational risks in a timely manner, and carry out risks assessments as required to manage foreseeable risks to children's safety and wellbeing."

The Guide also remind us that we need to "plan learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge, where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning."

It also talks about our role in educating children about risk:

"When children are given choices and control, they begin to understand the connection between actions and consequences, and learn to assess what risks are appropriate and how they may be managed."

"Instead of trying to eliminate all risk from children's play, it is important to understand that risky play can be acceptable where the benefit to children's learning outweighs the risks. Risks can be managed by conducting risk assessments and weighing the obligation to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm against the benefit of providing children with a stimulating play environment."

The Education and Care Regulations

The Regulations are in themselves a risk minimisation tool – they tell education and care services what risks are not acceptable and what risks need to be minimised.

They also tell us what formal risk assessments must be done and for some risk assessments, what they must contain:

- ▶ a risk-minimisation plan in consultation with the parents of a child with a medical condition to ensure that the risks relating to the child's specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition are assessed and minimised (Approved Provider) (Regulation 90)
- ▶ a risk assessment to identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the service for the purposes of preparing the emergency and evacuation procedures (Approved Provider) (Regulation 97)
- ▶ a risk assessment for an excursion (Approved Provider and Family Day Care educator) (Regulation 100) and what an excursion risk assessment must consider (Regulation 101)
- ▶ a risk assessment before a service transports a child (Approved Provider and Family Day Care educator)

(Regulation 1028) and what a transport risk assessment must consider (Regulation 102C)

- ▶ a risk assessment of each Family Day Care proposed residence before it is used then annually "to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children who are educated and cared for by the service are protected" and what this risk assessment should consider. (Regulation 116).

(Guide To The National Quality Framework, ACECQA).



What is risk assessment?

Undertaking a risk assessment means evaluating or deciding which risks are significant and how they should be addressed. Risk assessment is one part of risk management. It involves critical reflection on the benefits and hazards identified within the service, such as an experience, excursion, practice, piece of equipment or learning environment. (ACECQA, 2024)

Once you have identified risks relating to your everyday work in FDC, you need to analyse the likelihood of them occurring and the consequences if they occur.

A risk can be severe but very unlikely to happen. A risk may have minor consequences but be very likely to happen. The likelihood of a risk happening, and the consequences of that risk change how we might manage it. We need to ask key questions once we have identified the risks so we can decide what happens next. These questions include how likely it is to happen, how often it might happen, and how serious are the consequences if it does happen.



Risk assessment happens all the time in Family Day Care

FDC Educators and/or Service Leaders manage risk all the time. As professional Educators, we are always thinking about what is harmful or hazardous to children.

Here are a few examples:

Equipment and resources

You observe the hazard as the child is playing with the toy and immediately, you do an assessment about whether the piece of equipment is a risk to children. You might manage that risk by taking the toy away and eliminating the risk. Or, your evaluation or assessment of the hazard might suggest that you allow the child to continue to play. In your evaluation, you might decide that after the child has finished playing with the toy, it's removed, and you look at repairing or replacing that piece of equipment and figuring out when that might happen.



Arrival and departure

You have noticed that the street outside your FDC home is a bit busier than usual because of some road work that is taking place further up the street. You send a quick message to your FDC families to let them know to take extra care on the road as they arrive and depart FDC this week. You might also decide that this week is not the right time to go out on your regular excursion to the park because of the road work that prevents you from walking safely along the footpath.

The learning environment

You have observed that two of the children in your care have started to stand and take their first steps. You have also noticed that the way you have set up the learning space doesn't give these children enough safe room to practise their walking skills. You decide to rearrange the furniture so that children have more safe space to move around.



Why do we need to manage risk in Family Day Care?

First and foremost, we need to manage risk in FDC because, as professionals, we are required under the law and the reason we do is to protect children in our care. We also believe it is our duty and commitment to keep children safe so they can learn and develop.

It is important to note that we are required to manage risks in FDC because we work in a regulated environment under national law and regulations.

The Education and Care Services National Law requires you to 'ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children... from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury' (Section 167). Taking precautions involves carrying out risk assessments within your service to assess the risks and plan how to manage them. (ACECQA, 2020)

We also manage risk because:

- ▶ We are committed to providing best practice for children which includes keeping them safe from harm.
- ▶ This process helps us to understand which risks are helpful for children as they learn and grow, and which ones will prevent them from safely learning in FDC.
- ▶ We make a promise to families to do everything we can to ensure that children are safe from harm.
- ▶ It is part of our professional identity and commitment as skilled Educators.
- ▶ It not only keeps children safe, but it also ensures that we are safe when we are working as FDC Educators and/or Service Leaders.

