

Enrolment & Orientation Policy and Procedures

Purpose

This policy outlines:

- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at Acacia Children's Centres
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into Acacia Children's Centres
- processes to ensure compliance with legislative and DESE funding requirements in relation to the enrolment of children in early childhood education and care services.

Policy statement

Values

Acacia Children's Centres are committed to:

- equal access for all eligible children
- meeting the needs of the local community
- supporting families to meet the requirements for enrolment through the provision of information
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided for enrolment
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receive an effective orientation into the service.

Scope

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, early childhood teachers, Persons in Day to Day Charge, educators, staff and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at Acacia Children's Centres.

Background and legislation

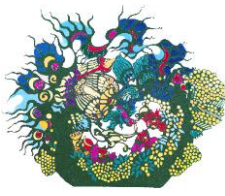
Background

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* require approved services to have a policy and procedures in place in relation to enrolment and orientation (Regulation 168(2) (k)).

It is intended that all eligible children (refer to *Definitions*) will have access to one year of kindergarten before commencing school. However, a shortage of places in some areas can limit choices for parents/guardians. Where demand is higher than availability, Approved Provider's must adhere to their eligibility and priority of access criteria (refer to *Definitions* and *Attachment 1*) policy in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places takes account of the requirements set out in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*), the service's philosophy, values and beliefs, and the provisions of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2012*. The Victorian Government requires funded organisations to ensure that their policies and procedures promote equal opportunity for all children. Services participating in central enrolment schemes are required to comply with the enrolment procedures of that scheme.

Childcare services providing approved child care (refer to *Definitions*) must abide by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for families childcare package) Act 2017* (refer to *Legislation and standards*) and the Commonwealth Government's *Priority for allocating places in child care services* (refer to *Sources*).

Immunisations are an effective means of reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. Early childhood education and care services which are regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* have legislative responsibilities under the *Public Health and*



Wellbeing Act 2008 to only offer a confirmed place in their programs to children with acceptable immunisation documentation (refer to *Definitions*).

Legislation and Standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 160, 161, 162, 168, 177, 183*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Regulations 2015 (Vic)*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*

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

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: <https://www.legislation.gov.au/>

Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Acceptable immunisation documentation:

Documentation as defined by the *Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood education and care services* as acceptable evidence that a child is fully vaccinated for their age, or is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind their vaccinations; or has a medical reason not to be vaccinated; or has been assessed as being eligible for a 16 week grace period.

Approved childcare:

Approved childcare services are services that have Australian Government approved to receive Child Care Subsidy (refer to *Definitions*) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care includes centre based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in home care.

Authorised nominee:

(In relation to this policy) is a person who has been given written authority by the parents/guardians of a child to collect that child from the education and care service. These details will be on the child's enrolment form.

The National Law and National Regulations do not specify a minimum age limit for an authorised nominee. Each service will need to consider a risk assessment on an individual basis to determine if a person under the age of 18 is able to be an authorised nominee and, if so, what constitutes the minimum acceptable age at that service.



Child Care Subsidy (CCS):

A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers. Further information can be found at: <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy->

Children with additional needs:

Children whose development or physical condition requires specialist support or children who may need additional support due to language, cultural or economic circumstances.

Eligible child:

A child attending an early childhood education and care service as described in the *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services* or a child in a kindergarten program who meets the requirements of both *The Kindergarten Guide* and the *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services*.

Enrolment form:

A form that collects contact details, and personal and medical information from parents/guardians about their child. The information on this form is placed on the child's enrolment record (see below) and is kept confidential by the service.

Enrolment record:

The collection of documents which contains information on each child as required under the National Regulations (Regulations 160, 161, 162) including the enrolment form; details of any court orders; and immunisation documentation as specified in the *Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood education and care services*. Enrolment records are stored securely in the service due to their confidential nature.

