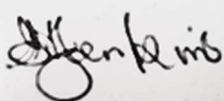


Date approved	27/3/23
Previous titles	N/A
Previous versions	N/A

Signature by Management representative	
	Chairperson, Suzanne Jenkins



## CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES: PLAYGROUP POLICY

### Internal ECS References

<i>In S:\0 CURRENT POLICY &amp; PROCEDURES:</i>	<i>In S:\1 CURRENT FORMS:</i>
<i>Complaints Policy</i>	<i>Playgroup Rules</i>
<i>Duty of Care Policy</i>	<i>Playgroup Client Information Form</i>
<i>WHS Policy</i>	<i>ECS Schedule of Fees</i>
<i>Bullying &amp; Harassment Policy</i>	
<i>Financial Management Policy</i>	<i>S:\0 current data base</i>

### External References

<i>Child Safe Standards at <a href="https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/resources">https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/resources</a></i>	<i>Data Exchange Protocols Manual at <a href="https://dex.dss.gov.au/">https://dex.dss.gov.au/</a></i>
	<i>Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988</i>

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**1. POLICY STATEMENT**

Playgroups provide opportunities for children to learn and develop through play. Adult coordinators set up a range of play activities each week to advance early learning and meet the varying developmental needs of the children. Activities range from music and singing, imaginative outdoor play and free play, art and craft, outings and cultural activities.

ECS is ideally placed to meet the community playgroup aims of:

- broad, universal self-managed peer support in a safe, secure community centre with exclusive use of a separate carpeted room with closed fire doors
- an opportunity for children to socialise and learn through play, and to develop their social, emotional and physical skills
- an opportunity for parents and carers to develop social and support networks with spaces for adult conversations, including a child-proof kitchenette.

**1.1 Definitions**

Client = term used across ECS programs and policy documents to describe the individual who uses ECS services

Community Playgroup = adult coordinators are volunteer parents, who attend and benefit as members

Supported Playgroup = adult coordinators are ECS workers, who devise the program and attend to provide service

**1.2 Acronyms**

ECS = Engadine Community Services

DEX = Data Exchange [Australian Department of Social Services]

TEI = NSW Targeted Earlier Intervention Program [NSW Department of Communities & Justice]

**2. GENERAL POLICY**

ECS currently provides facilities for four community playgroups:

- Grandparents Playgroup
- General Playgroup
- Czech and Slovakian Playgroup

Due to funding limitations, ECS playgroups are only supported by volunteers [sometimes students on a placement with ECS], who assist with set-up, including occasional craft activities, under the direction of ECS Building Communities Coordinator.

**3. PROMOTING THE PLAYGROUPS**

There is an ongoing need to promote ECS playgroups as children age and go to school, and as new families are seeking resources for their babies and toddlers. Current promotion strategies include:

- provision of information on the ECS website, including forms, flyers and a weekly calendar
- use of a Facebook specifically for ECS Playgroup members to share resources and used as a reminder the day before Playgroup is on
- provision of information to funded newsletters
- participation in local interagency meetings, at relevant public events and expos
- occasional dissemination of flyers to maternity and paediatric units in local hospitals.

In addition to playgroups, ECS provides a Toy Library for preschool aged children. Given the target group is the same, there are often opportunities to promote both services simultaneously.

**4. PLAYGROUP FEES**

The playgroups provided by ECS are community playgroups that are run by local parents on a voluntary basis. Fees are therefore necessary, but minimal, to help cover the costs of maintenance of the building, toys etc. They do not cover costs of drinks and food for playgroup members.

Each member pays a fee for each session they attend [per *ECS Schedule of Fees*] at the time they sign in. To make payment more convenient for both members and ECS, there also a ten visit pass which each member can purchase via electronic funds transfer. The sign-in sheet will be used as a record of attendance.