What is risk management?

Risk management is the skill or job of deciding what risks are in a particular situation and taking action to prevent or reduce these risks. It is a process of systematically regularly evaluating and identifying the risks in your FDC service in the environment or the program and taking active steps to ensure that they do not negatively impact on the children and families who attended the service.

Did you know?

Risk management is the process of deciding how you will manage the risks that you have identified based on the likelihood of them occurring and the consequences should they occur.

There are two ways that we can consider managing risks.

Managing a risk by eliminating it

Managing a risk by eliminating it includes working to prevent that risk or the situation from occurring in the first place. For example, when you are on an excursion, the risk assessment shows that to get to the park, you have to cross a busy road or go a longer route with no crossing. Going the longer route means you've eliminated the risk of a child being involved in a traffic accident by crossing the busy road.

Another example might be noticing that a child has left their bag in the hallway as they arrive. This is identifying a trip hazard, and asking the children to put their bag away eliminates that risk.



Managing a risk by controlling it

Sometimes a risk can only be controlled rather than eliminated. Controlling risks is another way to manage a risk or hazard. By controlling the risk, you work out ways to make it less likely to happen or less likely to cause a major consequence.

For example, you couldn't avoid crossing a road on an excursion but decided to take another adult with you that would be controlling the risk of a child being run over.

How to assess and manage risk

Managing risk is a systematic process that requires you to **think** and **plan**. The risk management advice from ACECQA suggests that there is a series of steps that help you to identify risks for children in FDC.

ACECQA's Risk Assessment and Management simplified guide to the process is a handy reference and can be found here: www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-05/Risk_management_and_management.pdf

In this booklet, we will focus on developing your risk management plan. As part of this process, it is important to take time to work through the whole process (detailed in the following table), identifying the risks in your setting and assessing the likelihood and consequences of these risks taking place.



(Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2024)

Step 1: Identify

Identifying the risks and hazards in your FDC setting.

This is done through completing daily observations and checklists for example.

It is an everyday process of making sure it's safe for children including regular conversation with your Coordination Team and monitoring the environment and equipment.

Step 2: Assess

Deciding whether the risk that you have identified is **likely** or **unlikely** to cause harm and the potential of that risk to support or undermine children's learning development and well being.

Step 3: Manage

Taking **action** to manage the risk by putting the appropriate level of control measures into the program so that children are kept as safe as possible.

Step 4: Evaluate

Reflecting on and evaluating the plan to understand whether the actions decided supported children to be safe.

Step 4: Review

Review and monitor the risk of potential harm to ensure it continues to be managed.

Here is an example of how this process works in everyday FDC practice.

Step 1: Identify	Step 2: Assess	Step 3: Manage	Step 4: Evaluate	Step 5: Review
<p>After a daily environment check Julie noticed that a section of the fence at the back of the yard has come loose.</p> <p>The gap did not look that big but on closer inspection Julie noticed that it is big enough for children to put their fingers through.</p>	<p>Julie then assessed the risk and made a decision that the risk to children was likely because it was a space they played in often and knew well.</p> <p>Julie also decided that the risk was not severe but to be on the safe side she needed to take action to ensure that children were safe – especially the youngest children.</p>	<p>Julie then decided that there were some things she could do to ensure that the risk to children was eliminated.</p> <p>Julie made a note in the risk planning document given to her by the service that she planned to block off that area for the day and talk to children about why they could not play in that part of the yard.</p> <p>Julie also spoke to her son and asked him to come around that evening and fix the gap in the fence.</p>	<p>Julie recorded the way the children responded to the restriction in space and told the families about her assessment and planned actions.</p> <p>She also discussed the process with her Coordinator and they both decided that the actions were appropriate and that the safety of children was maintained.</p> <p>The decisions were documented in a risk planning document that the service made available to Julie.</p>	<p>Julie discussed the process with her field officer.</p> <p>The decisions were documented in a risk planning document that the service made available to Julie.</p>

Assessing risk

Using a risk matrix like the one found in the ACECQA Risk Assessment and Management Tools (ACECQA, 2023) and Templates can help you assess risk. It is important to adapt this table to fit each learning experience or activity so that it is a meaningful part of your ongoing practice.

