

## Montessori Works

### Background

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Early childhood services must ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children at all times they are at the service. They must also ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and anyone else on the premises. To achieve these ends, services need a clear plan for the management of emergency situations so that educators are best equipped to respond calmly and effectively.

### Policy statement

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The Service has procedures to follow in the event of any emergency necessitating evacuation. These procedures comply with regulatory requirements and are consistent with recommendations by recognised authorities. They are designed to ensure the swift, safe and calm evacuation of all children, staff, families and visitors. Evacuations are rehearsed regularly so that educators and children are confident in knowing what to do.

The Service has lockdown procedures in response to any critical incident or foreseeable threat of harm to staff, children or visitors. Such an event could be:

- A hostage situation;
- A siege;
- Violent, intoxicated and/or drug affected persons;
- Dangerous animals;
- Unidentified external disturbance; or,
- Severe storm.

### Strategies and practices

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#### Evacuation

- Families are informed of the Service's emergency procedures at enrolment and orientation and throughout the year. They are also provided with educational materials (e.g. fire safety).
- The Service's *Evacuation and Lockdown Policy* and evacuation procedures are based on risk assessment that identified the potential emergencies relevant to the Service.
- The list of emergencies the service could potentially face:
  - Natural disaster
  - Fire or smoke
  - Bomb threat
  - Snake or other potentially dangerous animal
  - Act of terrorism
  - Chemical or hazardous leaks and spills

# Evacuation and Lockdown

- Loss of power or water
  - Intruders
  - Outbreak of infectious disease or illness
  - Death of a child or adult
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- Emergency evacuation plans are prominently displayed throughout the Service. These plans consist of a floor plan of the Service and indicate the reader's location, the nearest exit, the route to that exit, and assembly areas.
  - Each room has a labelled Emergency Evacuation Bag hung adjacent to the doorway between the indoor and outdoor play areas. The contents of this bag are listed in the Emergency Evacuation Bag Checklist and, after each evacuation rehearsal/event, the expiry date of perishables is checked as is the completeness of the contents.
  - All exit signs are clearly visible and escape routes and emergency exits kept clear at all times.
  - The Service has the required number of fire extinguishers and fire blankets together with other emergency equipment throughout the Service. Fire extinguishers are tested and tagged every six months, and all other equipment checked as recommended. All checks are documented.
  - All fire equipment is appropriately sign-posted and kept immediately accessible at all times.
  - The Service maintains up-to-date emergency contact details for every child and a compact copy of these is taken to the assembly point.
  - The contact numbers of emergency services are displayed beside all telephone outlets in the Service.
  - All educators are trained in the use of fire extinguishers, fire blankets and other emergency fire equipment and know where these items are located.
  - Ensure to have spontaneous rehearsals to build confidence in educators in dealing with unplanned emergencies.
  - The Service's security alarm system is appropriately maintained according to the installer's instructions.
  - The Nominated Supervisor ensures that all staff know the Service's Policy and Procedures for emergency evacuations and that they know their roles and responsibilities. These roles and responsibilities are posted beside the emergency evacuation plans displayed throughout the Service. Students and volunteers are told about emergency procedures during orientation and to follow directions from educators at these times.
  - Evacuation and lockdown procedures are rehearsed every three months. Rehearsal occurs at different times on different days of the week. Everyone in the Service at the time, including visitors, are expected to participate. The Nominated Supervisor sends out advance notice of each rehearsal (including the date and approximate time) to all staff to encourage their

# Evacuation and Lockdown

understanding and cooperation. It also ensures that staff recognise a genuine alarm activation when it occurs.

