

PURPOSE

Adventurous play is a natural part of children's play. It is sometimes called 'risky play'. It can often be described as a thrilling and exciting activity, involving a risk of physical injury and play that provides opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury risk (Sandseter (2007); Little & Wyver, 2008). Involvement in adventurous play provides children with opportunities to explore and test their own capacity, access risks and manage situations, master new skills, extend their limits and learn life skills.

In societies endeavour to create a physical environment that is safe for all children at all times, we may be creating a physical environment that inadvertently limits adventure and risk-taking.

We acknowledge that it is sometimes difficult to find the right balance between allowing children to engage in adventurous play in our physical environment whilst preventing serious injuries. Our Service is committed to supporting families to understand the importance and benefits of risk taking through adventurous play for their children. We believe that for children to learn effectively and prepare for life-long skills, it's important for them to experience challenging situations in our physical environment that is managed effectively to minimise negative outcomes, not eliminate risk.

SCOPE

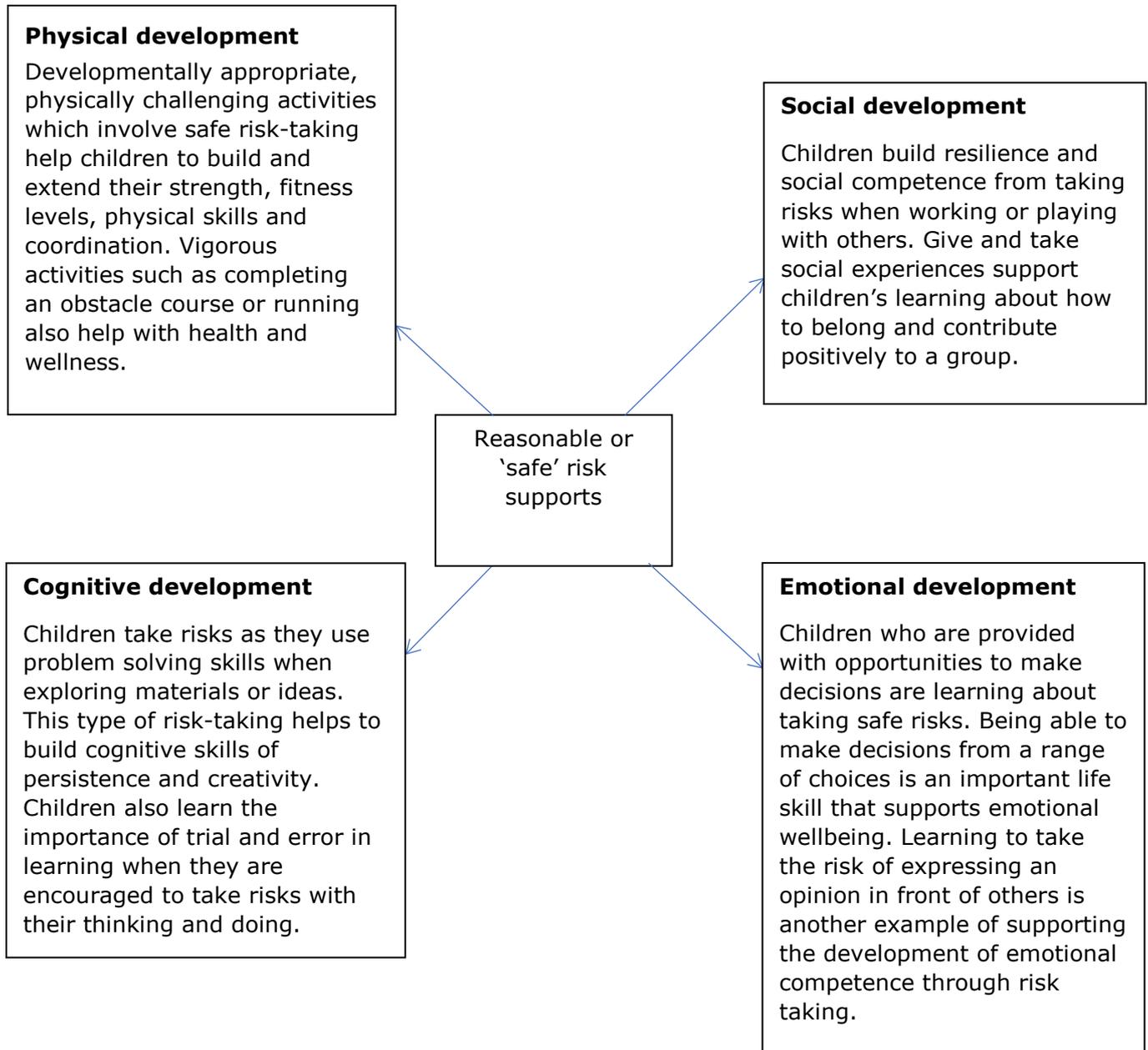
This policy applies to all staff, Educators, Educator Assistants, families, visitors and children that attend Clarence Family Day Care.

