



CHILD IMMUNISATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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Drafted by:	Strategic Finance Executive	Board approval on:	June 2023
Responsible Person:	Strategic Finance Executive	Scheduled Review Date:	June 2024

INTRODUCTION

Big Yellow Umbrella (BYU) is committed to providing a safe environment for young children, recognizing the special vulnerability of this target group and their need for ongoing care, support, and protection.

As part of this commitment BYU supports the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia's recommendation that all children should be immunised using the agreed schedule unless there is a clear medical reason why this should not occur.

The NSW Parliament passed the Public Health Amendment (Review) Bill 2017 that amended the Public Health Act 2010 to strengthen immunisation enrolment requirements in early childhood services and these changes are reflected in this policy.

When children are in any form of childcare, including playgroups, they are more susceptible to communicable diseases than adults because:

- Their immune system is underdeveloped.
- They are in close contact with large numbers of children in confined spaces.
- Their developmental level is such that hygiene practices are not fully mastered.

In line with the evidence about child and community wellbeing, BYU strongly encourages parents to have their children immunised using the schedule provided by the NSW Ministry of Health. This is available on the NSW Ministry of Health website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Publications/nsw-immunisation-schedule.pdf>

Immunisation protects children against harmful infections before they come in contact with them. Immunisation uses the body's natural defense mechanism, the immune response, to build resistance to specific infections. (Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health 1995)

Immunisation programs in NSW have been extremely effective in reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. All children are able to access free vaccines under the National immunisation Program at 6 weeks, 4 months, 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, and 4 years of age to provide them with the earliest protection against 13 vaccine preventable diseases. While around 90% of children at 1 and 2 years of age in NSW are fully immunised, at least 95% coverage is needed for effective disease control.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clear instructions on child Immunisation requirements when enrolling in BYU programs.
- Understanding immunisation and its importance in early childhood programs
- Understanding the changes to the NSW Public Health Amendment Bill 2017 and its influence on families enrolling in BYU programs

POLICIES

BYU (in line with the new Public Health Act) cannot enroll a child into any early childhood programs unless the parent / guardian has provided an approved immunisation form that shows that the child:

- Is fully immunised for their age or

<https://hrfocus1.sharepoint.com/sites/SUPPORT/Shared Documents/CLIENT WIP/Big Yellow Umbrella/Our Culture/New Policies/Child Immunisation Policy.docx>

- Has a medical reason not to be vaccinated or
- Is on a recognized catch up schedule if the child has fallen behind with their immunisation.

A 12-week temporary exemption is applicable for children evacuated during a state of emergency and those in out of home care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Babies under 6 weeks of age are welcome to attend BYU activities despite being too young to be immunised. Parents need to be made aware that their baby could be at risk of contracting a vaccine preventable disease but with BYU's immunisation policy in place, this risk would be significantly reduced.

BYU can only accept approved immunisation forms that can be obtained from the Australian Immunisation Register. Parents can obtain their Immunisation History Statement which contains proof of immunisation through Medicare or directory from the Australian Immunisation Register.

If a child has a medical condition that prevents them from being immunised or who have natural immunity to a vaccine preventable disease, a GP / Nurse Immunisation Medical Exemption Form can be completed and sent to the Australian Immunisation Register for their Immunisation History Statement to be updated. Children can then be enrolled in BYU early childhood services.

Immunisation History Forms Catch up Schedule can be accepted when there are gaps in immunisation information, or a doctor has organized to commence the child on a catch-up schedule for overdue vaccines ONLY if an Immunisation History Form has been signed by the doctor and forwarded to the Australian Immunisation Register.

BYU is to maintain an immunisation register that records the up-to-date immunisation status of all enrolled children after each of their immunisation milestone. These immunisation records are to be retained for 3 years from the date on which each enrolled child ceases to attend the service.

BYU is also required to notify the local public health unit if an enrolled child has a vaccine preventable disease. In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, unimmunised children (including babies under 6 weeks) are at serious risk of contracting and spreading the disease. Therefore, for the protection of their health and the health of other children, families with unimmunised children should not attend BYU's early childhood programs during an outbreak. This is particularly important because of the increased risk these diseases pose to very young children and pregnant women who may attend the program. The Director of the local public health unit can instruct unimmunised children to be excluded from attending.

Families are required to notify BYU if they have been in contact with or their child has any infectious disease that means they must adhere to the exclusion period.

BYU is to educate families on immunisation and provide information on:

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register at <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register>
- **Immunisation schedule:** NSW Ministry of Health website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Publications/nsw-immunisation-schedule.pdf>
- NSW Minister of Health website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/default.aspx>
- The Australian Government Department of Health website <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/>
- Raising Children Network <http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/immunisation.html>
- Staying Healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th edition, updated June 2013) is available along with additional resources (wall posters and brochures) at: www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch55

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The staff member employed by BYU to manage early childhood programs including all supported playgroups is responsible to enact these procedures with direction from the BYU Leadership Team.

The BYU Board are responsible for managing these policies and making any necessary changes in consultation with the BYU Leadership Team.

