

	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Interactions with Children Policy and Procedure</h2>
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Authorisation	Director City Life
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Responsible Officer	Manager Families and Children
Policy Owner	Early Childhood Coordinator

1. Purpose

Melton City Council is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service
- promoting fairness respect and equity
- encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions, and to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- considering the health, safety and wellbeing of each child, and providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which they can develop and learn
- maintaining a Duty of Care towards all children at the service
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family and cultural values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- building collaborative relationships with families to improve learning and developmental outcomes for children
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children and educators/staff at the service.
- the development of positive and respectful relationships with each child at Melton City Council children's services
- supporting each child at Melton City Council children's services to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

1.1. This policy has been adapted from *PolicyWorks* Manual - National Quality Framework released by the Early Learning Association Australia.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to services responsible for the direct education and care of children, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, Nominees, Certified Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Melton City Council children's services.

3. Background and Legislation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, wealth, birth status or ability. When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respectful. Relationships are the foundation for the construction of identity, and help shape children's thinking about who they are, how they belong and what

influences them (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 20; Framework for School Age Care, p. 19, and the Guide to National Quality Framework – refer to Sources)

Child Safe Standard 7 requires services to have strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children. When children feel respected and valued, they are much more likely to speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing. Enabling and promoting the participation of children within a service has multiple benefits in addition to enhancing the safety of children, including demonstrating a commitment to upholding the rights of children, checking that what the service is doing is what children want and building the communication and leadership skills of children.

4. Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and related procedures. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *Glossary of Terms*.

Word/Term	Definition
Adequate Supervision	<p>(In relation to this policy) Supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from Hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.</p> <p>Adequate Supervision refers to constant, active and diligent Supervision of every child at the service. Adequate Supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe and/or hear each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary.</p> <p>Variables affecting Supervision levels include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number, age and abilities of children • number and positioning of educators • current activity of each child • areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility) • developmental profile of each child and of the group of children • experience, knowledge and skill of each educator • need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).
Behaviour Guidance	<p>A means of assisting children to self-regulate their behaviour. It differs from traditional 'behaviour management' or 'discipline' which generally implies that an adult is 'managing' children's behaviour or using punishment to control children. Behaviour Guidance applies to all forms of behaviour, not just behaviours labeled as 'negative'.</p>
Behaviour Guidance Plan	<p>A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with behavioural difficulties to self-regulate their behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professional support agencies as applicable. Children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties are a priority for a written plan, however this is also a tool for all children, regardless of a diagnosis, to support with strategies in learning about behaviour and inclusion into the programs.</p>
Challenging Behaviour	<p>Behaviour that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disrupts others or causes disputes between children, but which is part of normal social development

Word/Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infringes on the rights of others • causes harm or risk to the child, other children, adults or living things • is destructive to the environment and/or equipment • inhibits the child's learning and relationship with others • is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.
Duty of Care	A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury.
Notifiable Complaint	<p>A Complaint that alleges a breach of the Act or Regulation, or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised.</p> <p>Any Complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider (Manager) and to the Department of Education & Training (DET) within 24 hours of the Complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b), National Regulations).</p> <p>If the Approved Provider is unsure whether the matter is a Notifiable Complaint, it is good practice to contact DET for confirmation.</p> <p>Written reports to DET must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of the event or incident • the name of the person who initially made the Complaint • if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant) • any other relevant information.
Serious Incident	<p>An Incident resulting in the death of a child, or an Injury, Trauma or illness for which the attention of a registered medical practitioner, emergency services or hospital is sought or should have been sought. This also includes an Incident in which a child appears to be missing, cannot be accounted for, is removed from the service in contravention of the Regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the service premises (National Regulations 12).</p> <p>A Serious Incident should be documented in an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record (sample form available on the (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority) ACECQA website – refer to Sources) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the Incident. The Regulatory Authority (DET) must be notified within 24 hours of a Serious Incident occurring at the service (National Regulations 176). Records are required to be retained for the periods specified in the National Regulations 183.</p>
Supervision	Refer to Adequate Supervision (see <i>Definition</i>).
Inclusion Support	Funded by the Commonwealth Government to assists services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs in mainstream services; providing them with an opportunity to learn and develop alongside their typically developing peers.
Mental Health	a child's ability to 'experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children. Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development

