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Active Supervision in  
Family Day Care

# What is Supervision?

Supervision is a key part of your role as an Educator in Family Day Care (FDC). It is a legal requirement, an element of quality standards and embedded in practice throughout the approved learning frameworks, the *Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (EYLFV2.0)* and *My Time, Our Place V2.0 (MTOF V2.0)*. When children are supervised effectively, families feel assured that their child is safe in your care. Children also have a right to feel safe and protected when they attend FDC or any other education and care setting.

So, what does supervision mean and what does it look like in practice? At its simplest level, supervision is about keeping children safe and protecting them from harm and hazards that may arise in their daily experiences as they play, interact with others, and move through routines and transitions. This is often described as ‘adequate’ supervision.

However, supervision involves more than simply preventing or responding to potential or actual harm and hazards. It requires the Educator to be actively involved with children

and have knowledge of what each child is doing at any given time of the day. This is known as ‘active’ supervision and is a requirement in all education and care settings, including FDC.

Active supervision transforms supervision from a passive approach to an active skill. Active supervision involves continuous monitoring of children’s activities, interactions, and environments and is much more than simply watching or observing from a distance. Active supervision emphasises the importance of being present, tuned in and actively engaged in children’s play and learning. By being near children and aware of their abilities and needs, you can prevent incidents and address any emerging issues quickly.

This does not, however, necessarily mean directly playing or interacting with the children all of the time. Active supervision is also about putting yourself in the right position, scanning, listening and keeping a watchful eye over children while you attend to another child, parent or prepare food.

# Why is supervision important and what are the benefits?

Active supervision ensures that supervision is effective within each context and setting, and has many benefits for you, the children in your care and their families.

Effective supervision is a professional and ethical responsibility for all Educators working with children. To do this consistently, you need to understand why it's important and how it benefits everyone involved.

1. **Safety:** By actively supervising, you can prevent accidents and other potential hazards, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of children at all times. This means you are complying with legislation, meeting the National Quality Standard and implementing your service policies and procedures.
2. **Assessment and planning:** Active supervision and engagement creates opportunities to assess each child's strengths, interests and ways of relating to other

children and adults. These assessments provide valuable contributions to planning the program and increase your understanding of children.

3. **Positive learning environment:** Active supervision creates an environment where children feel secure and supported. It promotes positive interactions and encourages learning and exploration in ways that are safe and developmentally appropriate. Considering supervision requirements when planning and reflecting on the environment, can help you to adapt experiences and equipment to suit children's developing skills and agency, while still keeping them safe.
4. **Responsive relationships:** Through active engagement and supervision, you can promptly address children's needs, whether it's helping them with a task, resolving conflicts, or providing emotional support. Being near or interacting with children enables you to build responsive



relationships and be aware of situations that need quick attention or more attentive supervision.

5. **Role modelling:** When you interact with children during play and routines, you model positive actions, language, problem-solving, and social skills. Active supervision is a great way of teaching and supporting children to develop many of these skills.
6. **Inclusion:** Active supervision ensures that all children, including those with diverse abilities, are included and have equal access to learning experiences that are safe and stimulating. As you may be working with children of different ages and skills, effective supervision ensures the program is safe, stimulating and inclusive for every child.
7. **Partnerships with families:** Actively engaging with children enables you to genuinely know each child, assess their learning and development and share this information with families. Exchanging meaningful information about children builds relationships with families and enables you to learn more about a child, and plan for supervision accordingly.

There are many other benefits that may be specific to your context and community. Can you think of any other benefits of active supervision?

## Child Safe Standards



# What gets in the way of effective supervision?

Although you may be following policies and procedures, and understand the importance of active supervision, there are many factors that can impact on your capacity to supervise effectively.

1. **Working alone:** Being solely responsible for a group of children requires you to be more vigilant and consider how you will manage supervision on your own across different areas, times of the day and during routines.
2. **Diverse ages, abilities and needs:** Supervising diverse groups of children can be challenging, as their needs, routines and skills may differ greatly, requiring you to supervise children in very different ways.
3. **Managing daily tasks:** It is easy to be distracted by other tasks, people, technology or unexpected events, which may lead to lapses in concentration and the ability to be actively engaged and present.
4. **Outdoor environments:** Outdoor spaces often have more variables (uneven terrain, natural elements) that require closer supervision and monitoring. You may need to conduct risk assessments to ensure that outdoor play and local outings are well supervised.
5. **Individual temperaments and experience:** Some children may be more impulsive, adventurous or prone to wandering, requiring extra attention and close supervision.
6. **Routines and transitions:** During routines and transitions (for example, arrivals and departures, moving from one area to another, meals and sleep), you need to be more aware of children's actions and safety, and monitor them closely. You may also need to give more attention to one child during these times, making it more challenging to supervise the whole group.
7. **Fatigue and stress:** Long hours and stress can impact on your ability to be fully present and engaged.

Other factors may also impact on your capacity to supervise children effectively. Being aware of the challenges and issues that may limit or make supervision difficult enables you to reflect on your personal and professional practices and ensure these situations are minimised or unlikely to occur. Regular audits and checks by yourself and service leaders can help to manage potential risks and challenges.

**What other factors impact on your capacity to supervise children effectively?**



# Supervision: The National Law and Regulations

Supervision is part of the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations and should be reflected in service policies and procedures. As an Educator, you need to be aware of the legislative requirements and follow specific policies and procedures related to supervision within FDC. Service Leaders should also ensure that all staff are informed of any legislative changes and update policies accordingly.

