

SNAKE AWARENESS & FIRST AID POLICY

QUALITY AREA 2 | VERSION 1.1

Adopted by Approved Provider of Golden Plains Shire Council Children's Services		Month / Year
Date revised		March 2024
Next revision due		March 2026



PURPOSE

We aim to ensure every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children, staff and Family Day Care educators from harm and hazards likely to cause injury, including the potential risk from snake bites.

This policy will provide a framework for:

- Defining the risks of snakes within our service environment
- Ensuring appropriate communication and education for all users
- Identifying the necessary strategies to be implements to minimise the risk of snake bites and the appropriate medical response if required.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Golden Plains Shire Council operated Early Childhood Education and Care services are committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children, staff, Family Day Care educators and volunteers participating in all programs including off site excursions and Bush Kinder experiences.
- Being respectful of wildlife in and around our communities, including an awareness of the presence of snakes in the area during the warmer months.
- Facilitating appropriate communication and education to staff, Family Day Care educators, parents/guardians and children to minimise the risk of injury from snake bite during kindergarten sessions.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Person with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day-to-Day Charges, teachers, educators, Family Day Care educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at a Golden Plains Shire Council operated service.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators, Family Day Care educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Conduct a risk assessment to identify the potential risk of encountering a snake on the service premises	R	√	√		
Develop an emergency plan and procedure to include the response if encountering a snake and actions required in case of a snake bite	R				
Become familiar and confident with the Service's Emergency evacuation policies and procedures in case of a snake encounter or snake bite		√	√		√
Follow this policy and its procedures whilst on-site at a service	√	√	√	√	√
Read and be familiar with this policy				√	
Always leave snakes alone		√	√		√
Be aware of the snake species inhabiting the local area	√	√	√		
Snake bite first aid is captured within staff emergency first aid training (updated every 3 years) however information on up-to-date immobilization techniques is provided annually	R	√	√		
Participate in Emergency First Aid training and ensure currency with up-to-date immobilization techniques		√	√		
Staff to participate in organisational snake information and training sessions	√	√	√		
Educate Children about snakes and snake bite prevention behaviours		√	√		
Teach children safe snake bite prevention behaviours on an ongoing basis outside of kindergarten (ie. Family outings)				√	
Ensure children are reminded on a regular basis that if they encounter a snake, to move away quietly and report the sighting to an educator		√	√		
Educate children not to put their hands into hollow logs or rock crevices		√	√		
Ensure an emergency action plan is displayed in a prominent location should a snake bite occur	R	√	√		
Ensure First Aid Kits contain compression bandages and are accessible for regular outings and excursions	R	√	√		

Ensure inspections of the outdoor and indoor learning environment are conducted daily both prior to and during session; including bush kindergarten, excursions and regular outings	R	√	√		
Ensure lawns and gardens are well maintained	√	√			
Cut any long grass around the boundaries of the premises	√	√			
Remove snake habitats such as piles of timber, compost heaps or sheets of galvanised iron from around the premise	√	√	√		
Maintain clean surroundings around any animal housing/cages to reduce any potential mice population (a food source for snakes)	√	√	√		
Raise animal enclosures so that there is visibility under and around the enclosures	√	√	√		
Reptile proof any chicken or other animal enclosures and ensure these are stored away from buildings, entrances, and general play areas where snakes may be attracted to enter	√				
Ensure water and pet food are not accessible to wildlife	√	√	√		
Provide information to families about snake awareness and recommended responses if encountering a snake	√	√	√		
Raise any relevant concerns/issues regarding this policy or snake awareness at a service with staff				√	
Notify the Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider immediately if a snake is sighted		√	√		
Have the contact number of Wires or other licensed snake handlers readily available to assist in rescuing the snake if the snake cannot return to its natural environment [for example: the snake is located in a garden shed or storage container; the snake is located inside and is unable to exit the building/premises]	√	√	√		
Follow procedures for notification of a serious incident in the unlikely event of a staff member or child being bitten by a snake	R	√			
Complete an Illness, Accident and Trauma Record	R	√	√		
Ensure all educators, staff and children always wear enclosed footwear whilst outside at the service. Shoes maybe removed when inside.	√	√	√		√
Ensure children wear closed shoes to the service				√	



PROCEDURES

- Please refer to Attachment 1



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

Australia has around 170 species of land snakes, some with toxic venom this includes the front-fanged group including - the tiger snake, brown snake, eastern taipan, death adder and mulga or king brown snake. Although less venomous than many other Australian snakes, the red-bellied black snake is also quite common in urban areas. Snake bites can be potentially fatal so immediate medical assistance should be sought for all cases of suspected snake bite. It is not necessary to identify the snake species. All snake bites are treated equally by emergency services.