5. Responsibility/Accountability

5.1. The Approved Provider, according to Regulations is responsible for the implementation of this policy. This will be achieved through the Leadership Group and their service staff:

- developing and implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy and Procedure* in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, Nominees, educators, staff and parents/guardians, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service
- parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and all staff are provided with access to this policy and comply with its requirements
- the Nominated Supervisor, educators and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families
- children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times
- the size and composition of groups is considered to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service (National Regulation 156(2))
- educational programs are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child
- the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators (National Regulation 73)
- that the service provides education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for (National Regulation 155)
- That the service provides children with the opportunity to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service (Regulation 156(1))
- clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's:
 - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
- progress against the outcomes of the educational program (National Regulation 74)
- supporting educators/staff to gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy, including promoting social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing
- ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children and promotes the active participation of every child
- that the Nominated Supervisor, educators and all staff members at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances (National Law Section 166)

- promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and educators, staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences
- referring Notifiable Complaints, grievances or complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner to the General Manager, Community Services
- informing DET, in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a Notifiable Complaint (Section 174(4), National Regulation 176(2)(b))
- notifying DET, in writing, within 24 hours of a Serious Incident occurring at the service (Section 174(4), National Regulation 176(2)(b))
- that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to regulate their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- that individual Behaviour Guidance Plans are developed for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, Nominees, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies
- ensure that parents/guardians and other professionals and support agencies (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour
- consulting with, and seeking advice from, DET if a suitable and mutually agreeable behaviour guidance plan cannot be developed
- developing links with and referral pathways to services and/or professionals to support children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families
- ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan
- ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of a child/children with challenging behaviour
- maintaining confidentiality at all times.

5.2. The Nominated Supervisor / Primary Nominee is responsible for:

- implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy and Procedure* at the service
- ensuring educators, staff and parents/guardians are provided with access to this policy and comply with its requirements
- ensuring all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families
- ensuring children have Adequate Supervision, that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times and the environment is safe, secure and free from hazards
- considering the size and composition of groups when planning program timetables to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service. Smaller group sizes are considered optimal
- developing and implementing educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child

- ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators
- ensuring that the service provides education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for
- ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's:
 - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
- progress against the outcomes of the educational program (National Regulation 74)
- organising appropriate training for educators/staff to assist with the implementation of this policy
- ensuring educators and all staff members at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances (National Law Section 166)
- ensuring that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents/guardians to share information about children's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships
- informing the Approved Provider of any Notifiable Complaints or Serious Incidents at the service
- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring educators/staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to regulate their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- ensuring that individual Behaviour Guidance Plans are developed for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, in consultation with educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies
- supporting educators by assessing skills and identifying additional training needs in the area of behaviour guidance
- investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support or training, specialist children's services officers from DET or other agencies working with the child
- setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour guidance plan.
- providing information, ideas and practical strategies to families, educators and staff on a regular basis to promote and support health and wellbeing in the service and at home
- cooperating with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required
- maintaining confidentiality at all times

5.3. Certified Supervisors and other educators are responsible for:

- assisting with the development and implementation of this policy, in consultation with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, parents/guardians and families
- providing parents/guardians and families with access to this policy
- complying with the requirements of this policy and procedure
- being aware of service expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families
- providing Adequate Supervision of children at all times
- communicating and working collaboratively with parents/guardians and families in relation to their child's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships
- delivering educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child
- delivering programs that develop a sense of wellbeing and identity, connection to community, and provide skills for lifelong learning in all children
- providing education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for
- developing warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
- supporting each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others
- using positive and respectful strategies to assist children to regulate their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- developing individual Behaviour Guidance Plans for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, in consultation with parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies
- implementing a behaviour guidance plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into the service program
- undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour
- maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with parents/guardians
- providing regular progress reports to the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor on the implementation and effectiveness of the agreed strategies contained in an individual behaviour guidance plan
- documenting assessments and evaluations for each child to inform the educational program (Regulation 74)

- being aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances
- maintaining confidentiality at all times.