[The Education and Care Services National Law](#) requires that all children being educated and cared for at an approved service are *adequately supervised and are protected from harm and hazards*, under the following sections:

## ▶ **Section 165: Offence to inadequately supervise children**

(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that all children being educated and cared for by the service are adequately supervised at all times that the children are in the care of that service.

(3) A family day care educator must ensure that any child being educated and cared for by the educator as a part of a family day care service is adequately supervised.

## ▶ **Section 167: Offence relating to the protection of children from harm and hazards**

(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children being educated and cared for by the service from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury.

(3) A family day care educator must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect a child being educated and cared for as part of a family day care service from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury.

## ▶ **Section 174: Offence to fail to notify certain information Regulatory Authority**

## ▶ **Section 174A: Family day care educator to notify certain information to approved provider**



[The National Regulations](#) further require that regulatory authorities be notified in case of any serious incidents or complaints alleging compromise of the safety, health or wellbeing of children. Specific regulations related to supervision include:

- ▶ **Regulation 84B:** Policies and procedures must address supervision during sleep and rest.
- ▶ **Regulation 84C:** A risk assessment for the purposes of sleep and rest policies and procedures must consider – the suitability of staffing arrangement to adequately supervise and monitor children during sleep and rest periods and the level of knowledge and training of staff supervising during sleep and rest periods.
- ▶ **Regulation 101 (2)(f):** Risk assessment considerations during excursions.
- ▶ **Regulation 102 (4):** Items to be included in a written authorisation for an excursion.
- ▶ **Regulation 102AAC:** Risk assessment considerations for the safe arrival of children.
- ▶ **Regulation 102C:** Risk assessment considerations for transportation of children.



- ▶ **Regulation 102D(4):** Items to be included in a written authorisation for transportation of children.
- ▶ **Regulation 168(2)(h):** Policies and procedures are required in relation to providing a child-safe environment.
- ▶ **Regulation 176:** Timeframes for notifying certain information to the Regulatory Authority.
- ▶ **Regulation 176A:** Prescribed information to be notified to approved provider by Family Day Care Educator.

Many factors may contribute to a hazard, such as the lack of a quality program, inadequate supervision and damaged equipment. Approved Providers, Nominated Supervisors and Educators are required to develop, implement and monitor procedures for identifying, mitigating and, where necessary, preventing hazards.

**Adequate supervision is essential to keeping children safe and protecting them from harm and hazards.**

Adequate supervision means:

- ▶ That you as an Educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation
- ▶ Knowing where your children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently.

The adequacy of supervision should be determined by a range of factors:

- ▶ Number, age and ability of children
- ▶ Number and positioning of Educators
- ▶ Each child's current activity, including those who are sleeping or resting
- ▶ Accessibility and visibility of areas where children play
- ▶ Risks in the environment and experiences provided to children, including excursions and/or transportation provided or arranged by the service
- ▶ Your knowledge of each child and each group of children
- ▶ Your own experience, skill and knowledge.

In FDC, particular consideration should be given to the layout of the areas of care, the number of children attending, and supervision during periods of sleep and rest and in toileting/nappy change areas. **(p.391, *Guide to the National Quality Framework, 2024*)**

Being a FDC Educator means you have already undertaken a variety of risk assessments and safety checks to be compliant with the National Law and Regulations. Your service will provide a range of policies and procedures that you will need to become familiar with and consistently implement. Although the service will have considered many of the factors related to supervision, being proactive and ensuring supervision is not only adequate but tailored to your home setting, will ensure the children in your care are always safe and protected.

Other regulations related to supervision include the use of tobacco, drugs and alcohol; sleep and rest; risk assessment, excursions, arrival and departure; transportation. You need to be aware of these regulations and how they inform service policies and procedures, and your day-to-day practice.

**Supervision is critical to the safety of children... Effective supervision also requires educators to be actively involved with children... [and not] merely 'stand back and watch'. Every child should always be monitored actively and diligently. This means knowing where children are at all times. Children of different ages and abilities will need different levels of supervision. In general, the younger children are, the more they may need an adult to be physically present and close by to support and help them... In a family day care service, some children may be playing in different parts of the family day care residence or venue and the educator will need to consider how these children will be supervised. (p.65 & 66, *Guide to the National Law and National Regulations, 2017*)**

# Supervision and the National Quality Standard

Supervision is also part of the National Quality Standard (NQS). The importance of actively supervising children to promote children's health, safety and learning is reflected in **Quality Area 2 of the NQS – Children's Health and Safety**, in particular Standard 2.2 and Element 2.2.1.

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.

The focus of this element is to ensure that children's safety is protected at all times, including on excursions and during transportation that is arranged by the service. It's also about creating safe physical and social environments that have a positive impact on children's learning, development and wellbeing.

All children have a right to be protected from potential hazards and dangers posed by products, plants, objects, animals and people in the immediate and wider environment.




You need to be alert to and aware of the potential for accidents and injury throughout your home, not just within the immediate area.

In a FDC service, the children may be a variety of ages, so different levels of supervision may be required in response to each child's developmental needs. Young children will require close supervision, whereas for older children, it is important to balance the need for close supervision with respect for their age and developing independence.