Golden Plains Shire Council Early Years Education and Care incl Funded Kindergarten, Limited Hours care and Family Day Care programs operate within rural and regional settings. Staff, contract educators and children also visit parklands and bush areas as part of excursions and regular outings, including bush kindergarten sessions. It is known that snakes inhabit these areas.

Snakes are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic) and should not be harmed or killed. Bites can occur if people try to kill snakes.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law 2010 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
- Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Codes,
- First Aid in the Workplace (2021)
- Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g., Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Australian Venom Research Unit (AVRU): is an internationally recognised, disciplinary research unit focused on the problem of venomous injury in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. Located within Melbourne University, the Australian Venom Research Unit aims to provide world-class expertise on the problem of Australia's venomous creatures, their toxins and the care of the envenomed patient.

Pressure Immobilization Bandage (also known as Compression Bandage): Bandage used for the purpose of applying pressure to the site of a wound such as a snake bite and to the affected limb. Refer to definition below of Pressure Immobilisation Technique.

Pressure Immobilisation Technique: The technique of pressure-immobilisation bandaging as a first aid measure is to prevent the spread of toxins through the body. This is done by applying enough pressure to compress the lymph vessels, and by preventing movement of the affected limb. Correct application of the technique can buy valuable time to get the patient to medical assistance.

Victorian Poisons Information Centre (VPIC): Located at the Austin Hospital, the role of the VPIC is to provide the people of Victoria with a timely, safe information service in poisonings and suspected poisonings. For members of the public this includes telephone assessment, advice on first aid, with or without referral to a doctor or hospital. Information is given to health professionals about formulations of products and management of poisoned patients.



SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- Bites and Stings web resource, Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health (www.austin.org.au)
- Australian Venom Research Institute (University of Melbourne) www.avru.org
- Service Emergency Management Plans

RELATED POLICIES

- Administration of first aid policy
- Incident, injury, trauma and illness policy
- Emergency Evacuation Policy
- Excursions and Service Events Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy



EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness.
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)) unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.



ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Snake Encounter

Attachment 2: First Aid for Snake Bite

Attachment 3: Snake Bite ACTION Plan

Attachment 4: Yard Check (September – April)

Attachment 5: Snake Catcher contracts

Attachment 6: Items and areas to be considered when undertaking daily snake-yard checks



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Golden Plains Shire Council in March 2024

REVIEW DATE: March 2026

ATTACHMENT 1: SNAKE ENCOUNTER

ENCOUNTERING A SNAKE

If a snake is sighted or encountered at the Service educators and staff will:

- inform children to move away quietly
- remove all children and staff from the immediate area, or evacuate the room until snake is removed if indoors
- isolate this area until the snake is removed or moves
- note the location of the snake
- if possible, monitor the snake from a safe distance (at least 5 metres away)
- if snake remains and is perceived to be a threat, contact local snake handler
- if indoors, close doors to the room and place towels along the bottom of the doors so the snake cannot move to another area and wait for snake handler to remove the snake
- **do not** approach the snake or try to contain it

Ensure that when safe to do so call Coordination Unit/Supervisor and provide update on actions incl:

- Especially important is to consider if it is possible that any child/adult was bitten.
- Was the snake touched/handled, stood on?
- Who was called? ie. Snake handler to be called/has been called
- Who saw the snake and exact location of the sighting?
- Where the snake is now? ie. moved on/on premises/Indoors etc
- It is important not to place buckets or containers over snakes, they are protected, and most snake bites occur when trying to contain, trap or catch snakes.
- The size of the snake is not relevant, small baby snakes are also venomous
- Snake venom can enter through skin so a bite is not necessary, a skin scratch may also result in poisoning

Coordination Unit will:

- Submit hazard report through Elumina and investigate
- Notify families via SMS of sighting
- Call Snake handler each time a snake is sighted on the premises to ensure a thorough check is undertaken and support staff with debrief
- Notify through NQAITS of an incident (as required)

ATTACHMENT 2: FIRST AID FOR A SNAKE BITE

FIRST AID FOR SNAKE BITE

(Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health, and Australian Venom Research Institute, Melbourne University, Australian Resuscitation Council Guideline 9.4.8 Envenomation – Pressure Immobilisation Technique)

- Stay calm and call for help.
- Have an adult phone an ambulance. If unable to phone, send someone for help.

Follow “Basic Life Support Flow Chart” DRSABCD as learnt in First Aid Training.