- Each room has a labelled Emergency Evacuation Bag hung adjacent to the doorway between the indoor and outdoor play areas. The contents of this bag are listed in the Emergency Evacuation Bag Checklist and, after each evacuation rehearsal/event, the expiry date of perishables is checked as is the completeness of the contents.
- When parents arrive to collect their children, they are purposefully informed that an evacuation rehearsal has occurred.
- The Responsible Person present at the time oversees the rehearsals and is responsible for completing the Evacuation and Lockdown Report (in conjunction with other staff members), and for implementing any improvements identified in that Report.
- In the event of a power failure, the Service has a discrete telephone with its own line as a back-up. The Service also has a mobile phone.
- Educators intentionally teach children about fire safety (e.g. through discussions, songs, games, role-play, fire brigade visits). Parents are provided with educational material about fire safety in the home and encouraged to work in partnership with educators by continuing the fire safety message at home.
- Every two years, the Nominated Supervisor arranges for the fire brigade to assess the rehearsal. Any recommendations in the assessment are followed and the evacuation plans adjusted accordingly.
- The Regulatory Authority and any other government health and safety authority concerned are notified of any incident requiring evacuation at the Service.
- After any incident requiring evacuation of the Service, counselling/debriefing is available to anyone affected. Children are likely to role-play the event afterwards so any debriefing will include preparing educators to respond appropriately.
- Families, visitors and educators who were present at the time of the drill/event, are provided with a feedback form after each evacuation/lockdown to share their thoughts.

## Lockdown

- The Service has a signal – distinct from the evacuation signal – to alert staff of the need for lockdown. The signal has been chosen taking into account the need for discretion that could accompany such an event (e.g. a parent acting against a court order).
- Educators are encouraged to speak quietly between each other and try and keep children's voices low and keep them comforted as much as possible.

# Evacuation and Lockdown

## Initial notification

- The witness to the event alerts the Nominated Supervisor immediately.
- The Nominated Supervisor determines whether or not lockdown is appropriate.
- If yes, the Nominated Supervisor activates the lockdown signal.
- Dial 000 for police/emergency services assistance, and follows the operator's instructions.
- Staff follow all directions of the Nominated Supervisor explicitly.

## During lockdown

- All educators and children inside are to remain in their rooms and those outside are to go inside immediately and follow lockdown procedures.
- Educators are to lock all doors and windows (draw curtains/blinds) and ensure children are kept secure (e.g. under tables).
- Educators check the sign-in sheet and ensure that all signed-in children are present, and as soon as it is safe to do so, inform the Nominated Supervisor of the names of any children unaccounted for.
- Do not use the phone for external calls. In case of a medical emergency, notify the Nominated Supervisor.
- Educators without children are to lock all external doors and windows (e.g. front door, laundry).
- Everyone is to remain in lockdown until the Nominated Supervisor announces the "All Clear."

## After lockdown

- The Nominated Supervisor notifies parents as soon as possible after the lockdown has ended.
- The lockdown will be documented, and the Service's response reviewed.

## Additional safe practices for babies

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- The Service has a labelled evacuation cot.

## Responsibilities of parents

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- To ensure all contact details for parents and those of the authorised nominees are complete, accurate and up-to-date.
- Familiarise yourselves with the emergency evacuation plans throughout the service
- Ensure to always sign child in and out of the service
- In an event of an emergency, please follow the directions of the person in charge even during a rehearsal.

# Evacuation and Lockdown

## Procedure and forms

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- Evacuation and Lockdown Report
- Emergency Evacuation Bag Checklist

## Links to other policies

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- Administration of Medication Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Incident, Injury and Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Supervision Policy

## Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

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Regulation	97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
Regulation	98	Telephone or other communication equipment
Regulation	168	Policies and procedures in relation to emergency and evacuation

NQS	QA2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
NQS	QA2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
NQS	QA2.2.2	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
NQS	QA6.1.1	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
NQS	QA6.2.2	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program
NQS	QA7.2.1	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place

## Sources

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- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 (September 2020 Update): Section 4 – Operational Requirements <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Guide-to-the-NQF-September-2020.pdf>

**Further reading and useful websites** *(Consistent with the approach of the National Quality Framework, the following references have prioritised efficacy and appropriateness to inform best practice, and legislative compliance over state or territory preferences.)*

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- Fire NSW *Portable Fire Extinguisher Information for Business* - <https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=699>
- Education NSW – Early Childhood Emergency - <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/emergency>

# Evacuation and Lockdown

## Policy review

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The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

## Version Control

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Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	
2	6 September 2019	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
3	29 November 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
4	30 December 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
5	May 2022	ACA NSW	Updated references Added points for parents Added list of possible emergencies Other small grammatical issues	
6	August 2022	Susan Chahwan	Adapted ACA NSW policy	