



# Integrating Indoor–Outdoor Free Play into Existing Policy

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Once your service has integrated more indoor-outdoor play opportunities into the daily schedule or program, it's important to ensure this is reflected in service policy. Updating your policy helps ensure consistent practice, supports staff and allows a way to communicate this information to families.



### Links to service policies

Your service may have one or more policies that relate to the indoor-outdoor free play program and that need to be reviewed and/or updated. These could include:

- Supervision policy
  - Physical activity policy
  - Sun protection policy
  - Indoor-outdoor / play environment
  - Maintenance of buildings and equipment
  - Interactions with children
  - Child protection
  - Environmental sustainability
  - Risky play
- Sample Policy Inclusions

### Sample Policy Inclusions

#### Rationale - why our service offers Indoor-Outdoor Free Play

By offering Indoor-Outdoor Free Play and increasing children's opportunities for outdoor free play, many aspects of children's health, wellbeing and development can be enhanced. These include the following:

- Greater physical activity levels
- Sensory development
- Improvements in fundamental movement skills
- Core strength development
- Sensory development
- Greater immunity
- Increased learning opportunities
- Promotion of curiosity & imagination
- Connection to Country and Culture resilience
- Opportunities for taking risks
- Building resilience
- Improvement in concentration
- Connections with nature



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## What is Indoor-Outdoor Free Play?

Sometimes referred to as free-flow play, indoor-outdoor free play is when children are allowed to access and move freely between the indoor and outdoor play areas during free play time. Children can choose what type of activity they do and explore the surrounding environment as they like. This can be a more or less energetic type of play, depending on what activities the children decide to do.

## Relevant Legislation and Guidelines

### Education and Care Service National Regulations

Early Childhood Education and Care Services National Regulations  
Part 4.3 Physical environment

### National Quality Standards

Standard 1.1 – The educational program enhances each child’s learning and development.

Standard 2.1 – Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted.

Standard 3.1 – The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.

Standard 3.2 – The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.

### Early Years Learning Framework

Learning Outcome 3 – Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

**Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years):** An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep.

## Other considerations for additions to your policy:

- How indoor-outdoor play aligns with service philosophy
- How indoor-outdoor free play will be scheduled (when) and implemented (how).
- How procedures may change seasonally
- How the service plans to enhance outdoor play environmental provisions and design in order to foster child learning, health and wellbeing and connections with nature.
- How the service supports and manages outdoor free play in different weather conditions
- How the service will undertake risk management
- How the service will comply with supervision requirements
- How the service will monitor and review new procedures



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## Examples of text:

- Wherever possible, the service will operate an indoor-outdoor program for the full day/session.
- The service will ensure that children have access to the outdoor environment during all occasions of scheduled indoor play, through allowing free-flow access to the outdoors.
- The service will equally value both the outdoor and indoor learning environments as places that support child development and wellbeing, belonging, creativity and social engagement.
- The service recognises the outdoors as a space which can support children to move more, have space and freedom for large and loud movement play, and develop fundamental movement skills. This is supported by providing outdoor environments that include adequate space, both fixed and moveable equipment, and natural elements that support active play.

## Weather related examples:

- The service will encourage outdoor play in all weather conditions, with the appropriate care taken to protect children, with consideration given to availability of adequate shade and shelter.
- Children will be reminded to drink water regularly, especially in warm weather.
- Children will be required to wear sun hats and have sunscreen applied at regular intervals, as recommended by the Cancer Council SunSmart policy
- To enable children to fully experience outdoor play opportunities, parents will be requested to ensure their child is dressed appropriately for playing outdoors in the current weather conditions, and that appropriate spare clothing is packed.

## Supervision and risk management related examples:

- The service will have systems in place to ensure the legal obligations of supervision are adhered to.
- Prior to any child accessing the outdoors area a member of staff will complete a full daily risk assessment of the area, ensure all external gates are securely closed/locked, and check all the equipment to remove any potential hazards.
- The external doors or gates to the outdoor area will be secured open when children are in 'free flow' to minimise any accidents with children trying to open and close doors/gates. Monitoring and review:
- Our service will provide families with opportunities to contribute to the development and review of this policy (inclusion/ procedure/ guideline).
- Our service will review the Indoor-outdoor free play policy inclusion every <insert timeframe, e.g. 12 months>



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## Thinking of Adding Indoor Outdoor Play to your Physical Activity Policy?

If your service decides its **Physical Activity policy** is a good fit for integrating indoor-outdoor play procedures, don't forget the *Munch & Move* program has a physical activity policy template that can be modified to suit the requirements of your service.

The policy template includes the three key elements recommended by the Munch & Move program:

1. Reference to the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years).
2. Physical activity is embedded in the daily program through spontaneous and intentionally planned active play that is both child initiated, and educator led.
3. Educators actively role model to children appropriate physical activity behaviours.

Resources to support policy development at your service along with a template for physical activity policies can be downloaded here: [Resources - Good for Kids policy support](#)

We look forward to working with you to enhance the physical activity, health, and wellbeing of the children in your care by increasing their opportunities for outdoor free play.

Please get in touch with any questions.

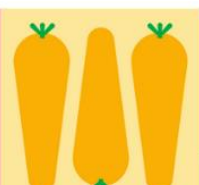
## Need help with your policies?

Please contact your Good for Kids Health Promotion Officer.



### Contact details:

Email: [hnelhd-goodforkids@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:hnelhd-goodforkids@health.nsw.gov.au)



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