The table below helps you identify how likely a hazard or risk is to occur and how severe or significant the consequences

might be. If the answer is almost certain and major, your assessment of the risk is that it is critical. If the answer is rare and minor, your assessment of risk is very low. Your management plan then reflects the assessment of the hazard or risk.

Risk Matrix						
Consequences	Likelihood					
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
	Major	Moderate	High	High	Critical	Critical
	Significant	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Critical
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
	Minor	Very low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Insignificant	Very low	Very low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

What is a risk management plan?

Developing a risk management plan is a way to manage or eliminate the risk of harm to children in your FDC service. It is an ongoing part of daily practice for education and care services. This tool is a starting point to support your thinking around hazard identification and risk management when planning experiences for children. Use this tool to identify, assess and manage the risk of harm before an incident occurs. It is important to adapt this tool to fit your service, so it is a meaningful part of daily practice.

When you complete a risk management plan you are thinking about your work with children. These risks relate to the safety and wellbeing of children in your FDC home and are different to the risks that you might identify in relation to your own work as a FDC Educator and/or Service Leader. These risks will be identified through work health and safety and are important to identify and manage in your daily work as an Educator. For example, slips or trips or falls hazards or risks that occur when caring for and educating children such as bending or lifting.



How often should we assess and manage risk?

National Law and Regulations require that your FDC service should incorporate ongoing risk management practices by:

- ▶ completing regular risk management and safety checklists
- ▶ regularly updating maintenance logs kept of your premises, equipment and resources
- ▶ carefully planning new or risky experiences for children and identifying any emerging risks in play
- ▶ engaging in active supervision
- ▶ having relevant policies and procedures as required by law and regulation, implemented and understood
- ▶ conducting risk assessments to inform service policies and procedures..

Regulation 116 requires approved providers of family day care services to conduct an assessment, including a risk assessment, for each proposed residence and family day care venue of the service, either at the time of application for service

approval or before education and care is provided at those residences and venues.

Approved providers are then required to conduct an assessment, including a risk assessment, at least annually thereafter to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children who are educated and cared for by the service are protected.

Matters to be considered in the assessment include the matters relating to family day care services in Division 1 of the National Law and Regulation 117 as well as the suitability of the residence or venue for the ages and numbers of children attending, the suitability of nappy change arrangements, the existence of water hazards, any risk posed by animals at the service or venue and direct access to an assembly area for residences or venues located in multi-storey buildings. (ACECQA, 2023)

Who is a risk management plan for?

The risk management plan is primarily for you. As a FDC Educator, you need tools and resources to help you make decisions that maintain the safety and wellbeing of the children in your care. The risk assessment and management plans that you develop assist you in being compliant and help you think through the risks for children and how you will eliminate or manage them.

Just like other tools, this plan helps you remember what you decided and make sure these plans are actioned. It is also a helpful way to look back and justify decisions and actions should something happen.

You can also invite your children to be involved in risk assessment and management. ACECQAs Risk assessment and management tool for children under and over 5 is a great way for children to actively participate in the risk assessment and management cycle.

Risk assessment and management tool – for children under 5

My name: _____ Date: _____
Learning experience: _____

How do we make it safer?
Do we need help?

What are we doing?
How might someone get hurt?

What happened?
What should we do next time to make it safer?

www.acecqa.gov.au

[Risk assessment and management tool – for children under 5.](#)

Developing your Risk Management Plan

Developing a risk management plan is a required part of the process of managing risks in your FDC program. There are several tools available that can help you undertake this process including templates developed by your Coordination Unit or the resources available on the ACECQA website. It is important to note that you can decide which tool works best for you – this is often a decision best made with your Coordination Unit.

To help you complete this process, this booklet outlines some important features of an effective risk management plan. Remember, they do not have to be long and complicated, and they can be handwritten in bullet points. The more you complete the process (at first with help from your Nominated Supervisor or Educational Leader), the easier and more skilled you will become.

Management plans will look different depending on the specific risk identified. It is helpful to look at the examples available on the ACECQA website for specific risks, although, as mentioned before, these are examples and may be modified to suit your setting. It's important to note that these examples are only some

of the available resources ACECQA provides. There are a suite of other resources available to support you to implement quality and safe practices.

- ▶ [Risk assessment and management template – Excursions](#)
- ▶ [Risk assessment and management template – Transporting children](#)
- ▶ [Risk assessment and management – Indoor and outdoor learning environment safety checklist](#)
- ▶ [Risk assessment and management – Learning experience plan – Educators/Teachers](#)

The following table identifies the features of effective plans based on the expectations of the National Law and Regulations and the best practices identified in the National Quality Standard.

