GUIDANCE FOR ADMINISTERING CHILDREN’S TEMPERATURE SCREENING

The current advice from Victoria’s Chief Health Officer is that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services may continue to operate, with appropriate risk-mitigation measures in place, except where there is a confirmed case of a child or staff member with coronavirus (COVID-19).

In order to support community awareness of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and to help identify children displaying symptoms, all schools located in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire will commence temperature screening of students while the Stage 3 Stay at Home restrictions are in place.

Many ECEC services have already implemented temperature screening for all children, and we strongly encourage services located in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire to continue to do this. Services located in these Stage 3 restricted areas, or have children attending who live in these areas, that are not already undertaking temperature screening are strongly encouraged to commence this as soon as practicable.

Children and staff who live outside metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire areas can continue to attend services within these areas. Similarly, children and staff who live within metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire can continue to attend services located outside these areas.

This document provides guidance to early childhood services to support temperature screening.

Rationale

Temperature screening can be used during a pandemic to identify the presence of fever in an individual. Fever, whilst not present in all cases, is a common symptom of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Temperature measurements in the context of a holistic assessment may help early childhood services to decide if a child should return home.

Where possible temperature screening should be conducted using non-contact infrared thermometers.

Temperature screening as a public health measure will support the identification of unwell children. Temperature screening does not replace the need for other important public health measures such as hand hygiene, and enhanced cleaning and disinfection.

The most important action that staff, students, children and families can take is to ensure they remain at home if they are unwell.

Implementation

Early childhood services are currently implementing changes to service entry procedures, including greeting families at the front entrance and staggering drop-off and pick-ups where required. Systems have also been put in place to reduce the number of adults congregating in service foyers and physical distancing measures are being implemented for educators, staff and families.

- Services should communicate to families any changes in arrival and temperature checking procedures and explain why this is important.
- Screening should take place at drop-off time, while the parent/carer is still present. Children with a temperature of 37.5º Celsius or above on screening should not proceed to their room.
- It is expected that services outside metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire areas will conduct temperature screening with children who live in these areas (at a minimum). To avoid
the risk of stigmatisation, these temperature screens should be conducted in a way that avoids public identification of any child. In services where more than half the children come from Stage 3 restricted areas, it is recommended that all children are screened.

- Written consent is not required as the process is non-intrusive. Services are advised to record the temperature of children who are deemed to have a fever or are unwell. Services are not advised to keep a record of the temperature of every child. If there is any concern about a child having their temperature screened, the service should discuss this with the family to confirm that any child who is unwell is unable to attend service.

- If services do not have access to appropriate thermometers, please email Early.Childhood.Implementation@edumail.vic.gov.au.

**Administration and thermometer use**

- Early childhood services are encouraged to consider the following:
  - establishing arrival procedures including how the temperature screening will be implemented (if not currently being implemented), ensuring that it allows appropriate physical distancing between adults. Any temperature screening procedure needs to be organised in a way that does not increase congregation and mixing of staff, children and parents.
  - ensuring educators are competent with the use of the equipment and interpreting results (refer to *Temperature thresholds and required actions* section below).
  - ensuring that a small number of educators undertake this task to minimise multiple contact points.
  - A single use face mask or cloth mask made to DHHS standards is recommended for educators performing temperature checks. See [DHHS guidance for taking masks on and off safely](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm) (following information that relates to hand hygiene and masks only). Note that a cloth mask must be washed after each use before being worn again.
  - educators should practise hand hygiene before and after conducting the temperature screening each morning.
  - establishing systems to ensure that devices are cleaned and disinfected at the completion of the day’s screening using disinfectant wipes or a spray.
  - service processes for when a child has a temperature of 37.5º or above on screening.

**Cleaning and storage of thermometers**

- Services should ensure that devices are cleaned and disinfected at the completion of the day’s screening using disinfectant wipes or spray. Services are encouraged to ensure an infrared thermometer is available to temperature screen any child who arrives throughout the day.

**Management of children who record high temperatures**

Children or other individuals who are unwell, even in the absence of a fever, should stay home. *Temperature thresholds and required actions*

- A fever will be classified as temperature reading at or above 37.5º Celsius\(^1\), with the following thresholds and required actions outlined below.

- Screening should take place with parent/carer present on arrival. Any child with a second reading equal to or greater than 37.5º Celsius should return home with parent/carer.

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\(^1\) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature reading</th>
<th>Required action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 37.5º</td>
<td>Child able to attend service.</td>
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| Equal to or greater than 37.5º on first reading | The child should be asked to wait in a separate room and have their temperature re-checked in 15 minutes.  
If the child is wearing outerwear, the educator should suggest the child remove this once they are indoors. |
| Equal to or greater than 37.5º on second reading | The child should return home with their parent/carer. 
If their parent/carer is not present, the child will need to be isolated and the parent/carer contacted to collect them from the service as soon as possible. 
Families should be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps and coronavirus (COVID-19) testing. |

For further information, including arrival and departure and processes to manage a child with a fever, view the [health and safety advice](#) developed with the Department of Health and Human Services.