

Coronavirus (COVID-19) information for educators and staff

How you can support children

Children in your service will most likely have knowledge of coronavirus (COVID-19) and will have seen and heard conversations and news footage. It is perfectly normal for children to have questions about events that are covered in the media. Children look to the significant adults in their lives for guidance on how to manage their reactions.

You can help children by remaining calm, maintaining currency with the facts and through providing reassurance that the situation is being handled appropriately.

There is a common misunderstanding that talking with children about a topic such as coronavirus may increase their anxiety. This is not the case. Educators play an important role in listening to children and answering their questions as honestly as possible. You should also act sensitively to correct any misunderstandings. This will help children feel informed and understand what is happening.

For OSHC services, older children may be accessing information on social media. It can be helpful to get them to find facts and talk about how misinformation can lead to confusion.

You should ensure that you are up to date with the facts from reliable sources as this will help keep conversations calm, considered, and constructive. Provide facts in words that are appropriate to the age of the children.

Children can become distressed when another child is away, believing that they may have contracted the virus. You can explain that others may be absent for a number of reasons, including just wanting to take extra precautions during this time. This can help to reassure children.

It is important to remain vigilant for any signs of children being ostracised or bullied. Children may be particularly vulnerable when returning to the service after an absence.

Some practical advice

During this time, practical measures can be undertaken to minimise risks to children and educators.

For example, you can display posters and other visual aids depicting good hygiene. You can also remind children to:

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- [Wash their hands](#) frequently with soap and water – before and after eating and after going to the toilet. For younger children you may need to explicitly teach what good handwashing looks like and make time in the day to do this prior to food breaks.
- Cover their nose and mouth when they cough or sneeze (coughing into their elbow is a useful strategy).
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth before washing their hand.

These are easy habits for children to adopt, and should help them feel as though they are able to exert some control over their circumstances.

As always, children or staff who are unwell and reasonably suspected to have a communicable disease should be excluded from your service until they are cleared by a doctor to return. Ensure the child is not ostracised when they return.

You should notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) and your local Public Health Unit (1300 066 055) if children or staff have been excluded and/or are reasonably suspected to have a communicable disease.

Communication is important

- Check the Department's ECEDUpdate emails for current information.
- Read any information and resources distributed to providers and services.
- See our [FAQs - COVID-19](#).

Where to get help

- See our key phone and web [contact list](#).
- Call the National Coronavirus Health Information line (1800 020 080).
- Review the [NSW Health](#) coronavirus website for the latest information and advice.

If you are personally concerned and would like additional support, you can contact:

- Early Childhood Education Directorate - 1800 619 113 or ececd@det.nsw.edu.au
- Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636
- Lifeline – 13 11 14