

February 2022 Educator Newsletter

Play sessions and excursions

As our play sessions and excursions unfortunately came to a halt last year with Omicron and lockdowns, we are hoping to get organised this year with frequent play sessions for our Educators and children. We have attended an information night at NERAM Art Museum and their program for Early Childhood looks promising for 2022. Our regular play sessions partner, Community Pre-School has stated they cannot commit to a year of play sessions with AFDC in 2022, due to the ongoing COVID battle. Since our previous excursions to the Arboretum and Curtis Park Armidale have been successful, we are thinking we can regularly meet at these locations for Play Session.



For our Educators in Guyra, Walcha and Uralla, we are hoping you may be able to travel to our Play Sessions in Armidale, although we understand that travel can be an issue and that families may not provide permission for their children to be transported. We encourage our Educators in outlying towns to meet up for regular play groups with your peers. NERAM is offering a number of travelling excursions we hope to be able to offer you, including the postponed "Art in a Suitcase".

As we commence planning excursions and outings, we remind all Educators to have your child seat restraints checked to ensure they are fitted appropriately. Remember that all restraints must be checked within a 12 month period.

Now is also a good time to ensure that all families provide sign new regular excursion permission forms and that you update your regular excursion risk assessments.

Website updates

We are in the process of updating our Armidale and District Family Day Care website and our Educator display in our office. We ask that Educators send us an updated photo of themselves, that we can display in our office as well as on our new website! In order to demonstrate our team to families and our community, we hope to upload a small picture of each educator with a little "about me" blurb, so we can show off our amazing team of Educators. Please email this to us at admin@afdc.org.au when you have it!



Emergency Evacuations and Lockdowns



We are attaching, word for word, (*Division 5: National Regulations 97: Emergency and evacuation procedures*), to highlight the importance of our compliance with this regulatory requirement:

(ab) in the case of a family day care service, the emergency and evacuation procedures are rehearsed every 3 months by each family day care educator and the children being educated and cared for by the family day care educator on that day; and (b) the rehearsals of the emergency and evacuation procedures are documented.

Regulation states, Division 5: 97 (2) For the purposes of preparing the emergency and evacuation procedures, the approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that a risk assessment is conducted to identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the service.

Given the requirement for Emergency Evacuations and Lockdowns to be conducted every 3 months, the Board has approved a new way of carrying out these rehearsals.

From the beginning of March, we will be implementing a specific scenario for Educators to practice their lockdown and evacuations with said scenarios in mind. We believe this will prepare children and educators for any emergency that will be specific to their service.

The Coordination Unit will send a risk assessment to Educators as an attachment, with the scenario, to rehearse to complete when the emergency rehearsal is undertaken. Educators should complete the risk assessment with hazards identified to their individual Family Day Care service.

Safe Sleeping Procedures

We have started to receive some Educators Safe Sleep Procedures and answers to our Questionnaire! Thank you to all those Educators for your prompt response. To ensure it is clear, Educators are to answer the Questionnaire with their individual services practices in mind.

Then type out your answers on a separate document titled "Safe Sleep Procedure" with your service name included. The Questionnaire is a guide to ensure your answers cover the ECEC guidelines and our AFDC safe sleep procedure. As your aware this has been a topic of discussion since August 2021 and the Questionnaire needs to be complete as soon as possible; if you need help or time to complete your procedure your visiting coordinator will be happy to assist you, or cover you in work hours. Just ask us as we conduct a visit!



Mini Conference for March

We are very keen to host an Educator Mini Conference in March 2022. We would love to hear Educators' feedback on last year's mini conference and what your interests are for this year's professional development.

So, can we please have an email from Educators with:

- A recent photo,
- An "about me" for the website and our office, and
- The topics you would like us to focus on at the Mini Conference, as well as your other professional development goals for 2022.

Remember coordinators offer up to 4 hours flexi time covered for you to engage in professional development each year as well as a \$50 voucher for Educators professional development!

Attendance Records and Family E Signatures

This is an urgent plea for Educators to ensure that families sign children in and out daily, and that families are sent an email requesting them to verify their weekly attendance as soon as their care week has finished.

Our team is often struggling to contact families who have not verified Attendance Records (*I would prefer not to be completing Attendance record submission at 8 pm again. P*), and families have been advised in a separate Newsletter that it is their responsibility to fulfill this requirement as part of their registration with our service.

Changes to the team



We are starting 2022 with a full team in the Coordination Unit, and I am sure you will have all now met both Lois and Sharon. Lois is employed as Coordinator for 30 hours per week and is also available to assist Educators with professional support. Sharon Conroy's main role in the Company is that of Nominated Supervisor of Armidale Out of School Hours Care and she is now working with Family Day Care as Educational Leader for 6 hours per week.

The office will continue to operate from Monday to Thursday from 8.30 to 4.30; we offer 24 hour emergency telephone support. However, if your concerns are related to Enrolments or Attendance records, we may respond to your issue during business hours.

Rapid Antigen Testing Requirements

AFDC has been given a supply of RATs to allow staff to and Educators to take a rapid antigen test twice a week before providing care, as recommended, should they choose to do so. **Participation in the surveillance testing is optional**

At this stage AFDC is not requiring Educators and children to participate in the surveillance testing requirements. Should you choose to do so as Educators, please let us know and we will endeavour to provide you with adequate RAT kits. You will need to collect them from the office, or wait for them to be delivered during a home visit.

We advise that you should continue to monitor for symptoms and use a test if you experience symptoms or are a close contact.

QR Coding It is a requirement in AFDC that all families QR Code into the care environment when delivering and collecting children. Educators should also encourage families to deliver and collect children from the entry to the service.

I am sure that Educators do not need to be reminded that they should not accept unwell children into care. This has always been a service requirement, based on pre-existing Dept. of Health requirements; it is now more important than ever.



Testing of Fire Safety Equipment

Lois has contacted Armidale Fire & Safety. Their officers have said they are very happy to check your equipment within your service. They can be contacted on 6772 5020. We have details of their costs in the office.

Educators Closing their Services

Please let us know when you are closing your service; a simple text message will mean that we are not impinging on your privacy with an unannounced visit.

Thank you all for the wonderful work that you do;

Charlie, Lois & Patricia