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Version 1.1

ABSCONDED, ABSENT AND MISSING CHILD POLICY

Happy Haven OSHC service's aim to ensure the safety and welfare of all children attending by ensuring clear processes, communication and cooperation between the service, families and the school community.

Happy Haven OSHC has a duty of care to all children attending our services. While we recognise the potential harm to fall upon a child who leaves supervised areas without permission, measures will be taken to first ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children attending the service, and then to the children who are deemed missing.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
12	Meaning of a serious incident
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

PURPOSE

Happy Haven OSHC educators have a responsibility to ensure that all children are accounted for at all times while the child attends the service. It is critical that all educators are aware of the whereabouts of each child and follow correct procedures when a child's location cannot be accounted for.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person, educators of Happy Haven OSHC services.

IMPLEMENTATION

For absconded, absent, and missing children, educators at Happy Haven OSHC services will follow all steps and guidance outlined in our *Absconded Child Procedure*, *Absent Child Procedure and Missing Child Procedure*.

ABSENT CHILDREN (WITHOUT NOTIFICATION)

If a child is booked in for an After School Care session but does not arrive during the roll call period, the Responsible Person will follow Happy Haven OSHC policy and procedures to ensure the location of all booked children is known.

- Families must advise Happy Haven OSHC as early as possible of their child/children's absence from a booked OSHC session
- If a child is collected from the school early due to illness or other reasons the parent must notify the service, using the delegated service's phone number, or the Happy Haven OSHC Head Office Line.

- If a child does not arrive at the Happy Haven OSHC service at the expected time the Responsible Person will:
    - Enquire with educators working at the service if the child has been seen, and to check all areas of the service for their presence
    - Conduct a lockdown at the service and headcount/recheck roll
    - Ring the child's carer/guardian to enquire if they know of their child's whereabouts
    - If carers/guardians believe the child should be at school, educators will search the school classrooms and premises with the assistance and permission of classroom teachers and any available authorised persons
    - Ask the child's teacher and/or office staff if they know of the child's whereabouts and if they were present at school that day
    - If the child cannot be found during this search, the child must be considered missing (See: *MISSING CHILDREN (AT THE HAPPY HAVEN OSHC SERVICE)*.
    - If the primary contacts have been contacted and the child is subsequently found, the Responsible Person must immediately contact the primary contacts to let them know. This information must be also shared with those who may have assisted in locating the child.
    - Submit an Incident Report through the SharePoint form so Head Office can notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of a serious incident as per required in the National Regulations
    - Any updates regarding the child's location are to be notified to any parties involved in the process (i.e. Police, family of child, Service Support line)
    - The family account will be liable for an additional fee (Not Notified Fee) when they fail to notify the service of their child's absence prior to the beginning of the session

ABSCONDING CHILDREN

If a child becomes distressed, or emotionally dysregulated, this can result in the child absconding from the OSHC service and/or school grounds. If a child absconds during a session the Responsible Person will:

- Ensure that adequate supervision is in place for all children at the service
- Ensure that educator:child ratio requirements are met prior to following the absconding child

- If ratio cannot be met, the Responsible Person will take note of the direction the child has absconded, and the child will be deemed missing (see: MISSING CHILD (AT THE HAPPY HAVEN OSHC SERVICE)
- If ratio requirements can be met, the Responsible Person will nominate an educator/or themselves to supervise the child from a distance, attempt to co-regulate with the child, and use any strategies available to bring the child safely back to the OSHC space. If the child absconds from school grounds, the educator or Responsible Person will take note of the direction the child absconded to and the child will be deemed missing (see: MISSING CHILD (AT THE HAPPY HAVEN OSHC SERVICE)

- Contact the family of the child to inform them of the situation and ask for the child to be collected as a matter of priority
- Contact the Service Support line (option 1: Professional Development & Incident Reporting) to seek further advice and support, and begin the reporting process
- Submit an Incident Report through the SharePoint form so Head Office can notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of a serious incident as per required in the National Regulations
- Any updates regarding the child's location are to be notified to any parties involved in the process

  (i.e. Police, family of child, Service Support line, Relationship Manager)

MISSING CHILDREN (AT THE HAPPY HAVEN OSHC SERVICE)

If a child is considered missing the Service Leader/Responsible Person will:

- Contact the police by dialling **131 444**
- Contact the child's family to update them on the situation
- Contact the Service Support line and select option 1 (Professional Development and Incident Reporting line) to inform them of steps taken and begin the reporting process
- Contact the school to inform them of the missing child
- Ensure that other children at the service remain appropriately supervised
- Submit an Incident Report through the SharePoint form so Head Office can notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of a serious incident as per required in the National Regulations
- Any updates regarding the child's location are to be notified to any parties involved in the process (i.e. Police, family of child, Serious Incidents line)

MISSING CHILDREN (EXCURSIONS)

During periods of Vacation Care, policies and procedures will be followed as per *Arrival and Departure Policy*.

If a child is identified as being missing during an excursion, the Responsible Person will:

- Enquire with all educators working as to the last known whereabouts of the child
- Conduct a headcount and ensure all other children remain adequately supervised
- Inform the venue staff of the situation and conduct a thorough search of the premises
- If the child is unable to be located the Police must be called and a missing child report completed
- The family of the child must be contacted to inform them of the situation
- A phone call is to be made to the Service Support Line (option 1: Professional Development & Incident Reporting) for further support
- Submit an Incident Report through the SharePoint form so Head Office can notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of a serious incident as per required in the National Regulations
- Any updates regarding the child's location is to be notified to any parties involved in the process (i.e. Police, family of child, Serious Incidents and Behaviour Support line)

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Education. *My Time, Our Place. Framework for School Aged Care in Australia*. (2011).

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).

Education and Care Services National Regulations.. (2011)

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020).

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	MAY 2022	NEXT REVIEW DATE	MAY 2023
MODIFICATIONS	New policy using childcare desktop template, HH archive policy and new formatting		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
July 2025	• Updated old terms and language. Revised responsibilities of notification to the Regulatory Authority. Removed related policies section.		July 2026
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