

The ISP Guidelines Series

No. 1 Educator to Child Ratios and Supervision Requirements

Purpose of IDF Subsidy

In centre-based day care and outside school hours care services, the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) Subsidy refers to IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator and Immediate/Time Limited Support. The IDF Subsidy subsidises the employment of an Additional Educator to increase the educator to child ratio in the care environment to support the inclusion of children with additional and ongoing high support needs with typically developing peers. Educators work as a team, including the Additional Educator, to meet the needs of all children within the care environment.

Non-Approved Purposes of IDF Subsidy

Non-approved purposes of the IDF Subsidy are listed in the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) Guidelines. One of the non-approved purposes is using the funding to meet licensing requirements as outlined in the [National Regulations](#). This includes the provision of adequate supervision of children and meeting the educator to child ratios as required under the National Regulations, within the particular care environment for which IDF Subsidy is requested.

What this means in practice

Increased Educator to Child Ratios

An increase in educator to child ratios assists educators to implement the Strategies and Actions in their Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP), which focus on supporting children's participation in the day-to-day program. This means there is an Additional Educator present in the care environment for the IDF Subsidy hours approved, above both the number of educators required under the National Regulations within the particular care environment, and the total number of educators stated in the Daily Profile on the IS Case.

The SIP focuses on the Strategies educators will implement to address the Barriers to inclusion to support children's participation in the program and interactions with peers. The SIP should not show an Additional Educator is needed to provide adequate supervision, as services are already required to meet this requirement under the National Regulations.

Supporting All Children

1. In the SIP there will be a range of Strategies and Actions **designed to assist children to participate in the program and interact with their peers**. These Strategies and Actions will assist several or most of the children in the care environment. For example: *During outdoor play some children find it challenging to join in, and others to include their peers. Educators will be available to model what words to use to initiate entry into play with others and sustain interactions. Educators will verbally encourage all children's attempts to use their words and social skills, such as helping a peer or waiting for a turn.*
2. The increased educator to child ratio may support educators to implement specific Strategies required to include children with ongoing high support needs, such as *providing a high level of support with toileting for older children, or positioning a child with a physical disability to support participation in play and interaction between peers.*
3. Educators will utilise Strategies that may have been identified as helpful for one child to benefit more children in the care environment, for example *the use of visual aids to support children's communication, or providing access and educator support to both indoor and outdoor play environments at the same time.*

The Inclusion Support Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education

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Further information and clarification

Educator to child ratios

The National Regulations set educator to child ratio requirements, which consider the level of supervision and care children of different age groups require. As per the ISP Guidelines, the educator to child ratios within **the particular care environment** must be met, based on the ages of the children attending, before the funding of an Additional Educator can be considered¹. This ensures that the approval of IDF Subsidy is above and beyond what a service is required to provide, including the provision of adequate supervision, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

Educator to child ratios apply at all times that an education and care service is operating, **including during sleep and rest periods**. To be included in the ratio, educators must be working directly with children at the service meaning they are physically present with and directly engaged in providing education and care to the children².

Adequate Supervision

The provision of Adequate Supervision is a requirement under the National Regulations. Educator to child ratios alone do not achieve adequate supervision. Adequate Supervision means:

- That an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation; and
- Knowing where children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently³.

The National Law and Regulations cannot prescribe the staffing levels required to ensure adequate supervision for each component of a service's educational program. The service must use their own experience, judgement and discretion in determining this⁴. A number of factors may be considered as helpful context when determining if supervision is adequate, including:

- the number, ages, abilities and individual needs of children
- the number and positioning of educators
- each child's current activity
- areas where children are playing, in particular visibility and accessibility of these areas
- risks in the environment and experiences provided to children
- the educators' knowledge of each child and group of children
- the experience, knowledge and skill of each educator.⁵

Note: the intention of the ISP Guidelines Series is to support interpretation of the ISP Guidelines. Advice is sought from the department by the IDFM, for consideration on a case-by-case basis, when exceptional circumstances exist.

¹ Inclusion Support Program Guidelines 2016-17 to 2018-19

² Spotlight on Quality Newsletter (Issue 2, 2018), Early Childhood Education Directorate, NSW Department of Education

³ The Guide to the National Quality Framework (NQF) Operational Requirements (February 2018), Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

⁴ See Reference 2

⁵ See Reference 3