- Reassure the patient and encourage them to remain calm and still. Do not move the patient.
- Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake.
- DO NOT WASH / cut or suck venom from the bite. Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Traces of venom that are left on the skin can be used to identify the snake, and therefore the type of anti-venom that should be used if required.

Apply the Pressure Immobilization Technique (PIT):

- if on a limb, apply a broad bandage (10 – 15cm) over the bite site as soon as possible. Use an elasticized bandage rather than a crepe bandage if available. Use clothing if neither available. The bandage should be firm and tight, you should not be able to easily slide a finger between the bandage and skin.
- apply a further pressure bandage, starting at the fingers or toes of the bitten limb and extending upward covering as much as the limb as possible. This should be applied over existing clothing if possible.
- if only one bandage is available, apply from the fingers or toes extending up the limb as far as possible, including the bite site.
- splint the limb, including joints above and below the bite site to restrict limb movement. The splint can be incorporated under the layers of the bandage. Use a sling for the arm.
- if the bite is not on a limb, apply firm direct pressure. Do not restrict breathing or chest movement and do not apply firm pressure to the head or neck.

Keep patient still and under constant observation and be prepared to commence resuscitation.

Staff are to follow procedures as set out in the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*, including contacting parent/guardian, calling ambulance etc.

ATTACHMENT 3: EMERGENCY SNAKE BITE ACTION PLAN

EMERGENCY SNAKE BITE ACTION PLAN

If a person (staff or child) or other is bitten (or reports being bitten) by a snake:

- Conduct a primary survey of the area – do not attempt to catch or kill the snake
- Stay calm and call for help- have someone call 000 for an ambulance
- Reassure the child/adult and encourage them to keep calm and still
- Immediately apply a firm bandage over the bite marks or scratches
- Apply Pressure Immobilisation Technique (see Appendix 1)
- Maintain continued pressure and immobilise ensuring the child/adult does not move
- Rest and reassure the patient
- Do not take off clothing
- Do not wash bite as a venom sample can be used to identify the snake
- Do not cut or suck the bite to drain venom
- Do not apply a tourniquet
- Be prepared- resuscitation may be required

Call Coordination Unit to inform:

- Time ambulance Called – arrival time if known
- Confirm Compression Bandage applied
- Have parents (family contact) been called – are they coming/meeting at hospital
- Who was bitten Name - DOB
- Location point on body
- Current state/condition
- Check on staff present – other adults

Coordination Unit will:

- Consider sending additional staff to support
- Collect information from Admin re: family contacts/address and contact details.
- Check-in with staff ongoing – during and after incident
- Inform Management/Director/CEO/People and Safety Team/Communications. Via email is sufficient. Ensure the Mayor is informed.
- Prepare and send communication to all families of children in the program
- Call QAR regional Office to notify of serious incident details to be submitted.
- Prepare summary documentation investigation and responses for:
 - Worksafe – via Safety and wellbeing team
 - QARD NQAITS reporting
 - Elumina reporting

ATTACHMENT 4 ENVIRONMENT SAFETY CHECKLIST

Golden Plains Shire Children's Services – Environment Safety Checklist.

Kindergarten: _____

Week Beginning (DATE):	MON		TUE		WED		THU		FRI	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
DAILY										
Doors unlocked incl. children's toilet doors										
Grounds are free of hazards inc. rubbish, water collection, garden tools, trip hazards, vandalism										
Snake/spiders check: also looking for potential snake hiding places										
Gates are secure and in working order - emergency exit gate padlocks are in working order.										
Equipment and toys are in a safe and suitable condition for use. Broken toys removed.										
Nothing near any fence or gate that would assist children to climb over. Fences are in good repair.										
Fixed outdoor equipment inc. tyres, storage boxes etc. are free of objects or animals/insects inside/under/behind.										
Sandpit is clear of foreign objects and raked as appropriate.										
Soft fall area is clear of foreign objects and items that may be a hazard if children fell. Spread evenly under equipment eg swings										
Rubbish awaiting collection is inaccessible to children and stored appropriately										
Outdoor yard is set up in accordance with plan										
Paths are swept and clear of sand.										
Brooms, shovels etc put away after use.										
Adequate paper towel and soap available to the children										
Verandas clean and tidy										
Staff of duty have keys readily available where needed to unlock exit gates and storage areas										
Building has no maintenance issues										

