



ENROLMENT & ORIENTATION

Quality Area 6

PURPOSE

This policy outlines:

- the criteria for enrolment at Hume City Council Early Years Services
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at a Hume City Council Early Years Service
- the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into a Hume City Council Early Years Service
- processes to ensure compliance with legislative and DET funding requirements in relation to the enrolment of children in early childhood education and care services.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Hume City Council is 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 Hume City Council Early Years Services.

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 by 2022 that all eligible children (refer to Definitions) will have access to two years 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 2019 to only offer a confirmed place in their programs to children with an Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions). To meet the Child Care Subsidy immunisation requirements, children must be immunised according to the National Immunisation Program Schedule (refer to Sources) set out by the Australian Government Department of Health.

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 2019 (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 - ComLaw: <https://www.nhmrc.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.

Additional Child Care Subsidy: Is top up payment in addition to the Child Care Subsidy which will provide targeted additional fee assistance to families and children facing barriers in accessing affordable child care. The Additional Child Care Subsidy has four elements: Child Wellbeing, Grandparents, Temporary Financial Hardship, Transition to Work

Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement: the next vaccinations the child is able to receive in the future if applicable.

Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement: is the only form of acceptable evidence of immunisation. The AIR is a national register administered by Medicare that records all vaccinations given in Australia, including to children. Parents/carers must provide a copy of their most recent AIR Immunisation History Statement, which shows that the child is up to date with their immunisations upon enrolment and when a child has received or been due to receive a vaccination while attending the service. In the case of medical contraindication, an authorised medical practitioner completes and signs a Medical Exemption Form, and supplies it to the AIR. In order to confirm enrolment, the Immunisation History Statement must show the child is up to date with the vaccines they can have, medical contraindication and indicate the due date for the next vaccinations the child is able to receive in the future if applicable.

Application fee: A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's application for a place in a program at the service.

Approved child care: Approved child care 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 record.

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): The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is the main way the Federal Government assists families with their child care fees, and is targeted to provide greater assistance to low and middle income families. CCS is generally paid directly to service providers to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families make a co-contribution to their child care fees and pay to the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount (also called a gap fee). Families are required to confirm a child care enrolment in their mygov account for the CCS to be applied to the fee.

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 (refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy).

Complying Written Arrangement: A Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) is an ongoing agreement between an Early Childhood Education and Care service provider and a Parent/Guardian, to provide care in return for fees. The CWA must contain a minimum amount of information as defined by the Government. Service providers are required to have a CWA in place for each child in their care, as set out in subsection 200B (3) of the Family Assistance Administration Act.

Deferral: When a child does not attend in the year when they are eligible for a funded kindergarten place, or is officially withdrawn from a service prior to the April data collection. DET considers that this child has not accessed a year of funded kindergarten and is therefore eligible for DET funding in the following year.

Eligible child: As defined by the Kindergarten Funding Guide; a child that is at least four years old on April 30th in the year of enrolment; enrolled for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year in a 4-year-old program; and not enrolled at a funded kindergarten program at another service. Or a child that is at least three years old on April 30th in the year of enrolment and is enrolled in a funded 3-year-old kindergarten program. Any child that is enrolled in an early childhood and education and care service must have an AIR Immunisation History Statement that indicates that the child is fully vaccinated for their age or who qualify for the 16-weeks grace period.

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 record; 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.

Grace period: Allows specific categories of children of families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to enrol and attend the service without an AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) or when the statement is assessed as not being up-to-date. Services complete the grace period eligibility form with families during enrolment, and keep a copy with the child's enrolment record. The 16-week grace period starts on the first day of the child's attendance at the service. During the grace period, the service is required to take reasonable steps to obtain the AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) and to encourage families to access immunisation services.