Consideration should be given to whether the age and developmental needs of individual children would allow them to play in areas of the FDC residence or a venue where they are not directly supervised. Travel outside the education and care service, for reasons of excursions or any form of transportation provided or arranged by the service, might also require different levels of supervision.

By fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the social and natural environment, you create learning

environments that encourage children to explore, problem-solve and create and construct in challenging and safe ways. This supports children’s agency and their ability to manage risks and keep themselves safe. The following examples highlight what might occur during Assessment and Rating, including what assessors might observe, sight and discuss.

	<p><b>Sight</b>          Authorised officers will sight documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, records of attendance, enrolment records, policies and procedures, meeting minutes, safety checklists, newsletters, photos, collections of children’s work and documentation of child assessments or evaluations).</p>
	<p><b>Observe</b>          Authorised officers will observe what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are doing (for example, engaging in caring, friendly and respectful interactions).</p>
	<p><b>Discuss</b>          Authorised officers will discuss why and how particular practices occur at the service, with the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, Family Day Care Educators, assistants or staff members.</p>

During Assessment and Rating, assessors might observe:

### Children:

- ▶ Being supervised in all areas of the service, by being in sight and/or hearing of an Educator at all times, including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines (\*Red Nose Australia recognises continuous supervision, in which an Educator is in sight and hearing of a sleeping child at all times, represents best practice)
- ▶ Being unable to access unsupervised or unsafe areas in the service
- ▶ Only being taken outside the service premises by an Educator, Co-ordinator, Nominated Supervisor, parent or Authorised Nominee.

### Educators:

- ▶ Ensuring all children are supervised effectively at all times
- ▶ Supervising children closely when they are in a situation that presents a higher risk of injury – for example, during water play or woodwork experience, or on an excursion or during transportation provided or arranged by the service

- ▶ Adjusting their levels of supervision depending on the area of the service and the skills, age mix, dynamics and size of the group of children they are supervising
- ▶ Talking with children about safety issues and correct use of equipment and the environment and, where appropriate, involving children in setting safety rules
- ▶ Discussing sun safety with children and implementing appropriate measures to protect children from overexposure to ultraviolet radiation such as sunburn
- ▶ Monitoring and adequately supervising sleeping children according to the service's policies and procedures around sleep and rest.

**Nominated Supervisors, Co-ordinators, Educators and FDC Educator Assistants** (*Regulation 144 (2) states that an approved provider of a FDC service may approve a person as a FDC Educator assistant to assist a FDC Educator in providing education and care to children as part of the FDC service. This also requires the written consent of a parent of each child cared for by the Educator*):

- ▶ Supervising every person who enters and leaves the service premises in areas where children are present
- ▶ Following the service's procedures for releasing children and ensuring they are released only to parents or authorised nominees
- ▶ Implementing safe sleep and rest practices (according to best practice guidance, for example: Safe Sleeping Practices for Newborns | Red Nose Australia) and [Early Childhood Educators | Red Nose Australia](#), and using cots and safe sleeping equipment that meet [Australian standards and Australian Competition and Consumer Commission](#) (ACCC) requirements
- ▶ Ensuring equipment, furniture and activities are arranged to provide adequate supervision while also allowing children to access private and quiet spaces.

Specific questions and examples of documentation for FDC may involve the following:

- ▶ How you are involved in identifying and managing risks to maintain adequate supervision at all times

- ▶ How you promote engagement in children's play and experiences whilst maintaining supervision requirements
- ▶ How you ensure that supervision arrangements are flexible to allow supervision of individuals or small groups of children, such as when children are sleeping, or indoor and outdoor experiences are concurrently offered to children
- ▶ How you balance supervision requirements with children's needs for privacy and independence
- ▶ How you ensure that children are not left alone with visitors to your residence or approved venue
- ▶ How you plan for and manage risk associated with overnight supervision if you offer this
- ▶ How the choice of sleeping spaces supports adequate supervision
- ▶ Evidence that a record is kept of all visitors to your residence or approved venue that includes the signature of the visitor and the time of the visitor's arrival and departure.



The following questions from the [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#) may be useful for further reflection and self-assessment, which are important for continuous improvement and developing your service QIP.

How do we identify potential supervision risks in the service?

How do we plan to ensure that all areas used by children are effectively supervised, including when children are participating in high-risk activities or varying their activities?

How do we plan to manage supervision of small groups of children who may need to be in a different space from the main group?

How do we identify, assess, manage and record hazards and potential risks for children, such as potentially dangerous products, plants, objects and animals at the service, and how often do we do this?

How do we ensure children are alerted to safety issues and encouraged to develop the skills to assess and manage risks to their own safety?

How do we ensure that all equipment and materials used in the service meet relevant safety standards, including bedding and sun protection resources and equipment?

How do we conduct risk assessments for potential excursions and plan for children's safety during excursions?

How do we conduct risk assessments for potential transportation of children and plan for children's safety during transportation provided or arranged by the service?

How do we identify which emergency procedures and specific action plans are required for our service and how often do we practise these? What recognised authorities are consulted in the development of these plans?

How do we maintain an awareness of the people who have contact with children at the service and/or who collect children from the service?

How do we keep up to date with current legislation in our state or territory in relation to child protection, and ensure that all staff understand how to report their concerns about child protection issues?

