Policy Statement

When groups of children are together, illness and disease can spread rapidly. Immunisable diseases such as measles and whooping cough (see list below) can have serious health consequences for children, especially young children. Staff who work in a child care setting are also at increased risk of certain infectious illnesses. The Heritage Immunisation Policy is an important strategy in infection control and protecting staff and children from illness.

The infectious diseases that can be immunised against are:

- Diptheria
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella (German measles)
- Tetanus
- Pertussis (Whooping cough)
- Polio
- Haemophilus (HIB)
- Hepatitis B
- Meningococcus

Other recommended vaccines are available, though not yet on the schedule for all children:

- Pneumococcus (causes pneumonia, blood infections, meningitis and ear infection)
- Varicella (Chicken pox)
- Influenza

Due to the success of scheduled immunisation programs, many conditions are rarely seen today and it is argued that this has caused complacency in some sections of the community. Heritage encourages parents to immunise their children fully (unless they have a pre-existing medical condition which makes this not possible) as non-immunised children help spread infection in the community. While there are common, usually mild side effects to the immunisation injection, Heritage follows government health advice that the child is at far greater risk of harm from contracting one of the infections than from the immunisation itself.

Families who register a conscientious objection to immunisation are usually concerned with safety of vaccines, a specific risk/side effect, or have a child who has had an adverse reaction to a previous vaccination. Heritage respects their views while respectfully providing information on the Heritage Immunisation Policy.

Heritage informs parents that homeopathic immunisations are unproven and only conventional immunisation produces a measurable immune response, and as such children receiving homeopathic immunisations are not considered immunised for the purpose of the Public Health Regulation 2000.
In addition to the Immunisation Policy, Heritage also minimises the spread of infections by strongly enforcing guidelines for the exclusion of children and adults with an infectious illness or disease, and adhering to strict hygiene and infection control practices. Refer to: Illness Policy and Hygiene Policy.

Policy Aim

The Heritage Immunisation Policy and related procedures has been developed to manage and prevent the control of certain infectious diseases among the Heritage community. The Immunisation Policy aims to:

- ensure, as far as possible, that all Heritage children are age appropriately immunised as per the schedule set out by ACT Health (see end of document);
- ensure all staff have had their childhood immunisations and have boosters for tetanus and diptheria;
- maintain up to date immunisation records of children and staff;
- encourage all families and staff to keep their immunisation status as comprehensive as possible by having new vaccines as they become available.

Rationale

Heritage recognises it has a duty of care to take all reasonable practicable steps to provide the Heritage community with a safe and healthy work environment (Work Safety Act 2008). In addition the Heritage Immunisation Policy has been developed to comply with:

- ACT Childcare Services Standards, 2009 [required by the Children and Young People Act 2008].
- National Childcare Accreditation Council’s Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS), Quality Practices Guide (2005), Principles 5.5, 6.6, 7.2.
- National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines.
- Department of Health and Ageing (2007), Immunise Australia program.

Scope

It is understood that there is a shared responsibility and accountability between staff and parents/guardians to implement the Heritage Immunisation Policy as a matter of high priority due to the potential health risks of not doing so.
Strategies and Practices

Responsibilities of Parents

On enrolment, a parent/guardian is required to sign an agreement on the Immunisation Register Form that:

- they will provide a photocopy of a confirmed record of their child’s immunization (such as the Blue Book, or Immunisation History Statement), in accordance with the Public Health Regulation 2000;
- they will inform Heritage when any updates to the record occur;
- it is the families’ responsibility to ensure their child’s immunisation is kept up to date;
- a child who is not immunised or whose immunisation is not up to date may be excluded during an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease;
- children who have only received homeopathic immunisation are considered not to be protected against vaccine preventable infectious diseases, and are not considered immunised for the purposes of the Public Health Regulation 2000.

Families Opposed to Immunisation

Families opposed to immunisation are usually concerned with safety of vaccines, or are concerned about a specific risk/side effect, or have a child who has had an adverse reaction to a previous vaccination. Heritage will:

- respect their views and acknowledge and listen to their concerns;
- refer them to their doctor for information on benefits and risks of immunization;
- respectfully provide information from ACT Public Health on immunization and on the exclusion polices Heritage follows for children who are not immunised.