It is helpful to review your risk assessment and management templates regularly to ensure that they are working for you and

that they meet any changes to regulatory requirements, policies or procedures. For example, your FDC service might decide that

there needs to be a formal posting of your digital platform’s plan – in which case this should be included in the template.

Possible details to include	
<i>Name of experience or activity</i>	<i>Be specific so the reader knows what this plan relates to.</i>
Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The date or dates when this experience or activity is occurring.
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Add the specific time if it is relevant. ▶ Or when the activity or experience is taking place.
Overview of the experience or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a brief overview of the experience. What will the children be doing? Add details about the experience.
Rationale and links to children’s learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It may be helpful to identify why you are planning to offer this experience or activity in FDC. What value does this experience have for the child(ren)’s learning and development?
Who will be participating?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify the specific children and your knowledge of their capabilities and dispositions.
Location: Where will the experience or activity occur?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Considerations include adequate space, ventilation, weather, and environmental conditions – add a proposed routine if the plan is about an excursion. ▶ Be specific if you are heading out to the community – a map might be helpful to include.

Possible details to include

Transport and route	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Your proposed route and means of transport E.g., public bus, private bus, coach, private car, taxi, tram.▶ Requirements for seatbelts or safety restraints in your state or territory.
Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What are the potential hazards in this experience which could cause harm?▶ Identify any hazards, including any water hazards during the excursion, including any risks associated with water-based activities.▶ Identify any hazards in relation to the management of children's medical conditions▶ Identify here if there is a potential hazard of leaving children in vehicles during transportation
What equipment will they be using?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Consider the equipment and materials required, including car seats and other special equipment.
Who will be leading the experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Consider whether expertise is required for handling materials or if additional educators might be necessary.▶ Add details about the adults who will be present – include information about their child safety status.
Assess risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Likelihood and severity – Given your knowledge of the experience, context and children, how likely is it that harm will occur? How severe might that harm be? Refer to the risk matrix, if required.▶ See the Risk Assessment and Management Tool

Possible details to include

How the risk will be managed

Manage risks

- Detail how the risk of harm will now be managed. Consider the role of active supervision in mitigating the risk of harm.

Educators to child ratios

- Educator-to-child ratio, including whether this excursion warrants a higher ratio.

A checklist of items that you will need to assist in managing the risk

This might include some of the following items.

- First aid kit
- List of adults involved in transportation
- List of children involved
- Contact information for each adult
- Contact information for each child
- Mobile phone / other means of communicating with the service & emergency services
- Medication, health plans and risk assessments for individual children

Possible details to include

At the conclusion of the experience or activity, your plan might include

Evaluation and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ How effective were the controls for managing the risk of harm?▶ What were the positive and negative outcomes of the experience?▶ Critically reflect on teaching strategies and the children's learning.▶ Were the identified intentions met?▶ What was surprising about the children's involvement in the experience?
Implications for future planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Consider safety implications in addition to providing for the extension of learning.
Date of evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The date helps you know when the evaluation took place and the next steps for continuous improvement.
Formalise your plan	
Experience plan developed by	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Add your full name and signature.
In consultation with	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Add the full name and signature of anyone who helped you, e.g. your Educational Leader.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Who needs to know about your plan?
Experience plan evaluated by	Add the full name and signature of the person who evaluates this plan.

(ACECQA, 2023)

Tips for developing an effective Risk Management plan



- ▶ **Take your time** – developing a risk management plan takes time and thought and benefits from the inclusion of reflective practice so that you can ensure the plan meets the needs of all children, educators and families with consideration to culture, accessibility and inclusive practice.
- ▶ **Ask for help** – developing a risk management plan for the first time can be challenging. It's OK to ask for assistance from your FDC Coordination Team, particularly your Nominated Supervisor, who has overall responsibility for complying with National Law and Regulations.
- ▶ **Think about a team approach** – if there are a few FDC Educators who are all visiting the park with a lake on a regular basis why don't you consider getting together and working on your individual risk management plans together. It is important to note that even though you work collaboratively to develop your risk management plan, your plan must be specific to your context.
- ▶ **Reflect on your plan** – the development of the plan does not mean you stop thinking about risk and how to manage it effectively. Include time in your planning schedule to reflect on the effectiveness of the risk management plan and talk with your Educational Leader or Nominated Supervisor about any changes you might like to implement.
- ▶ **Share your plan** – It is important that you share your plan with the families of the children in your FDC program. This not only communicates that you are compliant with National Law and Regulations but also that you take children's safety and well-being seriously and have made specific plans to understand and address any identified risks. Sharing your plan is an opportunity to consult with families and other people that may need to be involved in the development of effective risk for example, schools, other services, transport providers, NDIS support, etc.