POLICY

Clarence Family Day Care supports adventurous play. Giving children the opportunity to explore not only their environment and the community but also the opportunity to explore their skills and enhance their development.

Children need to take different types of risks in order to develop and learn (Rinaldi, 2006; Sutterby, 2009). Learning through risk is what helps us all to develop. Toddlers learning to walk take risks when they fall over and try again. They may mark or scare themselves, but they take a risk and try again which allows them to achieve this developmental milestone.

The various stages and areas of development are supported by providing children with opportunities to take reasonable or 'safe' risks.



PROCEDURE

- Educators and staff have a duty of care to children and are responsible for supporting and extending children's capabilities and learning.
- Risk taking should be balanced with protecting them from harm by using a common sense and professionally informed approach.
- All experiences have some level of risk attached to them.
- A safe risk means that:
 - The benefits from the experience far outweigh the risk of possible harm
 - The consequences of the potential risk are likely to be minor or insignificant
 - Educators have thought carefully about the risks, know the children well and have taken appropriate action to minimise the risks. Considering the risk factors mentioned previously helps to highlight the differences between safe and unsafe risks in different contexts and for different children.
- No play space is risk-free. No matter how much we try to remove the risk of children being hurt, children (and adults) can still get hurt.

- The greater risk is not providing children with the skills and abilities to identify and mitigate risk when they come across it.
- Think about what we mean by risk.
 - What does society say about risk?
 - In our children's play spaces do we incorrectly label risk as a hazard?
 - Reflect on the Early Years Learning Framework, what does it say about play, and risk? What does the National Quality Framework say?
 - Reflect on your approach to risk assessment and play.
 - Think about the features of your play environments, does it encourage risky play?
 - Are there areas or features that are problematic? If yes, is this because they are hazards, or that we think from our own understanding?

Planning for adventurous play

- Being adventurous is about creating opportunities for children (and adults) to explore and test their own capacities, to manage risk, and to grow as capable, resourceful and resilient children and adults.
- Creating adventurous children is also about building them up through our words and actions, showing joy in their achievements and also in them just attempting to do something.
- Our words can be as simple as 'you can do it', 'how can we make that happen', 'wow you did that so well', 'will we try that again' all gentle and positive ways of encouraging children to keep going and not to give up. Think about how you create opportunities for children to take risk.
- Think about the benefits of risky play and how this is supported in your planning.
- How do you talk about this with children, families and your colleagues?
- How do you reconcile your own knowledge of the benefits of 'risky play' with parents' views?
- How do you (or would you) deal with the risk-averse views of some parents?

Adventurers and enquiring minds are nurtured from the early years, they are encouraged to keep trying, never rescued but expected to go further, to seek new ways of thinking and doing. Adventurers are encouraged to be dreamers, to think of what is possible, to challenge what is known and unknown

The difference between a risk and a hazard

As well as maintaining children's health and safety, it is also important to give children genuine opportunities to explore, experiment, predict consequences and to take managed risks.

When thinking about this, it is useful to understand the difference between a hazard and a risk.

- A **hazard** is something that is inherently dangerous and needs to be remedied, such as a climbing structure with sharp edges or loose boards that could seriously injure children if they play on it.
- A **risk** is something that is possible to negotiate and may be appropriate for particular situations and children.
 - D Curtis in 'Talking about practice: adventurous play – developing a culture of risky play', *NQS PLP e-Newsletter*, 58, 2013

Addressing hazards: Adequate supervision

- All children must be adequately supervised at all times. Adequate supervision means that an educator is always aware of where a child is and is able to respond immediately, including when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation.
- In general, the younger children are, the more they may need an adult to be physically present and close by to support and help them.
- It is important to remember that effective supervision doesn't mean 'standing back and

watching' and it doesn't mean taking over. Watch for opportunities to be actively involved with children, but at the same time allow them space to discover, explore and solve problems by themselves.

