FOR ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

Non-Contact Time Implementation Guide

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1. Introduction

1.1 The introduction of mandatory Non-Contact Time establishes a common minimum requirement to support educators in carrying out essential professional duties that do not involve direct teaching, caring for or supervising children during their working hours. These include but are not limited to planning lessons, preparing learning resources, documenting children's development and engaging parents. Over time, this supports better workload management, stronger teaching quality, improved educator well-being and greater staff retention.

2. Purpose of this Guide

2.1 This guide sets out the definition of Non-Contact Time, ECDA's requirements, eligibility, planning considerations, compliance expectations and practical steps for centres to operationalise Non-Contact Time while safeguarding children's safety, well-being and learning experiences.

3. What is Non-Contact Time?

3.1 Non-Contact Time is protected time during an educator's working hours to carry out professional duties without directly teaching, caring for or supervising children. Non-Contact Time allows educators to focus on responsibilities outside the classroom, to plan, reflect, prepare learning resources and engage parents.

3.2 During their Non-Contact Time, educators should be relieved from classroom responsibilities and will not be counted towards the staff-child ratio. Centres are still required to meet the staff-child ratio requirement in the class based on the youngest age group, at all times.

4. Minimum Non-Contact Time Requirement

4.1 All ECDA-licensed Early Childhood Development Centres ("Centres") must provide all full-time certified educators[1] with **a minimum of two hours of Non-Contact Time per week,** in blocks of at least one hour. Centres may schedule this flexibly based on their operational needs, including accumulating the Non-Contact Time hours over no more than one month. For example:

- Weekly: One hour each on two separate days or two hours in a day

[1] Please refer to Table 1 in this Guide for the eligibility criteria

- Every two weeks: Four hours in a day
- Monthly: Eight hours in a day

4.2 Two hours of Non-Contact Time is a minimum, not a cap. Centres are encouraged to provide more, where possible. Non-Contact Time must not be achieved by extending an educator's regularly rostered working hours. For example, for an educator rostered for a 9-hour shift, excluding lunch break, their Non-Contact Time should be rostered within the 9-hour workday.

5. Non-Contact Time Requirement Eligibility

5.1 All full-time certified Early Childhood (EC) educators taking on the job roles per the Skills Framework for EC, must be provided with at least two hours of Non-Contact Time per week. Certified EC educators are those holding a Letter of Notification (LON).

5.2 The mandatory requirement will apply to full-time certified EC educators, whose roles include but are not limited to responsibilities such as lesson planning, documenting children's development, and engaging families. Part-time certified educators will not be subject to this requirement.

5.3 Non-certified staff, such as assistant educators and programme helpers, generally have different roles and do not carry these same responsibilities. They are not subject to the mandatory Non-Contact Time requirement.

5.4 Early Intervention (EI) educators and Learning Support (LS) educators are also eligible for Non-Contact Time if they are employed by the preschool organisation and based in one centre. For those employed at the organisation or Headquarters-level and deployed across several centres, they are not subject to the mandatory Non-Contact Time, but their employers may determine appropriate Non-Contact Time arrangements based on their work arrangements and operational needs.

5.5 While not mandatory, operators may extend non-contact time to all ineligible staff.

5.6 Please refer to the following **Table 1** on the eligibility criteria for mandatory Non-Contact Time:

Table 1: Non-Contact Time eligibility			
Full-time certified educators taking on the job roles per the Skills Framework for Early Childhood (EC)	**Full-time certified educators not taking on the job roles per the Skills Framework for Early Childhood**	**Full-time non-certified staff**	**Part-time or relief staff**
✅ **Non-Contact Time will be mandatory**	❌ Non-Contact Time not mandatory	❌ Non-Contact Time not mandatory	❌ Non-Contact Time not mandatory
• For example, an L2/L1-certified educator employed as a Preschool Educator, or an EY2/EY1-certified educator employed as an Infant Educator • Centre-based EI and LS educators	• For example, an L2-certified educator employed as an Assistant Teacher whose main role is to help out in the classroom.	• Assistant Educators • Assistant Infant Educators (AIEs) • Programme Helpers	• Certified or non-certified

5.7 Centres must make Non-Contact Time available to all eligible educators. If an educator is unable or does not wish to take Non-Contact Time, this should be discussed, mutually agreed upon by the educator and centre, and recorded, taking into account the educator's workload, responsibilities and centre's operational needs.

