

Policy Document No: ELC25
Category: Early Learning
Topic: Admissions Policy



Date Issued: March 2007
Review Dates: December 2016

Considerations

Philosophy: Equal access; meeting community needs.

Children's needs: Safe, harmonious environment; protection; access to parents/ guardians; equal access to the program.

Parent's needs: Access to their children; access to staff re: children's participation; enrolment for their child/siblings; emergency care; responsible parent issues; access to their child's records; confidentiality.

Staff needs: Safe, harmonious work environment; controlled interruptions to ensure children's program not negatively influenced; access to union representative; access to equal employment opportunity.

Management needs: Require access to any records to fulfil management tasks; confidentiality.

Background and Legislation

Education and Care Services National Regulations Part 4, regulations 98, 99, 111, 149, 158, 160, 161, 168 (2m), 177.
Ministerial Council For Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011

Equal Opportunity Commission – www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au

Guide to the National Quality Standard: elements 6.1.1; 6.2.2

Australian Government Child Care Service Handbook and website – www.facs.gov.au

National Privacy Principles – www.privacy.gov.au/act/index.html

Policy Statement

Access for families and children to the Centre will not discriminate against families, will ensure the safety and care of children at the centre, and will protect the rights of parents &/or guardians. Enrolments will be subject to Commonwealth Government priority of access guidelines. Other members of the community, professionals and students will be provided access to the centre where it enhances the quality of the program, protects the welfare and rights of children and staff and provides training and experience to members of the children's services field.

How the policy will be implemented - Specific Practices and Procedures

- Equal Opportunity principles will be observed in relation to access to the centre for children, parents & staff.

Enrolments

- Enrolments will be accepted according to the Commonwealth Government 'Priority of Access' (See appendix 1) and criteria set in line with College. An enrolment form must be completed for each child. Where enrolling parents are not fluent in English the enrolment interview will wherever possible be conducted in their primary language. On commencement parents will be given a "Parent Handbook"
- If a place is not immediately available at the centre the family may be put onto a waiting list. Details about priority of access eligibility, age of child and care requirements will be required at this stage. When a place becomes available the family will be contacted by the Registrar and enrolment may proceed.
- It is the family's responsibility to notify the service of any changes to their circumstances or details to ensure information is current and correct. Enrolment information will be kept in a confidential file. Access to this information is available only to authorised staff, parent and authorised Government Officers.

- Subject to any State or Federal Equal Opportunity legislation, the Centre reserves the right to exclude a child from the Service for any reason connected to the Welfare of the child and the welfare of staff and other children or parents who use the Service.

Administration

- The Centre will provide an area separate from the children and staff that is suitable for administrative activities and private consultations with parents (regulation 111)
- It is a requirement of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, that the child care service be connected to a telephone (reg. 98).

Attendance Records

- Accurate attendance records will be kept and checked each day.
- The enrolling parent/guardian or authorised person who brings the child to the service or collects the child from the service must sign/initial the child's times of arrival and departure.
- Parents who do not complete the attendance records will not be eligible to claim Child Care Benefit. (Refer to the Child Care Services Handbook – Accountability Requirements.)

Authorisation for Collection, Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisation

- The Nominated Supervisor and staff at the service will ensure that a child who is being educated and cared for by the service will not leave the premises except in accordance with the regulation 99 (*Education and Care Services National Regulations*).
- The names and contact numbers of all persons authorised to collect children from the Centre (the authorised nominees), must be included on the enrolment form. Any changes to these authorities must be advised in writing to the centre by the enrolling parent as soon as possible.
- If the enrolling parent arranges for an authorised person to collect their child from the Centre, they must contact the Centre to advise of this arrangement and confirm who will collect the child.
- If the centre has not been notified and someone other than the enrolling parent arrives to collect the child the Supervising Officer or Senior Staff Member will contact the enrolling parent to obtain their authorisation which will be in writing wherever possible. The child will not be released until the enrolling parent's authorisation has been obtained. If the authorised person is not known to the centre, the enrolling parent will be asked to provide a description of the person concerned, who will also be required to provide proof of their identity.
- An authorisation will be requested from parent/guardian at the time of enrolment and kept on the child's record as to consent to the medical treatment of the child for the approved provider, nominated supervisor or an educator to seek medical treatment for the child from a registered medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service and to organise transportation of the child by an ambulance service if required (regulation 161).

