



## Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) COVID-19 Information for Families (NSW)

New South Wales based early childhood education and care (ECEC) services (which include long daycare services and out-of-school-hours-care (OSHC) services) are regulated primarily by the NSW Department of Education.

Additional legal, regulatory and funding obligations of ECEC services also exist in terms of public health requirements, work health and safety, Fair Work as well as Child Care Subsidies (CCS).

While all ECEC services' staff are fully COVID vaccinated and children aged 0-5 years old may not currently have access to COVID vaccines, ECEC services remain responsible for keeping all children as well as educators, teachers and support staff safe from the likelihood of transmission and severe disease from COVID-19.

**PLEASE NOTE: The following are the minimum requirements and ECEC services can impose additional requirements due to their other legal and regulatory obligations.**

### When must a child or educator/teacher/staff member self-isolate?

Under the current [NSW Public Health \(COVID-19 Self-Isolation\) Order \(No 4\) 2021](#) (updated on 2 March 2022), any person (including children) who:

- generates a positive result from either a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) or a Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test; or
- is a household member of a person diagnosed with COVID-19

must self-isolate for a period of 7 days (see Clauses 6 & 7A(2)) of the [NSW Public Health Order](#).

Those with [symptom\(s\)](#) of COVID-19 will be asked to take a RAT or PCR test to determine if they need to self-isolate.

### When can a child return to the ECEC service?

There was previously an [Exemption](#) (introduced on 5 January 2022) where children could return to their early childhood education and care service upon producing the first of up to 7 consecutive negative Rapid Antigen Tests or PCR tests.

However, that Exemption was revoked by the NSW Minister for Health on 24 January 2022 by a new [Exemption](#) that excluded children.

Hence, under the [NSW Public Health \(COVID-19 Self-Isolation\) Order \(No 4\) 2021](#) (dated 2 March 2022), any person (including children) who generates a positive result from either a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) or a Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test or is a household member of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 must self-isolate for a period of 7 days (see Clauses 6 & 7A(2)) of that [NSW Public Health Order](#).



## Can my ECEC service refuse entry to my child(ren)?

Under the [Work Health and Safety Regulation](#) as well as the [Education and Care Services National Regulations \(NSW\)](#), your ECEC service must eliminate risks to health and safety and take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of infectious disease(s).

As such, ECEC services are required to assess all risks, including COVID-19, and prevent them for the protection of all children and their families as well as their educators, teachers and support staff.

## Can the gap fee be waived if my child is self-isolating due to COVID-19?

If your child is eligible for Child Care Subsidies (CCS), your ECEC service has the option to [waive the gap fee](#) if your child is isolating due to COVID-19. This also includes the circumstance when one of your household members must isolate due to COVID-19. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will need to provide evidence (such as an SMS or app notification) to the ECEC service for recordkeeping.

If the child is eligible for CCS and s/he belongs to a group of children at your ECEC service who must self-isolate or if your ECEC service has been instructed to be temporarily closed due to COVID-19 on written advice from the NSW Government, then your ECEC service has the option to waive the gap fee.

If parent(s)/guardian(s) self-isolate their child(ren) as a precaution against COVID-19, your ECEC service does not have the discretion to waive the gap fee.

If your child is not eligible for CCS, the contractual arrangement of fee payment is between you and your ECEC service.

## How will my Allowable Absence Days be used?

Families can have up to 42 [Allowable Absence Days](#) per child for each financial year. And until 30 June 2022, an additional 10 Allowable Absence Days per child have been allocated by the Federal Government to assist NSW-based families and ECEC services affected by COVID-19.

## Which Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) can I use for my child?

The Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) must be on the Federal Government's Therapeutic Goods Administration [approved list](#).

RATs differ in their potential effectiveness based on their clinical sensitivity – Acceptable Sensitivity (>80% Positive Percent Agreement (PPA)), High Sensitivity (>90% PPA) and Very High Sensitivity (>95% PPA).

As not all RATs are the same, parents/guardians will need to consult their GP or the RAT's product information (which can be available via the TGA's [approved list](#)) as to whether use by children aged 0-2 years old is permitted.