5.4. Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with the *Interactions with Children Policy and Procedure*
- engaging in open communication with educators about their child
- informing educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)
- informing educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour
- working collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual Behaviour Guidance Plan for their child, where appropriate.

6. Procedure

Educators interaction with children will have a direct link to the learning outcomes for those children.

When working directly with the children it is necessary that educators and staff:

- encourage the children to express themselves and their opinions
- allow the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- maintain the dignity and rights of each child at all times
- give each child positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
- consider the family, cultural values, age of child, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service
- develop and maintain respectful and equitable relationships with each child
- interact with each child in a warm and responsive manner
- build trusting relationships with each child
- engage with every child in meaningful dialogue that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning
- support each child to feel secure, confident and included
- provide the children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and other educators and staff at the service
- support each child to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults
- support every child to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities
- support each child to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts

6.1 In terms of Behaviour Guidance

The dignity and the rights of the child will be maintained at all times.

This includes:

- recognising that every child is an individual and should be treated as such
- respect for the child's family values

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- positive guidance towards acceptable behaviour, with encouragement freely given
- implementing a strategy that does not include physical, verbal or emotional punishment, including, for example, punishment that humiliates, frightens, or threatens the child.

6.2 Positive Behaviour Guidance strategies

6.2.1 Maintain appropriate expectations

Learn what is expected or appropriate behaviour for the child's age and stage of development and set your expectations accordingly. Understand that children's behaviour challenges are a normal part of development and deal with these situations in an objective and supportive manner.

6.2.2 Reinforce positive Behaviour

When a child has done something that you have asked, or shows appropriate behaviour, reinforce this with positive encouragement. Avoid using food as part of your positive encouragement technique.

6.2.3 Be consistent

Clear guidelines should be established and understood by adults and children. Where appropriate, guidelines should be established in consultation with the children. Don't allow at one time, what is not allowed at another.

6.2.4 Anticipate

Avoid a problem before it occurs. This involves you knowing the children in your care, so you can be aware of certain situations that may cause difficulties.

6.2.5 Re-direction

Redirect inappropriate behaviour to something that is acceptable. Consider offering an experience that will allow the child to act out similar behaviours in an appropriate way.

6.2.6 Natural consequences

Identify with the children any consequences that may arise from their behaviour.

6.2.7 Role modelling

Set a good example yourself. Adults need to model positive, socially acceptable behaviour and language. Remember children learn from imitating your actions.

6.2.8 Distraction

When a problem is anticipated or develops, distract the child to an appropriate experience. This is often effective with very young children.

6.2.9 Planning the environment

Think in advance about how you can best meet the needs and interests of each child. Make adjustments to the environment and care routines to minimise confrontation and conflict. Arrange the environment to ensure the adult rarely needs to say no.

6.2.10 Planning for routines and experiences

Allow the children time to complete their tasks and activities. Give children notice prior to pack up time. Allow children the time to be independent without rushing them. Be there for the child if help is needed but remember to stand

back and allow the child to be independent. Plan the routine so that there are not waiting times with nothing to do.

6.2.11 Communicating with children

Encourage children to use their language skills to tell you or another child what they want. Show children respect when speaking with them. When possible, get down to the child's eye level and speak with them rather than being the taller and dominant figure. Swearing, yelling and shouting in the presence of the children in care is unacceptable, this includes family members and any visitors to the service during childcare hours. Ensure that all people in contact with children behave in a non-aggressive manner.

6.3 In terms of managing on-going unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable Behaviour is defined as behaviour that has not responded to the strategies set out in the above procedures and is causing concern or risk to the educator, staff or other children.