Child Care Fees

- Parents will be billed four times per year. There will be an option of paying the full year's fees, with a discount of 4%. The discount is not applicable to all items on the fee statement - please contact the accounts department for further information. Once the family is approved by the FAO, it will advise us and begin to pay us a benefit on the family's behalf, which we will rebate off the fees in the next statement.

Late Collection

- Parents/Guardians who are unavoidably detained and are unable to collect their child at the negotiated collection time must telephone the centre to advise of their lateness and expected time of arrival. If a parent/guardian is unable to collect their child prior to closing time they should arrange for another responsible adult to collect the child and advise the centre of this arrangement if the person is not authorised to collect the child from the centre on the enrolment form. This advice should be in writing if at all possible.
- If the parent/guardian has not contacted the centre and the child has not been collected 10 minutes after the negotiated collection time, the centre will attempt to telephone the parent/guardian or if this is not possible telephone the emergency contact people listed on the child's enrolment form to arrange for the child's immediate collection. (See appendix 2)

Family Access

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians in a positive and supportive manner that encourages the parent-child relationship. Information with regard to family issues and personal lives will be handled confidentially. Every effort will be made to treat both parents/guardians equally. Without legal documentation, staff cannot act as though one parent is more fit than another to the legal rights of their child.
- Parents/guardians will have access to qualified staff to enable them to discuss any concerns they may have at any reasonable time regarding their child. This may be spontaneous, by telephone or by appointment. Staff will not discuss information of a confidential nature regarding any other child or family within the Centre. Parents/guardians will be given a copy of the centre's procedure for dealing with parents concerns at the time of enrolment. These procedures will also be displayed in the foyer.
- Parents/guardians may visit the centre at any reasonable time whilst their child is in care. However they are requested to give due consideration to the time of day in relation to the children's program i.e. rest time would be inconvenient and could disturb other children.
- Parents/guardians may bring other relatives to visit at convenient times that have been organised with the child's teacher.
- Where a child attending the centre is not living with both parents/guardians, or where disputes arise in relation to responsibility for the child the following will apply:
 - Parental responsibility remains with both parents/guardians jointly and individually except where it is altered by an order of the Family Court of Australia. In the absence of such an order the child will be released to either parent/guardian who is an authorised person to collect the child on the enrolment form.
 - Where a non-enrolling parent cites an Order of the Family Court giving him/herself lawful access to the child, the Supervising Officer will contact the enrolling parent to confirm the existence of the order and seek their direction on how to respond to the non-enrolling parent. Staff will not try to interpret or act on any court order without the approval of the enrolling parent.
 - The child will only be released into the care of the enrolling parent/guardian, or other person specifically authorised by the enrolling parent/guardian.
- In the case of a parent/guardian with parental responsibility for the child arriving at the centre to collect their child in a visibly intoxicated or unfit state to drive the parent/guardian will be encouraged to contact an alternative adult to drive them and their child home or the centre will offer to call a taxi. If the parent/guardian insists on taking their child, the police will be informed.
- Where human life is at risk any part of the above may not be able to be complied with and in such circumstances the police will be immediately informed. In such circumstances the centre staff will follow the centre's emergency action plan.

Visitors, Students and volunteers

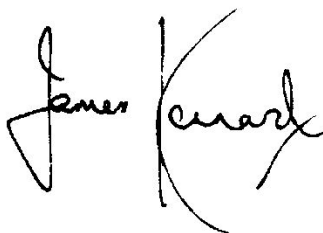
- Visitors may be invited into the centre as part of the children's program i.e.
 - Members of the Fire Brigade, Police Department, medical or nursing profession, community people with a skill, art or experience from which the children will gain experience or enjoyment.
- The centre will offer student placements to:
 - High school students who wish to gain work experience as part of their school program provided that the school has initiated the placement and the students are studying early childhood or family studies.
 - Students attending early childhood or child care training at college or university.

