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ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 6

PURPOSE

This policy will outline:

- the criteria for enrolment at Civic Kindergarten
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at Civic Kindergarten, and the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into Civic Kindergarten
- 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

1. VALUES

Civic Kindergarten is committed to:

- equal access for all 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.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, early childhood teachers,, educators, staff and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at Civic Kindergarten.

3. 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, a priority system for access must be determined by the Approved Provider in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places will vary from service to service, but is generally based on a 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. Criteria for access and inclusion are outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*). Services participating in central enrolment schemes are required to comply with the enrolment procedures of that scheme.

Childcare services providing approved 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*).

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*
 - Standard 6.1: Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained
 - Element 6.1.1: There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families
- *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 – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

4. 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.

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. The National Law and National Regulations do not specify a minimum age limit for an Authorised Nominee. Unless otherwise authorised by the Director in her/his absolute discretion, an Authorised Nominee must be a person aged 18 years or above. This information is included in the Delivery and Collection of Children Policy

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*).

Civic Kindergarten: The commonly used name of our children's service. The Approved Provider is Pre-School Association Middle Park Incorporated on our license (PSAMPI).

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

Enrolment application form: A form to apply for a place at the service.

Enrolment form: A form that collects contact details, and personal and medical information from parents/guardians about their child. This is completed after a place has been offered by the service and accepted by the applicant. 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*. This information is kept confidential by the service.

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

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register:
www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-childhood-immunisation-register
- Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/F2006B01541>
- *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/
- *Priority for allocating places in child care services*:
<http://education.gov.au/priority-allocating-places>
- *The Kindergarten Guide (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development)*:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>
- *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services 2015*:
www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit
- Victorian Department of Health: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation

Service policies

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

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- determining the criteria for priority of access to programs at Civic kindergarten, 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 and Equity Policy*
- appointing a person to be responsible for the enrolment process and the day-to-day implementation of this 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
- ensuring parents/guardians are only offered a tentative place until the child's immunisation documentation is assessed as being acceptable
- assessing the child's immunisation documentation **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
- ensuring that only children who have acceptable immunisation documentation have a confirmed place in the program
- advising parents/guardians who do not have acceptable immunisation documentation that their children are not able to attend the service and referring them to immunisation services
- 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 (Note: the child can continue to attend the service if acceptable immunisation documentation is not obtained).
- 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 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 that 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 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 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 regarding 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 acceptable immunisation documentation 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 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.

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: General enrolment procedures
- Attachment 2: Sample Enrolment Application Form (refer to Civic Kinder website)
- Attachment 3: Letter for parents/guardians without acceptable immunisation documentation

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Civic Kindergarten on 18th October 2017.

REVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2018

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	By	Reason for change
1.0	2014	ELAA	ELAA template updated in 2014
2.0	November 2015	Policy Officer, Treasurer and Director of Teaching.	Review and endorsement by Committee of Management (CoM)
3.0	August 2016	Policy Officer, President, Director of Teaching	Review and endorsement by Committee of Management (CoM)
4.0	June 2017	Policy Officer, Treasurer, Director of Teaching	ELAA template updated in 2016. Review and endorsement by Committee of Management (CoM)
5.0	October 2017	Policy Officer	Review and endorsement by Committee of Management (CoM)