For further information on the **NQS, Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety**, refer to the link below:

► [www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard/quality-area-2-childrens-health-and-safety](http://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard/quality-area-2-childrens-health-and-safety)



# Supervision and the EYLF V2.0 and MTOP V2.0

While supervision is not a specific principle or practice with the *EYLF V2.0* and *MTOP V2.0*, it is embedded throughout the frameworks with references to children's safety, alongside opportunities for children to demonstrate agency and safe risk-taking.

The following examples highlight how supervision is reflected in the Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes. It is part of the way you develop relationships and interact with children and their families, the learning environments you create, and the ways in which you support children's agency and inclusion.

## Principles

### **Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships**

"Through a widening network of secure relationships, children develop confidence and feel safe, respected and valued." (*EYLF V2.0*, p.14)

### **Partnerships**

"Ethical partnerships are formed when information is shared responsibly, and educators take safety precautions to ensure children's right to privacy and protection." (*EYLF V2.0*, p.15)

### **Equity, inclusion and high expectations**

"Educators... create inclusive environments and adapt flexible and informed practices, including making reasonable adjustments to optimise access, participation and engagement in learning." (*EYLF V2.0*, p.17)

## Practices

### **Responsiveness to children**

"Educators are attuned to, and respond in ways that best suit, each child's strengths, capabilities and curiosity." (*EYLF V2.0*, p.21)



### **Play-based learning and intentionality**

“Educators... take different roles in children’s play or make purposeful decisions about when to observe and when to join in and guide the play.” (*EYLF* V2.0 p.22)

### **Learning environments**

“Welcoming, safe and inclusive indoor and outdoor learning environments reflect, respect, affirm the identities and enrich the lives of children and families. Well planned environments cater for different learning capacities and learning styles and allow for reasonable adjustments when required.” (*EYLF* V2.0 p.23)

“Educators observe and review the environment – is it safe, cosy and comfortable, accessible, welcoming, self-sustaining?” (*MTOP* V2.0, p.23)

### **Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches**

“School age care educators consider children and young people’s needs, including nutrition and safety.” (*MTOP* V2.0, p.21)

## Collaboration with children and young people

“Responsive relationships with families and the local community, including schools, enables educators to establish safe and secure environments for children and young people.”

## Learning Outcomes

### Educators...

- ▶ Support children to learn about and recognise safe and unsafe situations (Identity)
- ▶ Promote body safety awareness with children and families (Wellbeing)
- ▶ Help children talk about negative emotions or potentially unsafe behaviours (Wellbeing)
- ▶ Discuss health and safety issues with children and involve them in developing guidelines to keep the environment safe for all (Wellbeing)
- ▶ Learn about e-safety for children and embed and model safe digital practices (Wellbeing)

- ▶ Plan learning environments that are flexible, with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take safe risks in their learning (Learning).

Alongside these examples, the Learning Outcomes in the *EYLF* V2.0 and *MTOP* V2.0 encourage Educators to promote learning through being attuned to and responding to children during play and routines, planning and setting up of safe, inclusive and stimulating learning environments, using intentional teaching strategies and supporting children’s agency.

As the age, developmental stages and abilities of children in FDC can vary greatly, it is important to be aware of the environment, available resources and how your interactions support the diverse needs of each child as they work towards achieving the Learning Outcomes and the learning goals that are important to their family and community.

Effective supervision needs to be balanced with opportunities for children to have agency, make decisions and engage in safe risks. While Educators need to see and/or hear children at all times, enabling children to have more agency as their skills

develop is an important part of active supervision. School age children may need more opportunities to test and challenge their skills, while you maintain the safety of younger children. Encouraging children to learn from and assist their peers also promotes relationships and collaboration between children of all ages.

Using the *EYLF V2.0* and *MTOP V2.0* as a guide to programming and practice, supports you to supervise children effectively by simply implementing the Principles and Practices and supporting children to achieve the Learning Outcomes.

**How is active supervision embedded and reflected in other Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes?**

## Planning for effective and active supervision

To address the barriers and challenges related to supervision, you need to plan the day well. Effective planning for supervision will assist you to meet legislative requirements, as well as implementing quality programs and practices.

You also need to plan ahead, particularly for excursions and other tasks that need to be done weekly, fortnightly or less often. This will involve formal risk assessments and having a diary or calendar for long term plans and events.



# Risk Assessment and Management

While some incidents may occur that are unexpected, assessing risks and using a preventative approach is more likely to minimise hazards and unsafe situations. To effectively supervise groups of children, you will need to conduct risk assessments to determine the level of supervision that is required for particular situations, experiences like water play or excursions.

*“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.”*

▶ ([PDIYP Effective Risk Management in FDC, April 2024, p.4](#))



When planning for effective supervision, the following questions can help to inform supervision when children are in care (adapted from the Risk Assessment and Management – Adequate Supervision infographic):

- ▶ What part of the environment are the children using?
- ▶ How many children are involved?
- ▶ What are the ages and abilities of these children?
- ▶ What is the visibility and accessibility of the area(s) being used by the children?
- ▶ What possible hazards and risks have been identified?
- ▶ Can I respond to an incident without putting other children at risk?

Further information on Risk Management can be found in [PDIYP Effective Risk Management](#) (April 2024) and on the ACECQA website.

- ▶ [Risk Management and Management](#), ACECQA.