All placements will be negotiated through the Head of Campus and classroom teacher. Students will be provided with clear guidelines in relation to their responsibilities and code of conduct whilst at the centre and will be closely supervised by regular staff at all times.

- Volunteers will be accepted for work experience when there are no students on placement at the centre and there is evidence of a genuine interest in the work involved. Potential volunteers will be interviewed by the Head of Campus to determine their suitability. All volunteers will be given clear guidelines in relation to their responsibilities and code of conduct whilst at the centre.
- All volunteers and students must provide the appropriate police clearances.
- A record will be kept of the full name, address and date of birth of each student or volunteer, as well as the days and hours on which the student or volunteer participates in the service (reg. 149).

- Volunteers and students are supplementary to staff requirements and will not be used to replace absent staff unless they are on the centre's payroll.
- All other visitors to the centre must make an appointment with the Head of Campus.
- Any unwelcome, violent or abusive visitor or intruder (including anyone adversely affected by alcohol or drugs) will be calmly asked to leave the Centre. Refusal to leave will necessitate the Convenor or Senior Staff calling the local police for the removal of the unwelcome visitor. Staff will not at any time try to physically remove an unwelcome visitor. The centre will establish a plan to manage critical incidents that will isolate children and staff from a violent or abusive visitor or intruder, until such a time as the police arrive to take control of the situation. The plan will include a warning signal that will alert all staff to the danger of the situation
- Professional access to the Centre will be at the discretion of the Operator and (if involving the children) with the parent's written consent. The only exception to this would be in the case of children at risk.

Approved by the College Principal:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Keane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K'.

Date: December 2016

Appendix 1 - Priority of Access Guidelines

It is a condition of continued approval that centre based long day care services undertake that they provide child care places according to the Priority of Access Guidelines. Refer to Child Care Service Handbook – www.facs.gov.au/childcarehandbook

First Priority:

A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect.

Second Priority:

A child of a single parent who satisfies, or parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under section 14 of the Family Assistance Act.

Third Priority:

Any other child.

Within each category the following children are to be given priority:

- Children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Children in families, which include a disabled person.
- Children in families with a non-English speaking background.
- Children in socially isolated families.
- Children of single parents.

According to the legislation, services are to follow the guidelines when they are filling vacancies (unless they are a work based service in which case children of employees can be given top priority) and, when there are no vacancies, they may require a child who is third priority to leave the child care service, or alter their days, in order to provide a place for a higher priority child.

This provision however only applies if:

- The person liable to pay child care fees for that child was notified on enrolment that the service followed this policy; and
- The service gives that person at least 14 days notice of the requirement for the child to leave the child care service.

Appendix 2 - Late Collection Procedure

It is a requirement of the children's services regulations that two staff members be on duty at all times when children are present in a children's service, one staff member is required to be a nominee of the service and hold recognised Early Childhood qualifications. Parents are expected to collect their child/ren 15 minutes prior to the official closing time to allow staff adequate time to check the premises and re-set the environment for the next day's program. It is with that in mind that Mount Scopus Memorial College charge a late collection fee.

Extended Hours Program Operational hours

Monday – Thursday

3.00pm – 6.00pm

Friday (summer)

12noon – 5pm

Friday (winter)

12 noon – 4pm

Staff will keep a log of all attempted calls to parents and emergency contacts.

- Staff will begin attempts to contact the parents 15 minutes after the expected departure time.
- Staff will begin to call the child's parents 15 minutes prior to closing.
- If the child's parent's can not be contacted, the child's emergency contacts will be attempted.
- Parents will be charged at one dollar a minute for each minute they are late after the official closing time.
- The head of Campus will be notified of any child collected after closing time.
- Attempt to contact the child's parents and emergency contacts will continue during this time.
- **After 45 minutes** If contact can't be made with the child/ren's parents or emergency contacts, the child/ren will be considered abandoned. The head of campus, nominee or qualified staff member will contact child protection. As per the regulations two staff member will stay with the child until child protection arrive and collect the child.