

OP16-PR001 Missing Child Procedure

Procedure title:	Missing Child Procedure
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1 Purpose

Petit Early Learning Journey (ELJ) is committed to providing a safe and caring environment for all children and to working in partnership with families. Effective supervision is critical to the safety and wellbeing of children while they are being educated and cared for at early education and care services, including while on planned excursions. Educators have a responsibility to ensure that all children are always accounted for through adequate supervision.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing from a Petit ELJ service, it is vital that the steps outlined in this procedure are taken immediately.

The Approved Provider, Operations Manager, Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director, educators and staff, parents/guardians and visitors are all responsible for ensuring the safety, security, and wellbeing of enrolled children on the premises. This procedure outlines the responsibilities and steps to take in the event a child goes missing while in the care of a Petit ELJ service.

2 Responsibilities

All employees have a duty of care to:

- take every reasonable precaution to protect children from harm and hazard likely to cause injury;
- ensure all children are adequately supervised at all times; and
- ensure all policies and their related procedures and forms are followed at all times.

3 Definitions

A **missing** or **unaccounted child** is defined as a child who cannot be accounted for any length of time. This is a serious incident and must be reported to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours.

4 Minimisation Strategies

To **minimise the risk** of a child going missing while in the care of Petit ELJ, it is essential to effectively supervise children.

Risk	Minimisation Strategy
Peak arrival and departure times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director ensures rosters facilitate the attendance of a non-contact educator or Responsible Person in Day to Day Charge (RPIDTDC) at the centre reception desk during peak delivery and collection times (generally 7am – 9am and 4pm to 6pm).

Risk	Minimisation Strategy
Peak arrival and departure times cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators provide a calm and inviting environment. • Educators inform relief educators, children, and their guardians of routine expectations during transitions in and out of care. • Educators welcome every child and their guardian and assist in transitioning children into play in either the grouped area or individual studio depending on centre routines. • Educators farewell every child and guardian to ensure the care has been officially handed over. • Educators mark children on the rolls/ratio sheet as arrived/departed. • Educators communicate with one another when assistance is needed and when taking over a supervision spot is required. • The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director displays signs and periodically remind guardians to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ only allow their own child in or out of any centre gate/front door/lift ○ ensure gates/doors are firmly closed behind them ○ advise an educator if a child is attempting to access gate/door by themselves ○ be aware of their own child's whereabouts when arriving and leaving the centre ○ sign their child in and out • Educators ensure gates and doors work and are maintained and report to the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director/RPIDTDC if gates/doors require maintenance. • Educators ensure that gates and doors to outdoor areas/bathrooms are closed or latched open as required. • Educators heighten supervision near gates, doors, sliding doors, hallways, and lift (where applicable). • Educators heighten supervision to be aware of children's movements to and from the rooms, verandas, and outdoor spaces. • Educators are familiar and engage with the centres Supervision Plan regularly and refer to the designated areas indicated on the supervision map when supervising in play spaces. Educators communicate frequently about supervision practices including where the movement of an educator is required to support supervision. • Educators ensure active supervision is in place while talking to families ensuring they can see and hear children. If families require an in-depth conversation, educators discuss with them booking a time when they are relieved from supervision duties • Educators have a responsibility to be aware of the number of children in their care. Educators ensure they clarify if they are

Risk	Minimisation Strategy
	<p>unsure and always pass this information on to relieving educators when leaving a space.</p>
<p>Transitioning between indoor/indoor, and indoor/outdoor environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators ensure a safety check of the indoor and outdoor environments is done before transitioning children. • Educators do a headcount/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for before and after each transition. • Educators check the area to ensure that no child is left behind in a play space, hallway, lift, stairs area, playground, etc. • Educators observe and support children while hand washing – especially when transitioning to mealtimes.
<p>Excursions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators follow the <u>Excursion or Regular Outing Proposal and Risk Management Plan Form</u> developed for each excursion. • Educators conduct several headcounts/roll calls throughout the excursion to ensure all children are accounted for before and after each transition.
<p>Regular Transportation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators follow the <u>Regular Transportation of Children Risk Assessment and Management Plan Form</u> developed for the transportation of enrolled children to and from schools as a part of the centre's Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program. • Educators conduct several headcounts/roll calls throughout the regular transportation to ensure all children participating in the OSHC are accounted for before and after each transportation trip.
<p>Enclosed spaces such as sheds/storage/bathrooms/toilet areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators heighten supervision to be aware of children's movements when near sheds/storerooms/prep areas. • Educators inform each other of their movements if they are alone or need to move to another area. They may do this by communicating face to face or by utilising their studio phone. • Educators ensure that doors to sheds/storage/prep areas are always closed and that these areas are closely supervised. • Educators heighten supervision to be aware of children's movements to and from the rooms, bathroom and on verandas. • Educators heighten supervision in toilet areas. • Educators utilise, supervision mirrors, cameras and viewing windows to ensure a full view of all areas in the environment • Educators do a full check of enclosed spaces (i.e. sheds, storerooms, prep rooms, etc) before transitioning to a different environment.
<p>When a child has been identified as likely to abscond, either by a family or an educator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director and Educators develop a <u>Risk Assessment and Management Plan Form</u> in consultation with the family. The Plan must consider strategies to minimise the risk of the child absconding including routine changes, environmental modifications or employing additional educators to assist with supervision.

