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| Service Name:  |  |
| Staff Member Responsible for Risk Assessment: |  | Date: |  |

**Details of Risk**

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| Risk Identified:  | Children are allowed and encouraged to wear bare feet in the indoor and outdoor environments. |
| Details of Educators at the service: |
| Full Name | Position |
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| Number of Educators: |  | Number of Children: |  |

**Activities, Risks & Hazards**

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| Proposed activity, and the link to your program: |
| Staff allow children to make an educated decision to remove their shoes while outside. By constantly providing support and educating children on the risks of going barefoot, we can prevent potential harm but also empower children to make decisions for themselves and learn how to risk take in a supported environment.There are many benefits that stem from children having opportunities to experience no-shoe play. Some examples of these include, but are not limited to:-Shoes can hinder the growth of neural connections in children's brains. The feet are the most nerve-rich parts of the human body, and when they are covered in shoes, it limits the opportunities for the brain to build neurological pathways.- Shoes can restrict foot movement and impair walking, balance, sensory development, and proprioception (understanding our body's direction in space). Barefoot walking can also help children acquire a natural, healthy gait.- When children walk barefoot, they use the muscles in their feet and toes to grip the ground more easily, strengthening them and minimising the chance of accidents and falls. Walking barefoot allows children to keep full foot function.- Barefoot walking teaches children to assess situations, adapt to environments, and develop a gentle gait. It also increases their awareness of their surroundings, preventing injuries from sharp objects.**-** Research shows that being barefoot in nature enhances the positive effects on children's social and emotional well-being. Shoes act as a barrier, reducing the health-promoting benefits of nature.- "Grounding," also known as "earthing," is a therapeutic technique that involves doing activities that "ground" or electrically reconnect you to the earth. This practice is based on the idea that being in direct contact with the earth's surface allows for a transfer of free electrons from the ground into the body. Proponents say that this can be achieved through activities like walking barefoot on grass, sand, or soil, lying on the ground. Many indigenous and ancient cultures have long understood the importance of maintaining a close connection with the earth, often incorporating this belief into their healing practices and daily lives. In today's fast-paced and technology-driven world, grounding offers a way to reconnect with nature, promoting physical and mental well-being.  |

**IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS & HAZARDS AND HOW THESE ARE TO BE MANAGED**

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| **Identify any Hazards or Risks associated with barefoot play** | **How will the risks be minimized and managed and who is responsible?** | **Are the risks:**Very likely likelyUnlikelyvery unlikely | **Are the risks:**ExtremeMajorModerateMinor |
| 1. Weather conditions
 | If the weather is deemed appropriate by staff for no shoes play- Staff will allow it. If not, children will be encouraged to leave their shoes on. | Unlikely | Minor |
| 1. Step on object that may cause cut, graze, bruise, splinters
 | * Children will be taught about the possibilities of different surfaces and what they may cause if they are not stepping carefully while being bare foot.
* By providing the necessary support and education, we can empower children to take ownership of their choices, including the decision to change their shoes when transitioning between activities like bike riding. This promotes safety but also instils a sense of responsibility and independence.

staff to ensure yard checks are completed daily for any potential new hazards | Unlikely | Minor/Moderate |
| 1. Step on a bee
 | * It will be the responsibility of all staff members to identify potential risks associated with children not wearing shoes, this involves bees in the yard. Although this is not a common occurrence due to the lack of natural grass, it can still happen. In the event that staff members spot bees in the yard, they will discuss the potential risks with the children and provide guidance to put their shoes back on, if necessary.
* Education and discussion with children will be had to identify the risks of possible bee stings.

If there are children who have known allergies to bee stings a risk minimisations and communication plan will be completed and the risks will be discussed with the child’s parents and a plan made that will be communicated to all staff. | Unlikely | Minor/Moderate |
| 1. Toes/feet ran over with the bike
 | All staff are responsible for educating children to not play around the bike track or use bikes when not wearing shoes. | Unlikely | Moderate |
| 1. An object being dropped on foot/toe
 | It is the responsibility of all staff to guide and remind children about the potential risks of objects falling on their feet. Staff should make suggestions and thought-provoking comments and questions to empower children to make informed decisions to keep themselves safe. | Unlikely | Moderate |
| 1. 6.Toes/feet burnt on hot ground/surface
 | Staff must guide children about the ground temperature when not wearing shoes. Encourage informed decisions by suggesting precautions and asking thought-provoking questions. | Unlikely | Major/moderate |
| 1. Uneven surfaces
 | All staff will be responsible in educating children about moving about uneven surfaces and the potential risks (refer to no. 2). | likely | minor |

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| Has the risk assessment been communicated to all staff?  | YES | *COMMENTS* |
| NO |

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| How will the Risk Assessment be made available for families?  | *COMMENTS* |

**ENDORSEMENT EEA, OM or CEO**

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| --- | --- |
| **Name** |  |
| **Signature**  |  | **Date** |  |