- In dealing with unacceptable behaviour, educators, staff and Team Leaders will:
 - discuss the behaviour with the parent/guardian if usual behaviour management techniques have been unsuccessful
 - discuss with the parent/guardian possible strategies and resources available (such as Inclusion Support Professional, referral for specialist assessment, additional adult support). Consent from parent/guardian must be given before any intervention/assessment is accessed
 - after discussion with the parent/guardian, develop a Behaviour Guidance Plan (see *Definitions*), which is clear and easily followed by all educators working with the child
 - set a review date and ensure future case conferences with parent/guardian and relevant, involved professionals occur frequently
 - approach the Coordinator Families and Children Manager if parent/guardian/staff consultation is unsatisfactory and consensus on strategies or resources is not reached
 - ensure any discussion maintains an adequate level of confidentiality.
- In dealing with unacceptable behaviour, the Coordinator/Families and Children Manager will:
 - address unacceptable behaviour with families
 - address a complaint lodged by a parent/guardian concerning another child's behaviour which is threatening the safety of other children
 - seek clarification from educators as to their professional evaluation of the situation and whether it is in hand e.g., have strategies been developed or resources accessed
 - investigate the availability of extra assistance, finance or in-service training, where applicable, to assist the situation
- nominate a representative if they believe the situation is not being resolved to:
 - assist the educator/parent/guardian to evaluate and if necessary, adjust the behaviour management plan.
 - meet with the staff and parent/guardian to discuss possible outcomes
- these outcomes may include:
 - the parent/guardian remaining with the child
 - behavioural assessment of the child
 - behavioural intervention program or specialist assistant

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- adjusting the amount of time the child attends
- parent/guardian assistance or other support services for the family
- additional staffing assistance, where funding is available for this.
- ensure timelines are set for the resolution of issues
- report back to the Team Leader as to the general outcome of these meetings
- abide by confidentiality requirements (don't use the child/parent/guardians name and don't divulge confidential details without first gaining consent from parent/guardian)
- discuss with parent/guardian concerned if outcomes have not been followed through within the nominated timeline and/or require immediate action e.g. suitability of placement.

6.4 In terms of play and development

The Melton City Council children's services/programs encourage children to interact with others and participate in a range of play and recreational experiences by:

- encouraging children to participate and respecting their level of participation
- ensuring that it is a priority of staff to encourage and support the involvement of children in the program activities, supporting them to initiate, create and explore
- children are encouraged to work together on their own projects and opportunities to participate in ongoing projects are provided
- being sensitive to the varying levels of competence and confidence of all children and know when to offer challenge/choice/help and when not to
- responding to the cultural barriers that may influence children's ability to take part in play
- sharing information with families about interesting initiatives taken by children within the program.

Melton City Council children's services communicate with children about their interests and support the physical development of children by:

- staff/educators taking an active, sensitive role in extending children's physical play so that they feel confident in attempting new play experiences
- encouraging children to participate in the setting up of physical resources where appropriate and provide ideas for activities and experiences
- encouraging children to adapt and make simple resources to develop their physical skills
- structuring physical experiences to provide opportunities for all children to participate according to their level of ability
- assisting children in finding ways to include others in their physical play and encouraging them to accept the differences in development and skill levels of others.

The programs support the development of children's growing independence and development of life skills according to their levels of development and the expectations of their families by:

- encouraging children to make decisions and consider the consequences of their actions
- encouraging children to develop self-help skills and providing opportunities for children to have responsibility
- encouraging children to collaborate and cooperate with each other on a range of activities and play experiences
- including experiences that promote the individual competence of children and the competence of groups

- encouraging children to share their ideas and experiences, challenging them to express and think for themselves
- supporting children to take on challenges within safe boundaries and take on roles of leadership in small and large group contexts.

6.5 In terms of language

We aim to provide an environment where children are encouraged to communicate.

Staff/educators promote the use of good language skills by:

- modelling and using correct terminology when speaking to children and other staff, while accepting children's forms of speech
- allowing children to use their speech in creative ways when writing stories and plays
- reading to children frequently and encourage them to read alone and with others.

7. References, Sources, Links to Legislation and Other Documents

8.1 Legislation and standards

- Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

8.2 Please refer to Reference and Sources page.

8.3 Related service policies and Procedures:

- *Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures*
- *Educational Program Development Policy and Procedures*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy and Procedures*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Procedures*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedures*
- *Supervision of Children Policy and Procedures*