# Strategies to support active supervision

Effective supervision often starts even before children have entered your home. Strategies to support effective planning for supervision might include the following:

- ▶ **Clear policies and procedures that address supervision.** Implementing required processes and practices means you are more likely to keep children safe and provide effective supervision.
- ▶ **Arrangement of furniture and objects.** Placing furniture in a way that lines of sight remain open enables you to see and hear children more easily, for example, by keeping furniture at waist height or shorter. It also makes it easier for you to move around and view play areas from different locations in the room. You may have to remove or reposition your own personal objects if they are a potential hazard to the children in your care.
- ▶ **Clear and uncluttered environments.** Decluttering environments helps to improve sight and supervision, for example, keeping windows clear and free from objects or

posters that impede your view. Less clutter also enables children to move around freely and avoid tripping or coming into contact with potential hazards.

- ▶ **Supervision plans.** Planning how environments and experiences will be set up and supervised, particularly ‘high risk’ or ‘high maintenance’ activities ensures you can be available for all children and easily address any incidents that occur, while still supervising the rest of the room and group.
- ▶ **Adjustment of plans and strategies.** Flexible supervision arrangements may be needed to allow for supervision of individual children or small groups, such as sleeping children or indoor and outdoor experiences offered simultaneously. Planning experiences ahead of time also minimises the risk of harm and injury by keeping children engaged and focused on safe activities.
- ▶ **Resource selection.** If you are working with mixed ages, consider what resources are being offered and when. Small

items may present a choking hazard for young children, however, will be important for the skill development of older children. The use of these materials will require close, constant supervision or should be provided when very young children are sleeping or not in attendance.

- ▶ **Routines and transitions.** Developing clear plans for transitions and movement between areas and rooms ensures children are well supervised during these times. You may need to check routes to children's rest and bathroom areas to ensure that they allow access to visible monitoring and do regular checks on sleeping children. Planning for arrivals and departures means you can have conversations with parents while still ensuring the other children are safe, for example, offering simple resources and experiences that all children can manage independently, ensuring children can be seen from the front door or encouraging parents to come into the main area where other children are playing.
- ▶ **Environment scanning.** It is important to be aware of what all children are doing by moving around and scanning the environment frequently. When scanning,

watch for potential hazards such as open doors or gates, play equipment in unsafe positions or children trying to enter out-of-bounds areas.

- ▶ **Positioning.** Check your positioning regularly, particularly when engaging with children. You should always place yourself so that you can see and hear all of the children. Decide where to stand or sit before starting a new experience to ensure maximum supervision and to minimise risks. A good rule of thumb is the 'back to the wall' position where you are looking at the children instead of walls or fencing.
- ▶ **Times of the day.** Be aware of busy and difficult times of the day that require closer supervision, for example, during meals and sleep. Try to avoid doing too many things at these times, as this will make it difficult to closely supervise children eating or sleeping.
- ▶ **Individual needs.** It is important to be aware of children who need more engagement and support, for example, a child might need more one to one attention when they are dropped off. Avoiding high maintenance experiences





at this time will enable you to give the child your full attention, while still supervising other children involved in independent play.

- ▶ **Listening.** Listen and be responsive to children's conversations and play. Specific sounds or the absence of them may signify a reason for concern, for example, sounds of splashing water, crying, choking or gasping can alert you to signs of potential danger or children in distress. Listening carefully for any changes of tone or volume in children's voices can provide cues and assist you in supervising children who may not be in direct vision.
- ▶ **Prevention.** Being alert and anticipating difficulties can prevent situations from arising. Observing children's play and anticipating what may occur next is another way that you can ensure children remain safe. By knowing about each child's abilities, culture, ideas and interests it is easier to anticipate what they may do. Undertaking risk assessments is another preventative tool available.

- ▶ **Discussions with children about safety and supervision.** Being proactive and talking to children about safety helps children to start making positive choices about their own safety, including body safety and personal space, and e-safety. This information can also be used to plan and create challenges that children are ready for and support them in succeeding – for example, outdoor play and sun safety. This helps children to learn about hazards and minimise risks to their own safety.
- ▶ **Manage daily tasks.** Try to avoid undertaking tasks such as administrative work or cleaning that might involve removing your gaze away from children. If these tasks need to be completed while children are present, try to involve children or ensure they can still be seen or are in close proximity.
- ▶ **Record keeping.** For example, making sure enrolment records are easily accessible and up to date with the names of people authorised or not authorised to pick up each child. If you are documenting and collecting information using technology, consider when or how this can be done with minimal impact to supervision.

When planning for supervision, it is also important to promote children's agency. When you allow a child to engage in independent exploration and appropriate risk-taking while keeping a close watch, you provide opportunities for the child to make responsible and genuine decisions about their play.

The April [PDIYP on Effective Risk Management in FDC](#) also has further information on supporting risky play and safe risk-taking.

What other strategies do you use to plan for effective supervision?



# Active supervision in practice

Active supervision happens throughout the day often without you realising you are doing it! However, specific times of the day will require constant, deliberate, and focused observation of children, for example, during meals, sleep, nappy changes, excursions and transportation.

Planning and implementing transitions and routines that support individual children while providing adequate supervision allows children the ability to move around their environment with confidence, being able to predict where they are going, what is coming next and what they need to do. Good planning also enables you to manage times of the day when you need to deal with multiple tasks, for example, supervising other children when you are changing a nappy and when a parent arrives to pick up their child. You even need to think about how children will be supervised when you go to the toilet.