Such arrangements should not be used to routinely waive Non-Contact Time, and centres should continue to ensure that educators are supported to complete their other professional responsibilities within working hours.

6. What Can Educators Use Non-Contact Time for?

6.1 Non-Contact Time should support educators in carrying out their essential professional duties that do not involve direct teaching, caring for or supervising children during working hours. Appropriate uses include, but are not limited to:

- Lesson planning, evaluation, reflection
- Preparation of teaching and learning materials
- Documentation, observation and evaluation of children's learning and development
- Communication with parents and outreach to community partners
- Participation in mentoring sessions intended to support the educator

6.2 Non-Contact Time is not the sole solution to workload management, nor is it a guarantee that all professional tasks will be completed within that time alone. Where an educator regularly finds the allocated Non-Contact Time insufficient, the centre should engage the educator and review not just the Non-Contact Time provided, but also the educator's overall workload and role expectations. The goal is not simply to meet a requirement; it is to ensure every educator has what they need to do their job well.

7. What Does Not Count as Non-Contact Time

7.1 The following do not count as Non-Contact Time:

- Time during which the educator continues to supervise, teach, care for or interact directly with children
- Meal breaks
- Transition periods between preschool programmes where the educator remains responsible for children
- Any time during which the educator is not formally relieved of classroom responsibilities

- Professional Development activities, including formal training, courses, workshops and conferences, whether conducted internally or externally
- Days when centres are closed for Development Days and preschool holidays, including the six Development Days, Teachers' Day and Children's Day

8. Implementation Steps for Centres

8.1 Centres may consider the following implementation steps:

i. **Assess the centre's current practices.** Review current arrangements, staffing models and possible challenges. For centres which currently do not have any Non-Contact Time arrangements, review manpower deployment and staff roster to schedule Non-Contact Time timeslots.

ii. **Map programme and manpower demands.** Identify periods where programme demands are lower and staffing capacity is available to support Non-Contact Time.

iii. **Plan in advance and develop a centre-level Non-Contact Time roster.** Incorporate Non-Contact Time into regular staff deployment and scheduling plans, ensuring children's care and safety. Centres remain responsible for ensuring adequate staffing and meeting all existing requirements as they plan their educators' Non-Contact Time. Please refer to Annex for an example of a scheduling roster.

iv. **Clarify roles and align expectations.** Communicate the purpose of Non-Contact Time and activities that may or may not be undertaken during Non-Contact Time to all centre staff.

v. **Put in place coverage arrangements.** Consider staggered schedules, staff rotation, or relief manpower.

vi. **Consider the physical space**. Where no dedicated staff room or suitable on-site space is available, centres may allow educators to use another suitable workspace or work from home, provided that it falls within the educator's working hours.

Where working from home is allowed, centres should set clear expectations regarding duties educators should carried out, accountability during the Non-Contact Time period, and how the Non-Contact Time will be properly recorded.

vii. **Monitor and review implementation.** Monitor whether educators receive the minimum Non-Contact Time requirement and whether disruptions are frequent. Review and refine the implementation plan where necessary.

9. Rescheduling and Managing Disruptions to Non-Contact Time

9.1 Centres should make every effort to protect their educators' scheduled Non-Contact Time. If Non-Contact Time is disrupted due to unexpected operational needs (such as covering for manpower absences), centres must reschedule the missed Non-Contact Time **by the end of the following month**.

9.2 Where rescheduling is not possible due to exceptional circumstances, the centre may offer alternative compensation, such as time off or overtime pay, in line with its employment arrangements. This should be on an exceptional basis **only in the first year of implementation, i.e. from 1 November 2027 to 31 October 2028**, and not become a routine substitute for Non-Contact Time.