## **5. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **5.1 ECS Workers**

ECS has volunteers who assist the Building Communities Coordinator with the playgroups. The following responsibilities may be delegated to several Reception Volunteers, students on placement or to a designated Playgroup Volunteer:

**Promotion of playgroups** per 3. [above], including:

- promote the playgroups in the broader community
- remind current members via Facebook the day before of upcoming playgroup sessions

**Setting up each playgroup session** at least 30 minutes before commencement of playgroup to ensure playgroup is ready when parents arrive:

1. Inspect the outdoor area to make sure it is safe eg. check for spiders, remove any litter
2. Turn on air conditioner in meeting room
3. Check that inside area is clean, and vacuum if necessary
4. Check that bins have been emptied
5. Set tables and get out toys by 'station' eg. craft station (always drawing and often another activity, like playdough), baby station (a floor mat and musical instruments) and Lego or stacking blocks
6. Large toys to be put out are dolls house, pram and farmyard toy

**Programming of play and developing new ideas**, including:

- ensure there is variety of play each session by planning to change the toys available for play
- develop a 'play box' to occupy toddler while mother is breastfeeding

### **5.2 Playgroup Members**

These are the basis of *Playgroup Rules*:

- Help make new families feel welcomed and included and help them settle their child into playgroup.
- Consider the health and safety of other children in the group. Do not attend if ill/contagious.
- When changing nappies use the baby change table and nappy disposal bin appropriately and clean and sanitise equipment after use, and wash your hands thoroughly.
- Supervise your child/children at playgroup to ensure their wellbeing and safety. A parent/carer must remain in close proximity, not just in their line of sight.
- Children are not permitted in the storeroom.
- If you are breastfeeding, use the private, comfortable area that has been set aside for this purpose.
- If you are having a hot drink, ensure it is in a safe, insulated and securely lidded container, or only have in the office kitchen area where children are not allowed. If you put your drink down, put it on a high surface out of reach of children.
- Use respectful language at playgroup and refrain from using swearing and offensive language, even when talking with another adult.
- Be watchful of children's behaviour to avoid conflicts and injuries. If you notice behaviours of concern you may have a quiet word with the parent/carer in a non-judgemental, supportive manner.
- Never strike a child or children in your care, and never attempt to discipline someone else's child at playgroup.
- Help out and share the workload. This can include offering to make playdough for a session, and in particular, all members must help with packing and cleaning up at the end of the playgroup session, as the room is used by other groups.

**NOTE: ECS staff have received training in Child Protection and can assist you with practical support and information on a range of complex issues. If you need help, or see or hear something that causes you to worry about someone else in playgroup, please talk to the Manager or Coordinator.**

Read more in our *Duty of Care Policy* at <https://www.ecs.org.au/policies>

## 6. MONITORING & EVALUATION

### 6.1 Data Exchange (DEX) Requirements

The Data Exchange (DEX) is the program performance reporting tool developed by the Department of Social Services (DSS). NSW Targeted Earlier Intervention Program (TEI) funded organisations, including ECS, must report their service delivery information and demonstrate the outcomes they are achieving for their clients. Data requirements are divided into two parts: a small set of quantity requirements that all service providers must report, and a data set that service providers can choose how to evaluate quality of outcomes for individuals, known as the Partnership Approach.

The DEX performance reporting period each year runs from 1 July to 30 June. Service providers can enter data at any time within a reporting period; ECS tries to enter data from group attendance sheets at the end of each month. The ECS Building Communities Coordinator is responsible for DEX reporting, also using information in the *Playgroup Client Information Form*.

Playgroup members benefit from participation in monitoring and evaluation for the Partnership Approach, as it helps identify need for services and helps improve existing services. Where possible, ECS will survey members at least twice a year via an online survey that can be accessed by a QR code.

### 6.2 Client Privacy & Consent for Data Collection & Reporting Purposes

ECS has a responsibility to all its clients to maintain privacy and confidentiality as per the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988*, the ECS **Privacy Policy** and **Aged Services: Rights and Responsibilities of Clients Policy**. ECS also has an obligation to collect data and report through DEX. Therefore, all ECS clients must be informed when they are approved for ECS supports that:

- a) the Data Exchange is an IT system that is hosted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services; and
- b) the Department will collect the client's personal information from ECS for storage on the Data Exchange because ECS is using the Data Exchange as a client management system; and
- c) the Department de-identifies and aggregates data that is stored on the Data Exchange to produce information for policy development, grants program administration, and research and evaluation purposes, and that this information will not include information that identifies the client, or information that can be used to re-identify the client, in any way

The requirement for DEX is acknowledged on the *Playgroup Client Information Form*.