Supervision should also be considered when transitioning children from one place to another. This may include the process of moving children between home and the education and care setting, between a range of different education

and care settings or moving between spaces or experiences during the one day: for example, from indoors to outdoors or between experiences, such as from free play to a group experience; or between an experience and a routine, such as from free play to lunch.

The following examples of practice provide more detail about what to consider and do to ensure supervision is effective and active during specific routines and experiences.

## When children are sleeping or resting

As of 1 October 2023, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and 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 (1)(3)).

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 Regulation 84C. 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.

As a FDC Educator, you are responsible for the supervision of your children during sleep and rest periods. You are required to be knowledgeable about safe sleep practices and how to implement them in line with your service's policies and procedures. Safe sleep policies and procedures also need to be regularly reviewed to make sure they accurately reflect the practices that are occurring day-to-day.

In addition, you need to implement best practice guidance for sleep and rest practices and safe sleeping environments, including sleep and bedding equipment and ensure there is adequate supervision and monitoring of children during sleep and rest period. Sometimes you may need to have difficult

conversations with families to ensure your practices are in line with your service policies and best practice guidance for safe sleep and rest. Red Nose have a resource to assist educators with these conversations: [Family Fact Sheet](#).

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.

Approved Providers must assess and mitigate risks\* associated to ensure children are adequately supervised. In all cases, safe sleep practices and regular, physical checks must continue to be implemented.

\*Providers must prepare a risk assessment at least every 12 months and as soon as practical after becoming aware of any circumstances that may affect the safety, health or wellbeing of any children during sleep and rest.

Red Nose recommends the following five tips for setting up a safe sleeping environment in FDC:

1. Babies/children should sleep in a dedicated room separate, but accessible from the main activity room. The room should have adequate light and ventilation so that you can keep a close eye on each child during sleep.
2. Remove any unnecessary furniture from the sleeping space that could cause accidental injury or become a trip or falls hazard. Likewise, any access to stairs should be completely blocked off.
3. Ensure there are no hanging cords, blinds, clocks or wall hangings such as bunting, pictures or canopies that could pose a danger to a baby/child.
4. Babies should sleep in a safe cot that meets mandatory Australian Standards. Babies should not be placed to sleep in a pram, bouncer, car seat, capsule or any other inclined device, which are not designed as dedicated sleep spaces. Importantly: the cot should be clear of pillows, bumpers, lambswool or thick loose bedding, even if the child is older than twelve months of age. These pose a significant suffocation risk.

5. For older children, floor mattresses are the safest place for sleep, reducing the risk of injury if they fall. You should ensure adequate space is maintained between each mattress to allow staff to check on each child safely. A note on pillow use: In line with NSW Government recommendations, the safest time to introduce a pillow is over the age of two.

Rooms that are very dark and have music playing may not support adequate supervision of sleeping children. Windows should be kept clear and not painted over or covered with curtains or posters. Any use of windows and CCTV and/or monitors must not replace physical bedside checks and should be used in addition to physical bedside checks.

Red Nose also highlights why continuous supervision is essential:

1. **Preventing sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI)**: Continuous supervision significantly reduces the risk of SUDI, including SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) and other sleep-related incidents. By staying attentive, you can swiftly respond to any signs of distress or discomfort, potentially averting a dangerous situation.

2. **Monitoring the sleep environment:** Continuous supervision allows you to closely monitor the sleep environment for any signs of compromise. Factors such as overheating, poor ventilation, or the introduction of hazards into the sleep space can pose serious risks to infants. With vigilant supervision, these issues can be promptly identified and addressed, ensuring a safe sleeping environment for every child.
3. **Identifying changes in wellbeing:** Bedside checks play a critical role in monitoring the wellbeing of infants during sleep. By conducting regular checks, you can observe subtle changes in an infant's condition, such as changes in skin colour, laboured breathing or unusual movements. Detecting signs early allows for immediate intervention and ensures that any emerging health concerns are addressed promptly.
4. **Maintaining safe sleep practices:** Continuous supervision reinforces the importance of adhering to safe sleep practices consistently. You can ensure that infants are placed on their backs to sleep, in a firm and flat sleep surface, free from loose bedding or other suffocation

## Safe Sleeping Monitoring Checklist

- Please make sure you can see and hear me, and check me frequently when I'm sleeping!
- Is my head and face uncovered?
- Are my skin and lips a normal colour for me?
- Is my chest rising and falling?
- Is my bed clear of soft and loose items?
- Am I warm but not too hot?

Red Nose acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands in which we work, live and visit.  
Red Nose Safe Sleep Advice Hub  
1300 998 898 (during business hours AEST/AEDT) [rednose.org.au/safesleep](http://rednose.org.au/safesleep)

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hazards. By closely monitoring each sleeping infant, caregivers can uphold these guidelines and create a secure sleep environment for all.

- ▶ [www.rednose.org.au/article/supervision-of-sleeping-and-resting-children-in-early-childhood-education-and-care-settings](http://www.rednose.org.au/article/supervision-of-sleeping-and-resting-children-in-early-childhood-education-and-care-settings)

You should also have an agreed and documented plan for the supervision of sleeping children, tailored to the unique layout and safety considerations of your service, as well as the ages, development stages and any identified individual health needs of the children in your care. For example, you should ensure that children are not placed in your bedroom if they would have access to medication or other dangerous items. Approved Providers must support Educators to assess, document and manage risks to their ability to maintain continuous supervision of sleeping children.