Fee:

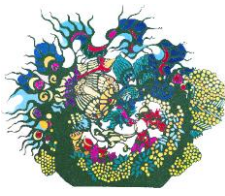
A charge for a place within a program at the service.

Priority of access:

In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a service than there are places available, the service must allocate spaces using the criteria outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*), or if in receipt of the CCS, comply with the Commonwealth Government's policy for allocating places.

Sources

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-childhood-immunisation-register
- The Family Assistance Law as the basis for Commonwealth child care fee assistance including the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS): <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-legislation>
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: www.acecqa.gov.au/
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*: www.acecqa.gov.au/
- *The Kindergarten Guide (Department of Education and Training)*: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx
- Department of Health and Human Services, *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care service*: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit>
- Victorian Department of Health: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation



Procedures

The Approved Provider or Persons with Management and Control is responsible for:

- determining the criteria for priority of access to programs at Acacia Children's Centres based on funding requirements and the service's philosophy (refer also to Attachment 1 – Eligibility and priority of access criteria)
- considering any barriers to access that may exist, developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access, an early childhood program
- complying with the Inclusion, Cultural Competence, & Equity policy
- providing opportunities (in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators) for interested families to attend the service during operational hours to observe the program and become familiar with the service prior to their child commencing in the program
- providing parents/guardians with information about the requirements of the law for enrolment, locating and accessing immunisation services and obtaining acceptable immunisation documentation required for enrolment
- assessing the child's immunisation documentation as defined by the *Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood education and care services* **prior to enrolment** to determine if the child's vaccination status complies with requirements
- taking reasonable steps to obtain acceptable immunisation documentation from a parent/guardian of a child enrolled under a grace period within the 16 weeks from when the child begins attending
- ensuring that the enrolment form (refer to *Definitions*) complies with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161, 162 and that it effectively meets the management requirements of the service
- ensuring that enrolment records (refer to *Definitions*) are stored in a safe and secure place, and kept for three years after the last date on which the child was educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 183)
- ensuring that the orientation program and plans meet the individual needs of children and families, and comply with DESE funding criteria
- reviewing the orientation processes for new families and children to ensure the objectives of this policy are met

The Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day to Day Charge and early childhood teachers are responsible for:

- reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions*)
- responding to parent/guardian enquiries regarding their child's readiness for the program that they are considering enrolling their child in
- discussing the individual child's needs with parents/guardians
- encouraging parents/guardians to make contact with educators and carers at the service, when required
- assisting parents/guardians to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child
- sharing information with parents/guardians concerning their child's progress with regard to settling in to the service

discussing support services for children with parents/guardians, where required.

All educators are responsible for:

- developing strategies to assist new families to:



- feel welcomed into the service
- become familiar with service policies and procedures
- share information about their family beliefs, values and culture
- share their understanding of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs
- discuss the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's learning
- providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members
- complying with the service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with this Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- completing the enrolment application form and the enrolment form prior to their child's commencement at the service and providing acceptable immunisation documentation of their child's immunisation status
- where a child is on an immunisation catch-up schedule, ensuring that the child's immunisations are updated in line with the schedule and providing acceptable immunisation documentation to the service
- ensuring that all other required information is provided to the service
- updating information by notifying the service of any changes as they occur.
- Reading and understanding the general enrolment procedures and orientation process (see Attachment 2).

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures

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

Attachments

- Attachment 1: Eligibility and priority of access criteria
- Attachment 2: General enrolment procedures

BREACH OF THIS POLICY

Any educator or staff found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Eligibility and priority of access criteria

1. Eligibility and priority of access criteria for the funded kindergarten program

The following children are eligible for attendance in the funded kindergarten program:

- children who have been granted approval to receive funding for a second year of kindergarten in accordance with *The Kindergarten Guide* available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx
- children who were eligible to attend in the previous year, but:
 - deferred
 - withdrew from the service prior to the April data collection
- children who turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten
- children turning six years of age at kindergarten who have been granted an exemption from school-entry age requirements by the regional office of DESE (refer to *The Kindergarten Guide*, available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>)
- three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection may be eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten program. This scheme provides funding to enable children to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for a specific number of hours. Details are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx.

