

Considerations for operating single educator model services in Out of School Hours Care

In addition to all requirements under the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations, the following considerations must be addressed when operating a service using only one educator with children.

Safety/Child Protection

- How will all children in care be supervised when the educator is caring for an unwell or injured child?
- What procedures will be in place to support the educator and children if the educator becomes unwell, is injured, or requires medical assistance?

There must be an alternate contact person within a reasonable distance of the venue who is able to respond immediately to an emergency and who is willing to have their contact number clearly displayed at the service (e.g. local area manager). The approved provider must ensure the alternate contact person notifies the educator of any changes to their contact details and availability and a replacement sourced.

In a medical, fire or security emergency, the educator must follow the service's emergency procedures and immediately contact the alternate contact person to assist.

Educators working alone must have immediate access to an operating telephone at all times.

A mobile phone must be available for use by the educator and children when outside or on an excursion, to ensure immediate communication to and from parents/carers and emergency services.

All telephones used at the service must be pre-programmed with emergency numbers identified clearly on the phone so that children can call for assistance should the educator be incapable of seeking assistance. The educator must explain this process to children so that they know how to seek assistance if the educator is unable to do so.

- Services must have policies and procedures relating to providing a child safe environment. Do the policies and procedures specifically acknowledge the potential risks that accompany a single educator model?
- Any single educator (or casual/relief educator) who is working with children must understand the current child protection law, how it applies at the service, and their obligations under that law. Matters in relation to child protection, including child safety and child abuse must be addressed within the service's risk assessment and child safe environment policy.
- Has a risk assessment been undertaken to identify the potential risks with operating a single educator model? How does the risk assessment identify strategies to mitigate these risks? Do they cover the following?
 - A supervision plan for children participating in different activities. This should include how the premises are designed to facilitate supervision (regulation 115).
 - A supervision procedure for times when the educator uses the bathroom or takes any breaks they are entitled to.
 - A procedure for managing toileting arrangements for children (including when bathrooms are used by both adults and children), such as children notifying the educator before moving to and from the bathroom, children moving in pairs, etc.
 - First aid management (ensuring adequate supervision) and contact numbers, for use if a child or educator has a medical episode, illness or serious injury.
 - The educator performing other duties e.g. taking phone calls, talking to parents (always in full sight of the children and ensuring supervision is adequate).
 - The educator managing a child who exhibits aggressive and/or challenging behaviour that places themselves or others at risk.
 - Additional children arriving at the service for care without notice/enrolment (on-call staff member being in close proximity).

The service's policies and procedures must support consistent, high quality practice, and incorporate feedback and expert guidance identified through the service's risk management and quality improvement systems.

Physical premises

- Do the physical premises contribute to a safe environment?

OSHC services should be located centrally on site and close to car parking facilities wherever possible.

An allocated OSHC parking space should be clearly identified for single staffed services or procedures in place where educators can move their car closer to the OSHC facility once school has finished.

- The National Quality Standard and National Regulations specify that premises, furniture and equipment must be safe, clean and in good repair (regulation 103 and Standard 3.2). Specific aspects that could be considered for single staff models include:
 - Security and sensor lighting being installed around OSHC facilities, toilets, car parks and thoroughfares between them.
 - Trees and bushes being trimmed around OSHC facilities, toilets, car parks and thoroughfares between them.

Staffing

- How are staffing issues addressed through alternate staff members and 'on call' assistance? What support will be provided to the single educator at the service?

For services that operate a single educator model, regular check-ins (date and time recorded) between area management/nearby services must occur with the service.

There should be an identified pool of alternate, relief staff who 'on call' and are able to assist and support the single educator, either in emergency situations, if the educator has an illness, or is delayed.

Educators working alone in after school care or vacation care service should only leave the site when the last adult and child/ren sign out for the day.

Any single educator (or casual/relief educator) who is working with children must have a current approved first aid qualification, have undertaken current approved anaphylaxis training and have undertaken current approved emergency asthma management training.

Educator: child ratios

- The legislated educator to child ratio of 1 educator to 15 children must be met. What are the contingencies if more than 15 children arrive at the service?