<https://hrfocus1.sharepoint.com/sites/SUPPORT/Shared Documents/CLIENT WIP/Big Yellow Umbrella/Our Culture/New Policies/Child Immunisation Policy.docx>

PROCEDURES

Enrolling children into early childhood programs (including supported playgroups) run by BYU:

All parents / carers attending BYU's early childhood programs must be issued with **an introductory letter** that explains our immunisation policy and what it means to them.

All staff must sight an approved immunisation form for each child (in line with the new Public Health Act) that shows the child is:

- Is fully immunised for their age or
- Has a medical reason not to be vaccinated or
- Is on a recognized catch up schedule if the child has fallen behind with their immunization.
- Has a 12-week temporary exemption due to evacuation during a state of emergency and/or is in out of home care and/or is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

If a parent / guardian does not have evidence of their child's immunisation history, they can obtain an Immunisation History Statement from the following:

- Medicare online account through myGov at <http://my.gov.au/>
- Medicare Express Plus App at <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/express-plus-mobile-apps>
- Immunisation History Statements can also be obtained from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) on 1800 653 809 or through the Department of Human Services
- Call the Australian Immunisation Register General Enquiries on 1800 653 809

If a baby under 6 weeks who is too young to be immunised wishes to attend the BYU activity:

- The baby can attend.
- The parents must be made aware that their baby could be at risk of contracting a vaccine preventable disease until immunised.
- The parents also need to be made aware of the BYU Immunisation Policy that ensures all other children over the age of 6 weeks must be immunised, reducing the risk to the young baby.
- The **Immunisation Register** must show that this information was provided as above.

If a child has a medical condition that prevents them from being immunised or who have natural immunity to a vaccine preventable disease, they can only be enrolled in BYU early childhood services if the following is adhered to:

- Parents / guardians should attend their GP / nurse with their child to obtain an Australian Immunisation Register Immunisation Medical Exemption Form
- This form must be signed and sent to the Australian Immunisation Register
- Parents / guardians can then access an updated Australian Immunisation Register Immunisation History Statement that records the medical contraindications / natural immunity.
- These records can then be accepted for enrolment.

If a child has gaps in their immunisation records (complete records will record "up to date") or the child is currently on a catch-up schedule for overdue vaccines:

- **An Immunisation History Form** signed by the doctor and forwarded to the Australian Immunisation Register can be accepted for enrolment.

NO OTHER RECORDS CAN BE ACCEPTED including not up to date immunisation history, medical exemption forms, Blue Books, GP letters or overseas immunisation records. Only approved immunisation providers can be accepted through the Immunisation History Form

Record keeping requirements:

- All children's immunisation status must be recorded on the [immunisation register](#) at enrollment and at relevant milestones.
- Immunisation records are to be retained for 3 years from the date on which each enrolled child ceases to attend the service.
- All children's vaccination history is protected under privacy laws which requires the person or organisation collecting the information to state why it is being collected, who has access, how it will be stored and how it will be used.
- Children's information must not be shared with other families. Immunisation information should only be provided to the public health unit staff upon request e.g., during a disease outbreak.

Ongoing management of immunisation records:

An updated approved immunisation form must be provided for each child after each immunisation milestones:

- 6 weeks
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 12 months
- 18 months
- 4 years

These requirements can be found in the [NSW Immunisation Schedule](#). The next immunisation and their due date will be recorded in the bottom section of their current statement.

Other BYU staff responsibilities:

- BYU is also required to notify the local public health unit (1300 066 055) if an enrolled child has a vaccine preventable disease. The public health unit will provide information for the parents and whether the child should be excluded.
- Families attending BYU early childhood programs are to be notified of any infectious disease outbreak to enable families with children under 6 weeks and pregnant women to review their attendance for the period of the disease.
- Families attending BYU early childhood programs are to notify the facilitator immediately if they or their children have been in contact with infectious diseases. Families are also required to notify the service if their child contracts an infectious disease and is required to adhere to the exclusion period.
- BYU staff are responsible for educating families on immunisation and providing relevant information using the related resources below.

RELATED DOCUMENTS
Anti-discrimination Policy
Australian Childhood Immunisation Register at https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register
Australian Government Department of Health website http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/
Clients Record Policy
Code of Conduct Policy
Confidentiality and Declaration Policy
BYU Immunisation Register
BYU Letter of Introduction (for parents and caregivers)
Disclosure of Information Policy

Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Publications/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit.pdf
Immunisation History (sample)
Immunisation schedule: NSW Ministry of Health website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Publications/nsw-immunisation-schedule.pdf
NSW Health Immunisation Register
NSW Minister of Health website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/default.aspx
Playgroup Policy
Privacy Policy
Raising Children Network http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/immunisation.html
Risk Management Policy
Staying Healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th edition, updated June 2013) at: www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch55
Working with Children & Young People Policy
WH&S Policy

AUTHORISATION

The Board of Big Yellow Umbrella has reviewed and approved this policy.

Signature of Board Secretary: _____

Date of approval by the Board: _____

On behalf of the Big Yellow Umbrella