- ▶ **Don't write an essay** – a risk management plan does not have to be a long, complicated document that uses formal language. Consider using dot points, terms, and words that are familiar to you. Check in with your Coordination Team to ensure that the way you have described the risk and your actions to address that risk can be understood by others and that you are compliant.
- ▶ **Think about storage** – your risk management plan should not be far away. Store it where you can readily find it and share it with others if necessary.
- ▶ **Read your plan** – the plan is not just for show; it supports your thinking and reminds you of the important strategy you have identified to address the risks to children in your daily activities. Take some time to regularly re-look at your risk management plans to be aware of the actions you need to take.
- ▶ **Review and renew your plan** – risk management plans that are reviewed and renewed are effective. Risk does not stay still, and possible strategies to address, eliminate, or control risk might change depending on your situation or what is happening in the local community.

- ▶ **Use the templates** – take advantage of the templates that are already available, including those in your own FDC service, to make it easier for you to develop a plan that meets the requirements under the National Law and Regulations. If you develop your own plan template, make sure you check it with your Nominated Supervisor to ensure it meets all the requirements under the law, national regulations, and local policies and procedures.



Are risks ever good?

Every day, we all take risks. What enables us to do this successfully is that we've worked out what risks can be taken and what risks can't, what keeps us safe, and what doesn't. We've all worked out how comfortable we are with taking particular risks. For example, some of us like to take a helicopter ride over the reef, while others of us would think that is too risky.

Children develop the skills that they need to make these risk assessments by taking safer risks in early childhood. With your support, children can be taught and begin to understand what they can and can't do and how safe it is to try something new.

That's why the *Guide to the National Quality Framework* tells us:

Instead of trying to eliminate all risk from children's play, it is important to understand that risky play can be acceptable where the benefit to children's learning outweighs the risks. Risks can be managed through conducting risk assessments,

and weighing the obligation to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm against the benefit of providing children with a stimulating play environment.
((ACECQA, March 2023) Guide to the National Quality Framework, Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety).



The benefits of risky play

When we adopt this risk-benefit lens and know how to effectively conduct risk assessments and management plans, we can maximise children's learning. This includes providing them with opportunities to make decisions about their play and learning how to take safe risks.



Reflect

How do you plan learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge, where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning? (ACECQA, 2023, Risk Assessment and Management Tool, p.238)

Example of risky play: Mud Play Risk Assessment

Let's look at an example of a risk assessment for a mud play experience using a section of [ACECQA's Risk assessment and management tool – Learning experience plan](#) as a guide. Remember this is just one tool you can use and it's important to include the context of your FDC service.



Risk assessment and management tool – Learning experience plan

Experience plan:

Mud Play

Date:

From 26.3.24

Time:

Mornings and afternoons

Overview of the experience – *Provide a brief overview of the experience*

Children will have the opportunity to freely engage in supervised open ended mud play in outdoor areas.

Rationale and links to children's outcomes – *What value does this experience have for the child(ren)'s learning and development?*

Mud play connects children with the natural world and Country, fostering a sense of wonder, curiosity and respect for the environment. It encourages them to observe natural processes, such as erosion and decomposition, and to develop an appreciation for the Earth's resources (Outcome 2 Children are connected with and contribute to their world).

Engaging in mud play encourages creativity and imaginative thinking. Children can mold shape and sculpt mud into different forms, fostering self-expression and storytelling as they create mud cakes, sculptures or imaginary worlds. (Outcome 4 Children are confident and involved learners).

Mud play encourages social interaction, cooperation and collaboration. Children engage in shared decision-making, problem-solving and role-playing as they work together to build and create in the mud pit. (Outcome 5 Children are effective communicators).

Identify hazards – *What are the potential hazards in this experience which could cause harm?*

Ingestion of mud/exposure to bacteria: slips, falls, sun exposure or allergic reaction.



The rationale here are the benefits you identified for children engaging in this potentially risky play experience. They connect directly to the EYLF/MTOP learning Outcomes. You might like to even use the words in the outcomes here.