Responsibilities of Director

Maintaining an Immunisation Record

The Director is responsible for maintaining an Immunisation Register containing a form for each child with the following details (see example at end of document):

- name, date of birth;
- age at which immunisation is due and date given;
- date vaccination record was sighted;
- where/by whom it was given;
- whether the child is up to date with immunisations;
- if the child has not been immunised, the reasons why, eg, parental choice/underlying medical condition.

The Director is responsible for reviewing the register monthly to find which children are behind on their schedule and respectfully encouraging families to quickly rectify the situation.

Disease Notification and Exclusion Requirements

If any Heritage child, staff member or visitor has a vaccine preventable disease, eg measles/whooping cough, the Director will follow the requirements of the Public Health Regulation 2000 and:

- inform ACT Health directly and ask for advice;
- inform in writing all families, staff and persons normally working or visiting the premises that an outbreak of the particular infectious disease has occurred;
- contact ACT Public Health Unit to seek advice about exclusion of children and staff who are not immunised or do not have up to date immunisation until the outbreak has resolved;
- ask the Public Health Unit for advice on exclusion of children too young to be immunised for that particular disease;
- on instruction of ACT Public Health Unit, inform in writing any staff member or family of any child who is excluded, giving the reason and length of exclusion period.
Full fees are payable for excluded children unless the Management Committee determines otherwise.

Staff Immunisations
The Director is responsible for ensuring all staff have had their childhood immunisations and require unimmunised staff to complete the courses required for measles, mumps, rubella, polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough.

In addition:
- All staff are encouraged to have current immunisation against tetanus and diphtheria, ie a booster of ADT every 10 years.
- All staff are encouraged to maintain their immunisation status against immunisable diseases (except in cases where a staff member has a pre-existing medical condition which prevents immunisation).
- All staff are encouraged to be immunised against Hepatitis A & B.
- Heritage maintains a record of the immunisation status of staff.
- Heritage will cover the cost of staff immunisations.
- Staff are provided with the latest information about immunisations.

Communication
The Director is responsible for providing all Heritage families and staff with a copy of the Immunisation Policy and Illness Policy (including exclusion of sick children guidelines) on enrolment.

Information/factsheets about immunisations and immunisable diseases and the Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule are regularly circulated to families and staff.

Local nurses and doctors are encouraged to visit and talk about immunisation. Other methods of communication and ways in which Heritage encourage parents to vaccinate their children include:
- wall charts in rooms;
- first birthday immunisation reminder cards;
- fourth birthday immunisation reminder cards.

Returning After an Immunisation Injection
Heritage recommends that parents have children immunised at the end of the day or keep children, particularly babies, at home following immunisations early in the day as side effects are common. If parents insist they return to Heritage on medication such as panadol/paracetemol, staff must respectfully communicate with parents and refer to the guidelines in the Illness Policy if the child is not coping in the care setting.

Privacy and Confidentiality
The right of children, families and staff to be afforded a level of privacy and confidentiality with regard to their immunisation status is respected by Heritage. Heritage ensures the confidentiality of personal identifying information of any staff member or child who is not immunised for any reason. Refer to: Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.
Related Material

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<td>Hygiene Policy</td>
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References and Further Reading


Useful Websites

Centre for Community Child Health - www.rch.org.au
HealthInsite - www.healthinsite.gov.au
National Health and Medical Research Council - www.nhmrc.gov.au
Raising Children Network – www.raisingchildren.net.au
Useful Fact Sheets for Parents

Illness in Child Care Fact Sheet

Staying Healthy in Child Care

Version Control and Change History

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<th>Approved by</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>January 2007</td>
<td>HECC Management Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>HECC Management Committee</td>
<td>Complete rewrite of Heritage Immunisation Policy based on National Childcare Accreditation Council’s Immunisation Policy Template and other references above. Revised Immunisation Register form.</td>
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