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

Vulnerable Children/Families: Children are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited. Some factors which may contribute to a child being vulnerable include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, known to Child Protection, Out of Home Care, substance abuse, or mental health; Aboriginal and/or Torre Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability (adapted from the Kindergarten Funding Guide)

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

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

POLICIES

- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy
- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Disease Policy
- Fees Policy
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

PROCEDURES

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

- determining the criteria for priority of access to programs at Hume City Council Early Years Services, as described in The Kindergarten Funding Guide; and/or as described under the Family Assistance Law for CCS recipients, and the service's philosophy (refer also to Attachment 1 – Eligibility and priority of access criteria for 3 and 4-year-old funded kindergarten program)
- 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 and 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 the AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) 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 or whether the child is eligible for the 16-week grace period (refer to Definitions)
- ensuring that only children whose AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) has been assessed as being acceptable or who are eligible for the grace period (refer to Definitions) have a confirmed place in the program
- taking reasonable steps to obtain an up to date AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) from a parent/guardian of a child enrolled under a grace period within 16 weeks from when the child begins attending (Note: the child can continue to attend the service if acceptable immunisation documentation is not obtained).
- ensuring that the enrolment record (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 (1a) (2d))
- ensuring that the orientation program and plans meet the individual needs of children and families, and comply with DET funding criteria
- reviewing the orientation processes for new families and children to ensure the objectives of this policy are met
- ensuring that parents/guardians of a child attending the service can enter the service premises at any time whilst the child is being educated and cared for, except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or educators under the Law (Regulation 157).

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 and the Inclusion and Equity Policy)
- 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 and developing an orientation program to assist them to settle into the program
- encouraging parents/guardians to:
 - stay with their child as long as required during the settling in period
 - make contact with educators 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:

- responding to enrolment enquiries on a day-to-day basis and referring people to the person responsible for the enrolment process, as required
- providing parents/guardians with information about the requirements of the law for enrolment, locating and accessing immunisation services and obtaining AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) required for enrolment
- 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 application form and the enrolment record prior to their child's commencement at the service and providing AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) to the service
- where a child a child is eligible for the 16 weeks grace period, ensuring that the child's immunisations are updated in line with the schedule and providing an up to date AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) 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.
- notify Hume City Council Early Years Services in writing if they wish to cancel their enrolment

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
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Eligibility and priority of access criteria

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by Hume City Council Early Years Services on **31 March 2020**.

ATTACHMENT 1: ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY OF ACCESS CRITERIA

1. Eligibility and Priority of Access Criteria for Three and Four Year Old Funded Kindergarten Programs

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

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children known to Child Protection and refugee and asylum seekers 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.
- 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 Four Year Old Kindergarten and children who turn three years of age by 30 April in the year they will attend Three Year Old 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 DET (refer to The Kindergarten Guide, available at:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>)
- children who are younger than the eligible age, but whose parents/guardians have submitted an early age entry request for their child to attend school the following year. This written request is to be directed to the regional office of DET, or the non-government school the child will be attending. A copy of the approval must be attached to the kindergarten application. Parents/guardians should note that very few requests are approved by DET. If the child attends kindergarten early, but does not proceed to school in the following year, they will be unable to access a second year of kindergarten unless they are deemed eligible by DET for having recognised developmental needs

When demand exceeds availability, the Approved Provider will refer to the service's values, philosophy and Inclusion and Equity Policy 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:
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/Priority-of-Access-Criteria.aspx>

If participating in a central enrolment scheme, the priority of access for that scheme will be implemented. 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).

2. Allocation within Groups

Where the service provides more than one funded kindergarten program or three-year-old program, places within the programs will be allocated to groups by the service in line with the eligibility and priority of access criteria.

Considerations may include:

- Needs of individual children
- Needs of the group
- Parental wishes.

3. Early Start in Four Year Old Kindergarten and Three Year Old Kindergarten

During the rollout of Three Year Old Kindergarten, Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) will continue to provide 15 hours per week of funded kindergarten for all eligible children up until 2029, when three year old children across the state will have access to 15 hours.

It is important to continue to enrol eligible children in ESK, even if funded three year old kindergarten is available at the service.

This guarantees that children experiencing vulnerability will continue to be enrolled in the full 15 hours of kindergarten in all service settings, including long day care. It also ensures that service providers can continue to receive all funding entitlements.

Service providers are expected to continue to provide the full 15 hours funded through Early Start Kindergarten, even in instances where three year old groups are being offered fewer than 15 hours.