Addressing hazards: Protecting children

According to the National Law, an approved provider and FDC educators must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury. The service must have policies and procedures in place that cover harm and hazards, including health and safety.

Reasonable precautions include, but are not limited to:

- daily safety checks of the environment and equipment. Educators in our service do this daily.
- secure storage of hazardous products, including chemicals
- an equipment maintenance schedule
- risk assessments, including for excursions
- purchasing products that meet Australian Standards; for example, cots and playground equipment and under-surfacing
- safety plugs in electrical outlets
- procedures for releasing children only into the care of authorised persons.

This list is not exhaustive. Educators are to conduct regular risk assessments to identify potential hazards relevant to your own service as well as strategies to protect children.

Providing opportunities for safe risk-taking

Risk-taking is a part of human growth and development. That means that, as well as protecting children from hazards, it is also important to give them opportunities to extend themselves in a safe environment.

Children need to be able to explore, experiment, play, use their abilities and develop new skills and knowledge without fear of hurting themselves or others.

They should be able to take 'safe' risks, where the potential for learning and growth outweighs any potential negative outcomes – physically or emotionally.

According to Dr Anne Kennedy, early childhood consultant, a 'safe' risk is one where:

- the benefits from the experience far outweigh the risk of possible harm
- the consequences of the potential risk are likely to be minor or insignificant
- the adults think carefully about the risks, know the children well and have taken appropriate action to minimise the risks.

Children may take on two types of risk:

- physical risk: when children make decisions to extend their physical abilities (for example climbing a tree)
- emotional risk: when children feel safe, secure and confident they may challenge their own social and emotional abilities (for example, playing with a new child at the service).

Practical suggestions for supporting safe risk-taking

Educators can support children to take risks by giving them opportunities to:

- make choices
- engage in problem-solving and a variety of creative experiences
- participate every day in vigorous physical unstructured and planned activities
- learn how to cope socially and emotionally as a member of a group.

Understanding each child's capabilities

- Educators can support safe risk-taking by being aware of children's abilities, past experiences, family, background, personal dispositions, interests and the activities they are drawn to. When children's experiences are connected with their expressed interests, children are more likely to be deeply engaged in their play, reducing the chance that they will engage in dangerous activities.
- It is important that Educators and staff demonstrate trust and respect for children's abilities to make sensible decisions and to keep challenges within their current capacities. Adults can then acknowledge children's achievements and support them to recover and move on when they experience difficulties, or do not immediately succeed in their undertaking. This capacity to 'try again' is integral to building resilience.

Safe spaces that offer challenges

- Safe spaces protect children from hazards. They also promote children's psychological wellbeing by allowing them to exercise their independence by making decisions and taking on new challenges.
- A safe space is one where equipment is safe, the space is easy to supervise and dangerous material is not accessible to children.
- A safe space allows you to interact with children in ways that support learning, rather than being over-focused on monitoring children's behaviour and movements.
- Safe spaces also offer appropriate levels of challenge.
- Outdoor environments can invite adventurous play.

Managing risk

- Ideally, the physical environment would be arranged so that it is a predictable, 'known quantity' as well as giving children opportunities to make decisions and do things for themselves successfully,
- Supervision strategies should be in place so that you know where children are at all times. The strategies should also allow children to explore and test their own capacities, to manage risk, and to grow as capable, resourceful and resilient children.

RATIONALE

Research suggests that children will engage in less risky behaviour when environments offer a variety of experiences with appropriate levels of challenge (Knackstredt & Wellisch, 2005; Elliott, 2008). Children are more likely to add or create risks or to engage in unsafe behaviour when their environments are sterile or boring.

NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	NATIONAL QUALITY AREA	NATIONAL QUALITY ELEMENT/STANDARD
158, 168	2	2.1.2, 2.1.3 2.2, 2.2.1
	3	3.1.2, 3.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2

REFERENCE & RELATED INFORMATION

- Education and Care Services National Law
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- KidSafe NSW
- Dr Anne Kennedy
- NQS PLP e-Newsletter, 58, 2013
- Belonging, Being and Becoming, Early Years Learning Framework
- National Quality Standard
- My Time our Place, Framework for School Age Children
- Our Service's Philosophy
- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
- Coster, D. & Gleeve, J. (2008) Give us a go! Children and young people's views on play and risk-taking. *Play Day*. Retrieved 29th July 2019 from http://www.playday.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/give_us_a_go___children_and_young_peoples_views_on_play_and_risk_taking.pdf
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