**Consider how you will ensure regular, high quality physical checks along with other safe sleep practices to ensure adequate supervision.**

If children sleep at different times or are no longer sleeping, it is important to consider how you will actively supervise all children during these times. As you will need to do regular checks of sleeping children, the following strategies may be helpful.

- ▶ Take children with you when you check on sleeping children
- ▶ Consider whether children can sleep in the same room as children playing without being disturbed
- ▶ Try to create a direct sight line if children are sleeping in another room
- ▶ Encourage nonsleeping children to play in one area or room if you need to leave the room regularly
- ▶ Offer low maintenance and open-ended activities that require minimal adult intervention and support
- ▶ Encourage older children to provide assistance to younger children when you are out of the room
- ▶ Use of a sleep monitor (regular physical checks must still be maintained and documented).



Red Nose also recommends regular and open communication with parents or caregivers. This ensures you can make accurate risk assessments about a child's vulnerability to SUDI. This is particularly important in very young babies, between birth and 12 months of age, because babies' development can be so varied during this time and parents' practices at home can differ dramatically.

▶ [rednose.org.au/article/safe-sleep-practices-save-lives](https://rednose.org.au/article/safe-sleep-practices-save-lives)

For further information on safe sleep practices, refer to the [PDIYP Safe Sleep in FDC](#) (March 2023), as well as the following websites and links:

▶ [Sleep and rest legislative requirements](#), ACECQA.

▶ [www.rednose.org.au](https://www.rednose.org.au)

### Scenario:

A new baby has started attending FDC two days a week. The parent has requested the child has two sleeps during the day, however, the other children in your care no longer require daytime sleeps. To ensure the safety of the baby and maintain supervision of the other children, you develop a documented plan for supervision. This includes where the baby will sleep, when and how you will do regular checks and what activities will be offered to the other children when you do the checks.

### During nappy changes and toileting

Preparing for a nappy change is fundamental to maintaining an adequate level of supervision of children. Ensure you have clear guidelines to ensure hygienic practices in nappy changing areas and these should consider proximity to hand washing facilities and supervision of all children. This should be included or considered in the assessment of FDC residences.

Other strategies to support active supervision during nappy changes and toileting include:

- ▶ Considering the best room or place for nappy and clothing changes, for example, in the same room as other children playing, using a mat on the floor rather than a change table
- ▶ Ensuring all the required equipment is available and within reach prior to beginning the nappy change, including maintenance of hygiene practices
- ▶ Never leaving a child alone on a change table
- ▶ Always maintaining physical contact with the child
- ▶ Where older children with special needs require nappy changing, considering the adequacy of supervision and the privacy needs of the child
- ▶ Encouraging older children to help, for example, getting another child's bag
- ▶ Keeping bathroom doors open or ajar to provide clear sight lines and quick access if needed
- ▶ Ensuring locks on doors cannot be accessed by children.

For further information of nappy changes, refer to the following resources and links:

- ▶ [QA2: Toileting and Nappy Changing Principles Practices](#), ACECQA.

### Scenario:

A toddler has had an accident, and you need to change their clothing. Other children are playing with toys and equipment on the floor in the loungeroom. To effectively supervise both groups of children, you help the child get their bag and other equipment needed to change them on the floor in the loungeroom. This allows you assist the child with their clothing while still actively engaging with and supervising the rest of the group.

### During meals and food preparation

Supervision during meals is an important part of your role as you manage daily routines and transitions.

This involves understanding Safe Food Handling practices



and being aware of any changes in legislation, guidance and practices. You must use good hygiene practices and handle, prepare and store food safely. It is essential to know how to store and reheat food children bring from home safely, as children can choke on food, have allergic reactions to food and get very sick from food that is not stored or reheated properly.

Effective supervision also includes clear information for families to ensure any food provided is both safe for their own child and others.

Sitting with and being close to children during meals will help you to monitor children's food intake and minimise any potential choking hazards. Likewise, having mealtime expectations such as sitting and not moving around while eating, and eating slowly, make supervision easier and help children learn about their own health and safety.

Encourage children to help set up areas for meals, prepare simple food and clean up when they have finished. You can use these opportunities to talk about food safety, health and wellbeing.

If you are eating hot food and drinking hot beverages with and around children, it is important to consider how you can

do this safely while still providing effective supervision. You will need to ensure hot beverages are in closed containers that cannot spill, and hot foods are kept away from children. If you are heating food for children, you must ensure that it is a safe temperature before feeding or providing it to children. While eating with children can offer opportunities for role modelling and discussions about healthy eating, it is essential to ensure that the health and safety of children is prioritised during these times.



## Scenario:

A child brings food from home that requires heating. Before doing this, you help the other three children get their lunchboxes and water bottles, ensure everyone has washed their hands and are sitting at the table ready to eat. While the other children start eating, you heat the food in the kitchen where you have a direct view of the table. This enables you to prepare the food safely while still supervising the children as they begin their lunch. You follow procedures for heating and serving food and then sit with the children while they have lunch. You can now effectively supervise all the children through close proximity, direct observation, active engagement and role modelling.

## Going on excursions and regular outings

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, an Approved Provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for managing excursions (Regulation 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure policies and procedures are followed (Regulation 170).