ATTACHMENT 1

General enrolment procedures

1. Application for a place

- Enrolment applications will be accepted any time after the child has turned two years of age.
- For siblings of children who are either currently attending the kindergarten, or who have attended the kindergarten in the past, enrolment application forms will be accepted at any time. However a cut-off date **31 May** applies for enrolments seeking priority for commencement the following year.
- Enrolment application forms are available from the kindergarten website www.civickinder.org.au.
- A separate application form must be completed for each child.
- All applications must be accompanied by a **\$40 application fee** as detailed in the application form and in the *Fees policy*. This fee is to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application and is not refundable. The \$40 application fee is not payable for children applying for a second year of funded kindergarten or children currently attending the three-year-old program at the kindergarten.
- To facilitate the inclusion of all children into the program, enrolment applications should clearly identify any additional or specific needs of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).
- Parents/guardians of children applying for a second year of funded kindergarten or currently attending a three-year-old program must notify the Director of the parent's/guardian's intention to attend kindergarten in the following year by a date to be determined by the Director.
- Positions for the 4 year old program are subject to the priority of access criteria outlined in this policy and availability of positions and are not automatic.
- A copy of the child's birth certificate, evidence of up to date immunisation and any relevant Action Plans for medical conditions must be submitted with all applications.
- Completed enrolment application forms are to be forwarded to the Enrolment Officer at the kindergarten.
- Access to completed enrolment application forms will be restricted to the person responsible for the enrolment process, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and educators at the service, unless otherwise specified by the Approved Provider.
- Applications will be entered on the waiting list using the eligibility and priority of access criteria.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure their contact details remain current and to advise the Enrolment Officer of any changes.
- The Enrolment Officer will advise applicants of waitlist acceptance via letter or email.

2. Offer of places

- Places will be allocated to applicants in accordance with the eligibility and priority of access criteria of the kindergarten.
- Offers of places in the funded kindergarten program will be made in Term 4 or at such other appropriate date determined by the Approved Provider.
- Within two (2) weeks of receiving an offer, written acceptance must be provided together with payment of the first term fee (see *Fees policy*) for the following year. This payment is non-refundable, except under specific circumstances (see *Fees policy*).
- On receipt of accepted offer documentation and payment of the first term fee, the Enrolment Officer will acknowledge receipt of the payment and securement of a place by sending the applicant a letter. Failure to pay fees by the nominated due date, or as otherwise arranged, either with the Enrolment Officer or the Treasurer, may result in the placement being forfeited.

- An enrolment form and other relevant information will be provided after the place is accepted and the fee has been paid. Children will not be permitted to attend kindergarten until fees are paid and relevant enrolment information is provided.
- Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a place, or intend to withdraw their enrolment, are requested to notify the Committee of Management, or the Enrolment Officer at the kindergarten, in writing as soon as possible.
- Following receipt of first round offers, should any places remain available, the Enrolment Officer will make offers to any other applicants that remain on the waitlist in order of receipted application but subject to selection criteria.

Note: Places will not be allocated to children until any substantial debt owed to the service by the family is paid, or a payment plan is agreed to between the family and the service (refer to *Fees Policy*).

3. Orientation Sessions

- The Committee of Management will determine the dates and times of orientation sessions in conjunction with the Director.
- The Director will write to each successful applicant, inviting them to attend the orientation sessions.
- The President will write to enrolled families in Term 4 each year providing a letter of formal notification of the date and time of the AGM for the Committee of Management and an invitation to attend.

4. Eligibility and priority of access criteria for the funded kindergarten program (4 year old kindergarten)

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

- children of families who live in the City of Port Phillip, or who have caregivers who live in the City of Port Phillip. Proof of residence must be provided.
- children who have been granted approval to receive funding for a second year of kindergarten in accordance with *The Kindergarten Guide* available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.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 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
- 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: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/learningdev/pages/earlystartkinder.aspx>

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 (^{See Note 1});
- 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

Such positions that remain in the funded program shall then be offered to children in the following order:

- children presently enrolled in the three year old program at the kindergarten (not including children who have been granted a casual position in accordance with this Policy);
- children on the kindergarten waitlist who have had a sibling previously attend the kindergarten, provided that the enrolment application has been received by the cut-off date of May 31 in the previous year;
- children presently enrolled in the three year old program at the kindergarten who have been granted a casual position in accordance with this Policy);;
- children on the waitlist to enable the funded four year old program to achieve gender balance amongst students if there exists a significant gender imbalance;
- children in such order as their name appears on the wait list in order of receipted application. If there are a number of children for whom applications have been received on the same day, the Enrolment Officer and Director will conduct a ballot to determine the order of offers.