Risk	Minimisation Strategy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director must ensure all Educators (including casuals) are familiar with the child's needs and with this procedure.
When closing the centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators must check all studios, playgrounds, and enclosed spaces before closing. The RPIDTDC must ensure all children are signed out before locking and leaving the centre.

5 Procedure

If a child is missing or unaccounted for **Act, Notify, Report**

Step One: Act

- Ask** the closest Educators and children if they know where the child is;
- Inform** another Educator and the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director;
- Check** all other children are accounted for – roll call or head count; and
- Search** indoor and outdoor areas including all studios, prep rooms, cupboards, toilets, storage areas, climbing structures, gardens, etc.

Step Two: Notify

If the child remains missing or unaccounted for:

- Contact** the parents to ensure the child has not been collected;
- Inform police** (000) and record time of call;
- Commence centre **lockdown** procedure; and
- Advise** the Operations Manager of the situation and ongoing status.

During Lockdown:

- Once in lockdown area, nominate one Educator to leave the centre to complete a search of the immediate surrounds

When child has been found:

- Notify** Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director and Operations Manager;
- Notify** Parents/Guardians;
- Notify** Police; and
- End** lockdown.

Step Three: Report

When safe and appropriate to do so:

- Inform** local Regulatory Authority via phone;
- Complete** an Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness Record;
- Collect** statements from all Educators involved; and
- Report** the regulatory Authority through NQAITS in consultation with the services Operations Manager.

6 Responsibilities

Approved Provider:

It is the responsibility of the Approved Provider to:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure that Nominated Supervisors/Centre Directors and employees of, and volunteers at, the service follow policies and procedures.
- Ensure copies of all policies and procedures are readily accessible to Nominated Supervisors/Centre Directors, educators, employees, and volunteers, and available for inspection.
- Ensure all Petit ELJ employees are provided with relevant and up to date training to understand a duty of care exists to ensure children are provided with a high level of safety and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect them from harm and hazard
- Make sure any notification in relation to serious incidents is within the regulated timeframes as per the *Managing Reporting Requirements and Notifications Policy*.

Operations Managers:

It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager to:

- Keep the Approved Provider abreast of any legislative requirements that are not being met or that have changed.
- Monitor compliance at a centre and site level and ensuring employees and volunteers have completed the training on this procedure.

Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director

It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director to:

- Ensure they and their employees and volunteers are familiar with and follow all policies and procedures as developed by Petit ELJ. This includes ensuring compliance with all related policies and procedures.
- Ensure Supervision Plan training is adequate and followed.
- Ensure all Educators have current Child Protection Training
- Ensure each child's authorised nominees are current
- Ensure children likely to abscond have a Risk Assessment and Management Plan Form
- Ensure debriefs and reviews following a serious incident or identified risk are conducted

Educators:

It is the responsibility of Educators to:

- Ensure they are familiar with and follow all policies and procedures as developed by Petit ELJ. This includes ensuring compliance with all related policies and procedures.
- Ensure that they ask for clarification if any information is unclear.
- Actively and effectively supervise children
- Record children in their attendance roll/ratio sheet when they arrive and depart
- Inform the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director if they believe a child in their care is likely to abscond so a Risk Assessment and Management Plan Form can be developed
- Comply with this procedure and its related documents

Families:

It is the responsibility of parents to:

- Provide any information about their child and family that supports educators meeting their child's educational and care needs.

- Regularly update the service on their child's needs
- Inform the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director if they have a child that they believe is likely to abscond.
- Work with Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director and Educators in developing a Risk Management Plan to minimise the risk of their child absconding.

7 Information, training, and instruction

Training Requirements

- Nominated Supervisors/Centre Directors must ensure all educators read, understand and are aware of their responsibilities in respect of this procedure.