9.3 Centres are <u>not</u> required to reschedule or makeup for Non-Contact Time under the following circumstances:

- If Non-Contact Time falls on educator's planned or unplanned leave, including medical/sick leave
- If Non-Contact Time is interrupted by an emergency. An emergency is defined as a situation that arose suddenly and could not have been reasonably anticipated or prevented through normal operational or manpower planning. Such situations include but are not limited to:
    - Fires, unplanned evacuation drills, or incidents resulting in evacuation
    - Serious injuries or acute medical emergencies involving a child or staff member
    - Incidents involving a missing child

9.4 Centres should schedule Non-Contact Time in advance and also consider known centre closures, term breaks and public holidays when planning Non-Contact Time schedules.

10. Compliance, Documentation and Records

10.1 ECDA does not have a prescribed template for recording Non-Contact Time. Centres must keep up-to-date records of the Non-Contact Time provided to each eligible educator, indicating the date, timing and duration. These records should be made available to ECDA upon request.

10.2 The Non-Contact Time requirement will be included in the Early Childhood Development Centres Code of Practice (the 'Code'). All centres are expected to meet the requirements set out in the Code.

10.3 From 1 November 2027, failure to meet the Non-Contact Time requirement may result in regulatory action liable under the Code.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 **Operators at headquarters-level or centre-level**: Responsible for planning, approving, monitoring and tracking the implementation of Non-Contact Time.

11.2 **Eligible Educators**: Responsible for using Non-Contact Time appropriately for professional duties that support teaching quality, adhering to the centre's Non-Contact Time schedule and agreed coverage arrangements.

12. Resources Available

12.1 Centres may tap on the following resources to implement Non-Contact Time:

- For access to affordable and reliable relief staff services: ECDA | Relief Staff Pool Initiative
- Support for hiring and training: Manpower Hiring Grant, Early Childhood Career Conversion Programmes: Career Conversion Programmes (CCP) Listing
- For support on adoption of digital solutions: ECDA | Early Childhood Industry Digital Plan

13. Frequently Asked Questions

13.1 Centres may refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) published on ECDA's website at ECDA | Ask ECDA.

13.2 For all other feedback or clarifications relating to Non-Contact Time implementation, centres may contact ECDA at Contact@ecda.gov.sg.

Annex: Practical Scheduling Model

The following is an example of what the staff roster could look like.

Rostering Assumptions:

- **105**-capacity centre with each level distributed based on historical patterns.
- **12** certified educators.
- Each educator is a full-time employee working 44 hours per week, 9-hour shift per day.
- Children arrive and depart gradually, with most arriving after 8.00am and leaving after 5.00pm.
- Different classes are grouped during non-programme hours.
- Infant care children are not grouped with childcare children; at least two programme staff are required at opening and closing regardless of attendance.

Please note that the roster below is an example which centres may adopt and it is contingent on the arrival pattern of the children. Where required, centres must adjust its manpower deployment to meet ECDA's minimum staffing requirements and to ensure the safety and well-being of children are upheld.

An example of staff roster

Non-Contact Time on Tuesday
Non-Contact Time on Wednesday
Non-Contact Time on Thursday
Not in class

Bay 1 (36)	**30%**	**35%**	**45%**	**60%**							**Stagger 1-hour lunch break between 12pm and 2pm**											**60%**	**50%**	**40%**	**30%**
Time	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30	15:00	15:30	16:00	16:30	17:00	17:30	18:00	18:30	19:00
Maximum Attendance	10	12	16	21	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	21	18	14	10
Minimum Staff Required (based on youngest SCR - PG)	1.25	1.50	2	2.63																		2.63	2.25	1.75	1.25
PG (16)																									
Staff A			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Staff B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Staff C					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
K2 (20)																									
Staff D					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Staff E	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Bay 2 (69)	**30%**	**35%**	**45%**	**60%**																		**60%**	**50%**	**40%**	**30%**
Time	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30	15:00	15:30	16:00	16:30	17:00	17:30	18:00	18:30	19:00
Maximum Attendance	21	24	31	41	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	41	34.5	27	20

Minimum Staff Required (based on youngest SCR - N1)	1.75	2	2.58	3.42																		3.42	2.88	2.25	1.67
N1 (24)																									
Staff F	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Staff G		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1					
Staff H					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
N2 (30)																									
Staff J			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Staff K				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
K1 (15)																									
Staff L	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Staff M					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1