

NQF CHILD SAFETY CHANGES FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2025 AND 1 JANUARY 2026



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority™

In December 2023, ACECQA published the [Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the NQF](#) (the Review), undertaken at the request of Education Ministers.



The Australian, State and Territory Education Ministers have agreed to changes to the National Quality Framework (NQF).

This information sheet explains the changes for providers and their services.

As part of their response to the Review, Education Ministers have now agreed to several changes to the Education and Care Services National Regulations and the National Quality Standard (NQS). These will commence from 1 September 2025 and 1 January 2026.

What the changes relate to

- Policies and procedures for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments.
- Notification timeframes for physical and sexual abuse.
- Prohibiting the use of vaping substances and devices.
- Refinements to NQS Quality Areas 2 and 7.

When the changes start

Changes to the Education and Care Services National Regulations will commence on 1 September 2025.

Refinements to the NQS will commence on 1 January 2026.

From 1 September 2025

New policy and procedures – safe use of digital technologies and online environments

It's important to prioritise children's safety when using digital technologies and online environments.

Changes to regulation 168 mean providers will need to make sure services have a policy and procedures for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments at the service. These must include:

- the taking, use, storage and destruction of images and videos of children
- obtaining authorisation from parents to take, use and store images and videos of children
- the use of any optical surveillance device (e.g. CCTV)
- the use of any digital device issued by the service
- the use of digital devices by children.

Support to prepare for this new requirement

The [National Model Code – Taking images in early childhood education and care](#) and [Guidelines](#) were introduced in 2024. These resources support approved providers and their services to embed child safe practices for taking, sharing and storing images or videos of children and the safe use of electronic devices. These may help you to develop or update your policies and procedures.

ACECQA has developed guidance on preparing a policy and procedures for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments. These will be made available as part of ACECQA's suite of guidelines on our [Preparing NQF policies and procedures](#) webpage.

Changes to notification timeframes for allegations or incidents of physical and sexual abuse

The timeframe for approved providers to notify the regulatory authority of any incidents or allegations of physical or sexual abuse to a child while being educated or cared for by an education and care service will reduce from 7 days to 24 hours. All other notification requirements remain the same.

Services to be free from vaping substances and vaping devices

While service environments must already be free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol, they will also need to be free from the use of vaping substances and vaping devices.

From 1 January 2026

Refinements to the NQS will commence to sharpen the focus on child safety and explicitly reference child safety within Quality Areas 2 and 7. This will reinforce the existing intent of the NQS about quality education and care services being child safe services.

Refinements to Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

(new wording in *bold*)

Element 2.2.3 will become Child **Safety and** Protection:

- Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities **regarding child safety, including the need** to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

Refinements to Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

(new wording in *bold*)

Quality Area 7—Governance and leadership will become:

- Effective leadership contributes to sustained quality relationships and environments that facilitate children's learning and development. Well documented policies and practices that are developed and regularly evaluated in partnership with educators, coordinators, staff members and families contribute to the ethical management of **a quality service that is child safe**. There is a focus on continuous improvement.

Standard 7.1—Governance will become:

- Governance supports the operation of a quality service **that is child safe**.

Element 7.1.2—Management systems will become:

- Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service **that is child safe**.

Support to prepare for this new requirement

The [Guide to the NQF](#) will be updated to reflect these refinements. This will include additional examples of how services can demonstrate their child safe practices during quality assessment and rating.

There will also be additional content added to the [Guide to the NQF](#) to support children's online safety.



References and resources

ACECQA will continue to work with all state and territory regulatory authorities to support providers and their services to understand these changes.

ACECQA will progressively release more guidance and support, including new policy and procedure guidelines around the safe use of digital technologies and online environments. This will help approved providers and their services in meeting the new requirements.

Two new guides have been released to help approved providers and their services prepare for the changes:

- [NQF Child Safe Culture Guide](#) – embedding child safe cultures in education and care services.
- [NQF Online Safety Guide](#) – embedding child safe online environments in education and care services.

Existing resources including the [Guide to the NQF](#) will be amended from 1 September 2025 and from 1 January 2026 as the changes take effect.

For further information about these changes, [contact your regulatory authority](#).

What's next in response to the Child Safety Review?

Any further changes, and the timing for those changes, will be considered by governments following the national Child Safety Review public consultation process, which ended on 11 June 2025.