Note 1: Victorian children are entitled to one (1) year of funded 4yo kindergarten prior to commencing School. Where a child is observed to display delays in key outcome areas of learning and development, the possibility of a second year of funded kindergarten may be considered by the early childhood teacher in exceptional circumstances. Further information regarding the process for approval of a second year of funded kindergarten can be found in DET's Kindergarten Guide (Part B) at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/The%20Kindergarten%20Guide%202015.pdf>

Note: Twins and multiple birth siblings will be considered as one applicant for the purpose of making offers, including any ballot.

Note: Any parents wishing to enrol children but do not fall within the criteria listed above may write to the Committee of Management stating their case. The Committee of Management will address any such requests at the first meeting following receipt with any decision of the Committee of Management being final.

5. Eligibility and Access Criteria for the three-year-old program

Children who turn three (3) years of age on or before **31 January** in the year of attending kindergarten, living in the City of Port Phillip, or who have caregivers who live in the City of Port Phillip are eligible for attendance in the three-year old kindergarten program. Proof of residence must be provided. Positions will be offered in the following order:

- children recommended by the Director for an additional year in the three-year-old program. Children will only be able to attend a second year of three-year-old kindergarten in exceptional circumstances (after consideration by the Approved Provider).
- children on the waitlist who have had a sibling previously attend the kindergarten, provided that the enrolment application has been received by the cut-off date (May 31);
- children on the waitlist to enable the three year old program to achieve gender balance amongst students if there exists a significant gender imbalance;

children on the waitlist in such order as their name appears on the waitlist in order of receipted application

Note: Twins and multiple birth siblings will be considered as one applicant for the purpose of making offers, including the ballot.

Note: Any parents wishing to enrol children but do not fall within the criteria listed above may write to the Committee of Management stating their case. The Committee of Management will address any such requests at the first meeting following receipt with any decision of the Committee of Management being final.

6. Filling of Casual Vacancies

Should a casual position arise at the kinder, the Director shall advise the Committee of Management as soon as practicable. The Committee in conjunction with the Director will make a decision as to the practicalities of whether the position should be filled or otherwise. Should it be deemed appropriate by both the Director and Committee of Management to provide for such a casual position to be filled, it shall be offered to the next available child on the waitlist subject to the eligibility and access criteria herein. Children offered a casual position in the three year old program may not get priority of entry into the funded kindergarten program.

7. Number of Positions Available

The number of positions available shall be determined by the Committee of Management in consultation with the Director as required. Should enrolment numbers exceed/fall short of the necessary quota of places as determined by the Committee of Management, the Committee reserves the right to re-evaluate the number of hours for each group and the number of places offered.

ATTACHMENT 2

Enrolment form

Please refer to the Civic Kinder website – Enrolment section for the latest Enrolment form.

ATTACHMENT 3

Letter for parents/guardians without acceptable immunisation documentation

Civic Kindergarten

[Address]

[Insert date]

Dear [insert name]

Re: Enrolment at Civic Kindergarten for [insert year]

I am contacting you regarding your tentative place for [insert child's name] at Civic Kindergarten in the [insert 3 year old or 4 year old program] in [insert year].

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* early childhood education and care services cannot enrol a child unless the parent/guardian has provided acceptable immunisation documentation.

Acceptable immunisation documentation includes evidence that your child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated
- has been assessed by our service as being eligible for a 16 week grace period.

As we have not received acceptable immunisation documentation for [insert name of child] by the due date, we are unable to confirm a place at our service for [insert year] and your child's name has been removed from our list.

Immunisation programs are effective in reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. Immunisation from an early age helps protect your child against serious childhood infections. Further information about immunisations for your child is available from:

- your doctor
- [insert details of local government immunisation service]
- National Immunisation Information Line Tel. 1800 671 811
- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register Tel 1800 653 809
- Better Health Channel website: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/no-jab-no-play>

Should you wish to re-apply for a place for [insert child's name], we are happy to accept a new enrolment application accompanied by acceptable immunisation documentation. The new application would be considered in line with [Service Name]'s Enrolment and Orientation policy.

Yours sincerely

[Insert name]

[Insert title]

Civic Kindergarten