When demand exceeds availability, the Approved Provider will refer to the service's values and philosophy to determine the priority of access. This will include:

- children who have received funding for a second year of kindergarten
- children who were eligible to attend in the previous year but deferred or withdrew from the service prior to the April data collection.
- priority of access criteria as outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide* available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx

Other considerations may include date of application, siblings already enrolled at the service, attendance in the three-year-old program and local community zoning.

Childcare services providing approved child care (refer to *Definitions*) must abide by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011* (refer to *Legislation and standards*) and the Commonwealth Government's *Priority for allocating places in child care services* (refer to *Sources*).



ATTACHMENT 2

Enrolment Procedures

During the enrolment process, parents/guardians are required to attend in person with their child and collect an enrolment pack which includes:

- An Enrolment form (paper or Online);
- Payment information;
- Information about our service and rooms;

The Director or Nominated Educator will take the time to explain the information required by the Centre and ensure the family understands the purpose for this. If required, interpreting support services are available for non-English speaking families.

During this time, the Centre staff will also discuss any specific requirements for the child and inclusive practices employed at the Centre. This may include, anaphylaxis medical management action plan, asthma action plan, medicines, diet, allergies, cultural requirements or a court order. In addition, an initial orientation process including stay and play and short visits will be planned or commenced.

Information Required to be provided by the Family

Before the child begins their first day at the Centre, Acacia Children's Centres must have all required documentation for the child. The child will not be accepted into the service without this being completed. Information that is required is as follows:

- A completed enrolment form;
- A copy of the child's Immunisation history statement from Australian Childhood Immunisation Register;
- A completed medical management plan which includes Action plans and any Medication or aides required to fulfill the Action plan requirements (if any medical condition has been confirmed);
- Child Care Subsidy requirements;
- Kindergarten enrolment form for children enrolled in 4-year-old kinder program;
- Excursion authorisation form if applicable.

Fees

The Director or the Nominated Educator will advise families of their individual daily or weekly fees which is to be paid on their commencement week. All fees are payable two weeks in advance. We have a range of payment options available to families and these will be provided upon commencement; the preferred payment type is Direct Debit.

Information for Families

At the time of enrolment, families will be informed about policies and procedures that pertain to the family and their individual needs. Families will be informed about the location of the centre Philosophy and the Policy and Procedure folder. They are also informed about how they can be involved in the Centre, including the Management Committee, sub-committee and other Centre activities.

Orientation Process

Acacia Children's Centres recognise that a child's transition from home to the centre is an important time and will ensure that children and families are supported to settle into their new environment. A child's experience of child care will be effectively formed by a successful transition into the Centre. Settling the child into a Centre can be a sensitive time for children, parents/guardians and educators. An orientation period will enable the child and family to familiarise themselves with educators, staff and the Centre. This will assist in making the child feel safe and secure in the Centre environment.



All children must have at least one orientation session before their first day. Families will be consulted on how many more sessions after their first orientation session will best suit their individual needs to ensure a smooth transition into Acacia. Orientation will be of no charge to families and will be organised at a time suitable for the room, educators, and families involved. The Director or Nominated Educator will show families around the centre and introduce them to educators and staff in the child's room.

During orientation, the parent/guardian is required to provide adequate supervision for their child at all times. No Parent is to leave the building whilst undertaking an orientation session.

Parents/guardians will advise educators of their child's routines, sleep, feeding and comforting needs. Comfort objects from home will be encouraged and be available for the child. We encourage families to share their expectations, ideas and information about their cultural background. Educators should take the opportunity to share information with children and their family about Acacia's programs and operations, the Centre philosophy and the children's indoor and outdoor environments.