Risk assessment and management tool – Learning experience plan

Assess risks – Likelihood and severity – *Given your knowledge of the experience, context and children, how likely is it that harm will occur? How severe might that harm be? Refer to the risk matrix, if required.*

Ingestion of mud/exposure to bacteria: Medium – Supervision and non-toxic materials reduce but do not eliminate the risk.

Slips/falls: High. Likelihood of occurrence is high. Potential for minor to moderate injuries.

Sun exposure: Medium – depends on the time of day and duration of experience.

Allergic reaction: Low to medium – depends on the child's known allergies or sensitivities.

Manage risks – *Detail how the risk of harm will now be managed. Consider the role of active supervision in mitigating the risk of harm. Refer to the hierarchy of control, if required.*

Ingestion of mud/exposure to bacteria: only non-toxic, natural soil will be used. Ensure active supervision at all times and discourage children placing mud in their mouths.

Slips/falls: Clearly marked the play area around surround with soft mulch; teach children safe ways to move and play in the mud.

Sun exposure: invite mud play in the morning or late afternoon. Apply sunscreen and ensure children wear hats.

Allergic reaction: Parents to confirm if children have known allergies. First aid kit and Educator close by at all times.



Remember to use the risk matrix and control measure shared earlier to help you complete this section of the learning experience plan.

Example of Safe Sleep and Rest Risk Assessment

From 1 October 2023, the approved provider, nominated supervisor and family day care (FDC) educator must take reasonable steps to ensure that the needs for sleep and rest of children being educated and cared for by the service are met, having regard to the ages, development stages and individual needs of the children (Education and Care Services National Regulations, regulation 84A). To ensure the safety of children during sleep and rest, a sleep and rest risk assessment must be conducted for each FDC residence or FDC venue of the service that considers the requirements outlined in 84C.

Below is an example based on the [ACECQA's Sleep and Rest risk assessment Template](#). It is a starting point only, and does not include all potential risks that may be relevant to your children and service. To support you in assessing your safe sleep environment and practices, you may wish to consider using the [Red Nose Best practice sleep and rest audit tool](#) to assist you. Safe sleep risk assessments should be adapted to meet the individual needs of your FDC residence/

venue. It is a requirement that you complete a sleep and risk assessment at least once every 12 months, and as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the safety, health and wellbeing of children during sleep and rest.

Sleep and Rest Risk Assessment

Activity assessment	Hazard identified	Risk assessment (Matrix)	Elimination/control measures	Who?	When?
Religious or teething necklaces during sleep/rest	Choking hazard	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Educators of the service Safe sleep policy requirements. ▶ During orientation discuss if the child sleeps with anything ▶ Consult with parent and inform of the serious risks of having things around a baby's neck at sleep time. Conversations with families (rednose.org.au) ▶ Ensure all educators are aware of the need to remove the necklace for each and every sleep time. 	Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ During orientation ▶ During parent discussions and before child sleep/rests ▶ Before the child sleeps/rests ▶ During policy and risk assessment reviews.

Sleep and Rest Risk Assessment

Activity assessment	Hazard identified	Risk assessment (Matrix)	Elimination/control measures	Who?	When?
Infant sleeping in a cot	Placing infant in a cot incorrectly can place them at risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Perform regular physical sleep checks and of a high standard. ▶ Undertake annual Sleep and Rest training. ▶ Regularly review policies and understand the Safe Sleep Recommendations. ▶ Ensure the cots meet the Australian Standard AS/NZS 2172. ▶ If portacots are used, the risks of this are considered in line with recent guidance from ACECQA and the ACCC. 	Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ During sleep/rest periods e.g. each infant under two (2) is physically checked every 10–15 minutes, and this is recorded by an educator PhysicalChecks.pdf (rednose.org.au) ▶ Annually ▶ Annually and whenever there are new Regulations and/or sleep recommendations ▶ When purchasing ▶ Ongoing hazard and maintenance checks.

References

- ▶ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2020). *Risk assessment and management*.
- ▶ ACECQA. (2023). *Risk Assessment and Management Tool*.
- ▶ ACECQA. (February 2024). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*. ACECQA.



This booklet is part of the PD In Your Pocket professional development program.



This topic – **Effective Risk Management in Family Day Care** – has an accompanying webinar and video, both of which can be viewed as videos or listened to as podcasts.

There is also a Facebook Group where you can discuss the topic with other Family Day Care educators in NSW.

For more information about PD In Your Pocket, go to:

www.nswfdc.org.au/pdinyourpocket



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