List items here relevant to each location											
WEEKLY CHECK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Padlocks on gates physically opened to check operation • Vegetation trimmed, lawns mowed inside and outside perimeter fencing • Any items to be reported for maintenance or added to family gardening roster • Inspect soft fall: sufficient and not compacted • Sheds clean and are safe to enter and exit Task performed by: Name: Signature:	Comments										
Items reported to Management											
MONTHLY CHECK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft fall: is depth to 30cms across play equipment area, not compacted etc • Tissues/wipes available outdoors • Snake catcher signage clearly viewed from indoors and outdoors • Sheds inspected for safe use • Shelves in playrooms clear or only have items relevant to children • Chemical storage areas checked for safety and clear signage, clear labels on all decanted products • SDS storage area & First aid kits: located and clearly labelled for ease of access • First aid kit, children/staff medication expiry dates checked and followed up • Emergency backpacks in identified location, have current lists of children, medications/plans accessible for emergency collection • Timber equipment and other wooden items such as garden bed edging are free of splinter risks. • Are rodent/insect control measures working? 											
Check performed by:						Date:					
TERMILY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of term security check prior to holidays • Do carpets need cleaning? • List of items to be cleaned distributed to cleaners • Garden & pet feeding rosters in place for break 											
Check performed by:						Date:					
Nominated Supervisor weekly sign off:											

Please check each box and record Name/Initials of person

completing check.

Over summer months/warmer weather – staff are to check common places for snakes before taking children outside prior to anytime re-entering the playground.

Items to report for maintenance:

Urgent	Non urgent	Detail	Reported by	Reported to/date
		1.		
		2.		
		3.		

*Please keep all docs on file for the year.

ATTACHMENT 5 – SNAKE CATCHERS CONTACT DETAILS



SNAKE CATCHERS

- Contractors with a '✓' have completed Council's OHS requirements and should be used in the first instance (where possible and appropriate)
- That being said, you are encouraged to try multiple contractors to find the quickest available catcher. If a second contractor can arrive at site quicker, please cancel the original contractor as soon as possible

Shire – SOUTH

Contractor	Base Location	Contact Name	Number
• WildTek ✓	Teesdale	Mike Henry	0407 973 520 5281 5052
• Network Pest Control ✓	Batesford	Bobby Andrews	0418 599 243 5276 1177
• Jim's Pest Control ✓	Corio	Greg MacPherson	0466 136 645 131 546
• Snake Catcher Geelong	Geelong	Darren Keiller	0425 751 706

Shire – NORTH

Contractor	Base Location	Contact Name	Number
• Ballarat Snake Catcher	Ballarat	Jules Farquhar	0408 308 680
• RID Pest Control	Ballarat	David	0414 567 977

List Updated: 5 November 2018

2 Pope Street, Bannockburn, Victoria 3331

☎ 5220 7111 ✉ enquiries@gplains.vic.gov.au 🌐 goldenplains.vic.gov.au

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ATTACHMENT 6: ITEMS AND AREAS TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN UNDERTAKING YARD CHECK

Items and areas to be considered when undertaking daily snake-yard checks.

Take a rake/stick or broom – checks done twice daily during Spring Summer: September – April. Before session and after lunch.
Check all pot plants (high and low)
Push stick into crevices in rocks and ledges, any holes and gaps
Do not keep water containers out overnight
Check under all door mats/lift these at end of the day – reset each morning
Bridges and walkways, check in and under
Keep animals eg. Guinea Pigs, chickens etc house away from the facility in snake proof hutches
Rake Sandpit and reset equipment – store all sandpit equipment at end of session
Grass areas, ensure neat and tidy and no opportunity for snakes to hide in long grass
Sandpit boxes, if slats on floor watch that snakes do not enter from underneath – keep these closed and not accessible to children over spring/summer months. Staff set items.
Walk yard perimeter and check for new entry points and secure as necessary
Rubbish bins with handles facing user so there is no shuffling of bins – pull them towards you at all times
Rake soft-fall areas and reduce the amount of mulch under trees and fence lines.
Use stick under and in all bushes, shrubs and low-level foliage (idea is to scare any snakes hiding from this location, also check inside grass bushes)
Do not keep piles of garden waste or household/consumable rubbish on site at any time
Look in, on and around equipment especially cubby, forts etc
Check inside all cupboards in and around yard, check mud kitchens in and around and ensure no new entry points and open draws in cupboards and reset activities looking in pots, saucepans and containers.
Check seals especially those on the bottom of doors provide an adequate seal with no gaps
Check verandahs and hard surfaces especially on mornings after very hot days
Be vigilant 2-5 days after park lands, drains etc have been mowed as this will promote movement.
Check obvious places, check warm places on concrete, along walls and behind storage items
Ensure sliding doors seal when closed
Ensure you have good clear view of all areas, no hiding spots or mats/boxes/storage along building walls