

Community Participation

Info Sheet

Childcare Services at Sport, Recreation and Fitness Centres

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Should sport and recreation organisations or centres offer childcare?

Sport, recreation and fitness organisations do not have to offer childcare. Organisations that offer childcare can however benefit greatly from increased membership and revenue generated from increased use of their facilities, and improved marketing opportunities.

Childcare offered by sport, recreation and fitness organisations is usually classified as temporary care. Temporary childcare services should only be available for the duration of the physical activity program, or sporting event, and only to the participants and supporters involved in that program or event.

2. How do we know that the childcare service is reputable?

Child-minding services that are organised by people conducting a fitness centre or other sport or recreational activity for the children of people using the facility, are not required to meet the standards of a registered or licensed childcare provider.

All childcare services however, have a duty of care to the children for whom they will be caring. Good quality childcare services will have:

- qualified staff and recommended ratios of staff to children
- regulated hygiene and safety programs
- appropriate equipment, facilities and programs.

Visit the child-minding services prior to booking your child in for care and talk to other people who have used the service.

3. What qualifications should the staff working in the childcare service have?

All staff responsible for the direct supervision of children, either paid or voluntary, must be over the age of 18 years. The supervisor of the service must be over the age of 21 years. One of the carers should hold a current first aid certificate.

Organisations are required to ensure that all prospective employees complete a Working with Children check when working in child-related positions. This authorises a police check of employees' records.

'Prohibited Persons' are persons who have been convicted of a serious sex offence and cannot be employed in child-related positions.

4. How many childcare staff should be employed to look after the children?

The NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) recommends that the ratios of adults on duty, to children in care at the service must be at least those listed below:

Staff/child ratio	Ages of children
1:5	0 to two years
1:8	two to three years
1:10	four to six years
1:15	seven years and older

If parents are concerned that the ratios exceed the recommended levels at their childcare service, they should contact the centre or organisation's management. Local Government or DoCS may provide further assistance if required.

For more information contact:

NSW Department of Sport and Recreation
6 Figtree Drive Homebush Bay NSW 2127
Locked Bag 1422 Concord West DC NSW 2138
fax (02) 9006 3884

phone **13 13 02**



www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

5. Do I have to book my child into childcare services?

Most childcare services require a prior booking so they can prepare for the number and ages of children to be cared for.

Centres should have a signing-in and out book which parents or guardians complete. This may be coupled with a ticket system that includes information such as:

- child's name
- arrival and departure times
- location of parents or guardians
- emergency contact numbers.

When the childcare service is within the same complex as the parent or guardian's physical activity, such as occurs at fitness and sports centres, the booking-in procedure should include information about the on-site whereabouts of parents or guardians, in case of emergency. These people must remain on the premises.

6. Can I send someone to pick up my child from childcare?

The person responsible for bringing the child to the childcare facility should be responsible for collecting the child. Written authority from the parent or guardian should be obtained before the child is released to anyone other than the person who brought the child to the service.

As this is particularly difficult to monitor in a one-off event, the childcare worker should insist on some personal identification (such as a current driver's licence), as well as the signed authority mentioned above, if the person collecting the child is different to the one who brought the child to the service.

7. What safety measures should the childcare service have in place?

Childcare services should aim to create and maintain settings that cater for children's social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs. Services should consult and cooperate with parents and use safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate practices.

Safety issues to consider include:

- a safe and comfortable facility
- suitable equipment and toys
- regulated hygiene practices
- first aid kit and qualified staff with first aid
- qualifications
- appropriate policies for the management of children (e.g. infectious diseases and behaviours).

8. What amenities should the service have?

A junior-sized toilet or toilet with a modified toilet seat and baby changing facilities should be conveniently located near and directly accessible from the play area.

Water and an appropriate place to store labelled food supplied by parents should be made available. Appropriate sleeping arrangements need to be considered for children requiring sleep or rest.

Children under two years of age may sleep in their prams. Older children, particularly two to three years olds, will need somewhere quiet and comfortable to rest after lunch.

9. What happens if my child gets sick while in the childcare service?

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) provides policy guidelines for excluding children from childcare services when they are suffering from specified infectious diseases.

Admission of children with minor complaints (e.g. colds) can be left to the discretion of the staff or organisation. If a child is injured or gets sick in more than a minor way, childcare staff should contact the parent or guardian immediately.

Childcare services should have a code of conduct for the administration of medications and ensure that at least one staff member has an approved qualification in first aid. No medication can be given to any child except on the written instruction of the parent or guardian.

10. Should the service offer an activity program?

Children are usually in care for a short time while parents participate in sport and physical activity. This may make it difficult to implement a formal program of activities. However, there are two basic principles that should guide childcare activity programs:

- developing the children's social skills
- maintaining their emotional security.

Where can I get more information?

NSW Department of Sport and Recreation has recently published 'Childcare Guidelines for NSW Sport, Recreation and Fitness Organisations'

phone 13 13 02

website www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) Office of Childcare

phone (02) 9716 2222.