

Early Years Services – QA3.5 Water Safety

TRIM Reference: D15/38683 Due for Review: 4 January 2026
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to keep children safe in and around water and support children's learning in a safe environment. Children's safety and wellbeing will be protected at all times when around water or engaged in water play activities through supervision and education.

According to Kidsafe (the recognised authority on the prevention of injuries in children), drowning continues to be one of the main causes of fatalities of Australian children. Every year a number of children are killed and hundreds more are rescued from near drowning situations. Non-fatal drowning incidents are also of great concern as they can have potential long-term effects, including brain damage and permanent disability.

The most common factor in childhood drowning is lack of supervision. A child can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water. Items such as nappy buckets, sinks, pet drinking bowls, ponds, pools, water features and water tanks are potential drowning hazards.

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards: 2.1.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 7.3.5,
Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Regulations: 168 (2) (a) (iii), 26 (1), 116
Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020

Scope

All Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services staff, students, volunteers and children accessing the Early Years Services.

Policy

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services are committed to ensuring the protection and safety of children at all times, especially when around water or engaged in water play activities.

Water-based play is an important part of our children's healthy growth, learning, wellbeing and development. Our educators and other staff ensure that all precautions are employed to safeguard children during these experiences.

Risk Assessment

General Risk Assessment is conducted to ensure every reasonable precaution is taken.

Excursion Risk Assessment

Every reasonable effort is taken to minimise risks in relation to water hazards and risks related to water based activities (where applicable) on excursions. Risk management must occur before the excursion takes place. It is also important to recognise potential water hazards and to take action to eliminate or control the hazards. A visit in advance to the proposed excursion destination is required in conducting and recording the risk assessment. Information to be gathered regarding the suitability of the excursion site in relation to water hazards/water based activities is to include: age appropriateness and safety of the location, supervision requirements/possible issues and planning for this, other people attending venue and planning for any required emergency responses.

Supervision

No child is to be left unsupervised at any time whilst around water hazards, involved in water based activities, or water play activities.

Water Play

- Water play activities may be included in education and care programs provided by Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services. When water play activities are planned, teachers, educators and staff will consider the developmental levels and individual needs/provisions of the children in the program and as a result of these considerations will ensure constant supervision is in place to ensure the safety of all children.
- Water play troughs, buckets and other water containers will be emptied after every use, and stored to prevent the collection of water when not in use.
- Any ponds or areas of open water in children's play areas must be fitted with a childproof cover.

Water Hazards

- Given the increased risk of injury posed by water hazards, children are to be visually supervised at all times by staff/educators.
- To reduce the incidents of falls from water/other fluid spills, all spills are mopped up as they occur.

Definitions

Risk assessment

A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

Adequate supervision

- an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation
- knowing where children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently.

Water hazard

Any water body that poses a potential drowning risk to children and could include:

- large bodies of water, such as rivers, creeks, dams, ponds, swimming pools, jetted bathtubs (or jacuzzis), in-ground spas, above ground portable spas (or hot tubs) or any container with poor drainage that allows water to pool
- smaller bodies of water, such as baths, nappy buckets and pet water containers.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

D15/33004	Early Years Supervision of Children Policy
D14/70705	Early Years Excursions Policy
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D14/87971	Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan
D17/23578	Kindergarten Regular Outing Form
D19/24712	Kindergarten Excursion Authority Form
D24/86382	Kindergarten – Excursion Parent Permission Form – combined all families
D21/221509	Bush Kinder Regular Excursion Authority Form

Other References

Kidsafe Victoria Water Safety Fact Sheet
 Victorian Pool Fencing Laws
 Education and Care Services National Law 2010
 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
 ACECQA National; Quality Framework Resource Kit

Document History

Approval Date	01/04/2014	General Manager Culture and Community
Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Aged and Family 1 April 2015
2	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Aged and Family 8 June 2017
3	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 6 December 2018
4	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 15 May 2020
5	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 31 August 2021
6	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 7 March 2023
7	<i>Amended</i>	Manager Community Strengthening 4 July 2024