The policy and procedures must include the following:

- ▶ Conducting a risk assessment before each excursion to identify any risks that might affect the safety, health and wellbeing of children, as well as how the risks will be managed (Regulations 100, 101)
- ▶ Conducting periodic new risk assessments for regular outings
- ▶ Obtaining authorisation from families or authorised nominees (Regulation 102).

The risk assessment will need to take into account the levels of supervision and number of adults needed for the entire time the children are out of the FDC residence. Services might consider how attendance numbers will be verified at certain times during the excursion, such as when leaving the premises or travelling on public transport. For example, head counts or allocating a one or two children to a parent volunteer or educator.

Volunteers, such as parent helpers, may assist or be needed to provide additional supervision for high-risk excursions. In other instances, such as regular outings (shopping, visiting

the local library, going to a park or playground and attending (playgroup) you may be able to supervise effectively without additional support.

Using an excursion risk management plan, such as the template on the ACECQA website, is a good tool to organise and prepare a risk assessment:

- ▶ [Excursions](#), ACECQA.
- ▶ [www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/sample-forms-and-templates](http://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/sample-forms-and-templates)

Effective supervision during excursions could involve:

- ▶ Being familiar with required policies and procedures for excursions
- ▶ Ensuring risk assessments are carried out and reviewed as required
- ▶ Creating an excursion checklist of all tasks/items needed throughout the process
- ▶ Creating an excursion run sheet and ensuring you and any volunteers have a copy

- ▶ Ensuring any volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities on the day and through an excursion supervision induction prior to the excursion
- ▶ Creating an Excursion Review template that reflects on the educational value and the health and safety issues that need to be noted for future excursions
- ▶ [Unpacking excursions and regular outings](#), NSW Government.

## Scenario:

You are taking three children to the local park as part of your regular outings. One child requires a pram, and the other children can walk independently. You completed a risk assessment at the start of the year and have continued to reflect on and assess any additional risks that might occur. You complete a checklist prior to leaving your home to ensure you have all the necessary equipment to meet individual needs and safety requirements. You remind children about what they need to do before the outing, for example, clothing, hats, sunscreen and toilet. You then discuss how they will stay safe as you walk to the park, for example, holding on to the pram and listening to your instructions. Once you are at the park, you talk to the children about where they can play and stay in close proximity to them at all times. You actively observe and interact with the children to prevent any risks and encourage safe play. Before returning home, you remind children about what they need to do and allow more time knowing they will be tired and less responsive to instructions.

## During transportation

Children can be transported by, or be on transport arranged by, children's education and care services, including by FDC Educators. Transportation can present heightened risks to children's safety, in particular, during the period of moving between transport and embarking or disembarking from a vehicle.

While new requirements for regular transportation from 1 March 2023 apply to centre-based services only, it is good practice for FDC staff to apply the new requirements to minimise risk and ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children during any periods of transportation. FDC Educators and providers should consider establishing clear and consistent procedures, through effective risk assessment, that ensure no children are left in vehicles when the FDC Educator or FDC Educator assistant is transporting children.

For further information on excursions and transportation, refer to the [PDIYP Safe arrival/Transport of children in FDC \(June 2024\)](#) and the following websites and links:

- ▶ [Resources – Kids and Traffic \(mq.edu.au\)](#)
- ▶ [InfoSheet: Guidance For Adequate Supervision During Transportation](#), ACECQA.
- ▶ [InfoSheet: Safe Transportation Of Children.pdf](#), ACECQA.
- ▶ [www.education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/ecec-resource-library/transporting-children-safely.html](http://www.education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/ecec-resource-library/transporting-children-safely.html)

There are many other times in the day when supervision may require further planning or specific processes to keep children safe and minimise potential hazards. As every residence is different, you need to be aware of the regulations and standards, and how they apply to your setting. Clear policies and procedures, thorough induction processes, risk management and ongoing evaluation can help services ensure all staff have the knowledge and skills needed to supervise children effectively in FDC.





# Conclusion

Adequate supervision is a key part of your role when caring for and educating young children. However, active supervision goes beyond legislative requirements and standards to ensure children are not only protected but can learn and develop in a secure and stimulating environment.

Through risk management, thoughtful programming and active engagement, you can plan for and implement supervision that is active and effective. This in turn, creates a safe place for children to grow, be nurtured and develop agency about their own health, safety and wellbeing.

# References and resources

- ▶ ACECQA. (February 2024). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*. ACECQA.
- ▶ ACECQA. (2023). *Risk Assessment and Management Tool*.
- ▶ Australian Government Department of Education (2022). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (v2.0)*. Australian Government Department of Education for the Ministerial Council.
- ▶ [NQF Resource: Guide to ECS Law & Regulations](#), ACECQA.
- ▶ [Staff Ratios and Adequate Supervision](#), NSW Government.
- ▶ [InfoSheet: Legislative Requirements For Family Day Care Educators](#), ACECQA.
- ▶ [QA2: Active Supervision Ensuring Safety and Promoting Learning](#), ACECQA.
- ▶ [Active Supervision In Early Childhood Settings – Aussie Childcare Network](#).
- ▶ [PD in Your Pocket – NSWFDCA](#).

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



This topic – **Active Supervision 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](http://www.nswfdc.org.au/pdinyourpocket)



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