

Delivery and Collection of Children Policy

1. Policy statement

Values

This centre is committed to:

- The delivery of a program which ensures the safe delivery and collection of children being cared for or educated by the centre.
- Fulfilling our duty of care to all children.
- Encouraging families to deliver and collect their child/ren on time, for the programs in which they are involved.
- Recouping all additional costs incurred due to the late collection of a child, by the imposition of a late collection fee on their parents/guardians.
- Complying with all legislative requirements.

Purpose

To provide clear guidelines for parents/guardians, authorised persons, committee/board and staff in relation to their responsibilities for the delivery and collection of children at the centre.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all parents/guardians, authorised persons, the committee/board, staff, volunteers and students working within the centre.

3. Background and legislation

- *Children's Services Act 1996*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Family Law Act 1995*
- Children's Services Regulations 1998
 - o *Regulation 14(1)(a) requires the proprietor to ensure that an attendance book is maintained and regulation 14(2) requires the proprietor to ensure that the records are accurate*
 - o *Regulation 15 requires that the name, time of arrival and departure of each child is recorded in the attendance book, and that it is signed by either the person delivering/collecting the child, or a staff member*
 - o *Regulation 16(d) requires the child's enrolment record to provide details of the name of the person or persons who have lawful authority to collect the child, or who is authorised by such a person to collect the child*
 - o *Regulation 20(2)(f) requires that the proprietor provides information about the arrangements for the delivery and collection of children at all times the centre is open for the care or education of children. This must be available for inspection at all times.*

4. Definitions

Authorised person: A person for whom the parents/guardians have given written authority to the centre to collect the child. This person must be aged 15 years or more

Delivery: Delivery of the child at the centre begins once the child and parents/guardians, or authorised person, arrive on the premises and enters the time and signs the attendance book, or when the parents/guardians or authorised person leaves the child at the centre.

DHS: Department of Human Services

Collection of the child: Collection of the child from the centre occurs once the parents/guardians or authorised person has entered the time and signed the attendance book prior to their departure with the child from the premises, or when the parents/guardians, or authorised person, leaves the premises with the child

Late collection: When a parent/guardian or authorised person collects their child/ren from the program after the designated time for the program to end

Attendance book: The book provided by the proprietor for the person who delivers and collects the child from the centre, or a staff member, to sign and record the time of arrival and departure of each child being cared for, or educated by the centre

Program: The course/activity in which a child is enrolled and which has specific hours of attendance

Late collection fee: A fee imposed by the committee/board when parents/guardians are more than 15 minutes late to collect their child/ren from the program in which they are participating

Licensee representative: The person who exercises control over the operation of the centre. This is displayed in the main entrance as per the requirements of regulation 20(1)(b) of the Children's Services Regulations 1998.

5. Procedures

The committee/board are responsible for:

- Providing parents/guardians with a copy of this policy, when their children commence at the centre and ensuring a copy is available for inspection at all times
- Ensuring staff are provided with an attendance book for use in the program which meets the requirements of the Children's Services Regulations 1998
- Being available to assist in the situation of the late collection of a child (refer to procedures in this policy)
- Developing and implementing a late collection fee, for example:

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to collect their child promptly at the conclusion of the session. The committee/board recognises however that there may be isolated occasions when parents/guardians may be delayed through no fault of their own. The committee/board also has a responsibility for staff who have other tasks to complete after the conclusion of the session and who must be paid if they remain after their rostered finishing time.

A late collection fee may be applied when:

- The parents/guardians are between 15 and 30 minutes late in collecting their child. The fee will be based on \$10 for every 10 minutes, or part thereof, from the conclusion of the session/day.
- The parents/guardians are over 30 minutes late collecting their child. The fee will be based on \$10 for every 10 minutes, or part thereof, for the first 30 minutes from the conclusion of the session/day and then \$20 for every 10 minutes or part thereof, after that.

Note: The procedure for the recovery of a late fee is set out in the centre's *Fees Policy*.

The staff are responsible for:

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- Welcoming children into the program
 - Keeping the children's enrolment records up-to-date
 - Displaying an up to date list of telephone numbers near each telephone for the licensee representatives (office phone only), DHS regional Children's Services Adviser, Child Protection Crisisline, and the local police station.

Delivery of the child to the centre

- Ensuring the attendance book is available in the main entrance for parents/guardians or carers to sign in their child/ren on their delivery to the centre and to record the time of delivery.
- Checking the attendance book periodically including when the door is locked and when additional children arrive by the teacher in charge and, if required, completing the entry(ies) as per the requirements of the Children's Services Regulations 1998. This includes checking that children who are signed in are in attendance.
- Reminding parents/guardians/authorised persons/or carers, who continually do not complete the attendance book, of the centre's procedures for the delivery of children.

Note: Once the attendance book has been signed and time of delivery entered by the parents/guardians, carer, or authorised person or the parents/guardians, carer, or authorised person leaves the centre, the supervision of children on the premises becomes the responsibility of the staff members at the centre.

Collection from the centre

- Developing procedures for the dispersal of children at the end of session/day. Our procedure is for the unqualified staff member to be seated with the children on the mat area. The exit door should be visible by the unqualified staff member. The qualified staff member will be positioned at the exit door to ensure that children do not leave the building without the person responsible for collecting them. Parents/guardians will need to approach the mat to collect their child/ren and children will remain seated until the qualified staff member calls their name.
- Requesting parents/guardians/authorised persons wishing to speak with the qualified staff member or assistant involved in the dispersal of children, that they will need to wait until all of the children have departed. For example, a person collecting a child informs the assistant that they cannot locate the drawing their child did on that day. The assistant would inform the person that they will be able to assist in finding the drawing once all children have departed.
- Ensuring the attendance book is available at the main entrance for parents/guardians or authorised person to sign out their child/ren on collection from the centre and to record the time of departure.
- Checking the attendance book periodically, including as soon as is practicable after all children have departed and, if required, staff will complete entries as per the requirements of the Children's Services Regulations 1998. The staff check and initial that all the children have been signed in and out.

Note: Once the attendance book has been signed and the time of collection noted, the children's supervision is the responsibility of the parents/guardians or authorised person while they are still on the premises. (Refer to *Background Information* for information on duty of care - supervision of children)

- Releasing a child to the parents/guardians, or a person authorised to collect the child. This information is provided on the child's enrolment form. If a staff member is concerned that

releasing a child to the parents/guardians, or a person authorised to collect the child, could put the child at risk, the procedures outlined in Appendix 3 should be followed.

- Implementing procedures as outlined in Appendix 1 if a person arrives to collect a child who is not listed on the child's enrolment form as an authorised person (regulation 16(d)).
- Implementing procedures as outlined in Appendix 2 if the parents/guardians telephone the centre to advise that a person not listed on their child's enrolment form as an authorised person will be collecting the child.

Late collection of a child

In the situation where the parents/guardians or authorised person is 15 minutes late in collecting their child/ren and has not notified the centre that they will be late the qualified staff member is responsible for:

- Contacting the parents/guardians, and if they are not available contacting the other persons authorised to collect the child/ren on the child/ren's enrolment form, requesting that they collect the child/ren.
- If a staff member needs to leave, contacting the nominated licensee representative(s) or staff members to relieve staff. Centres need to ensure that two staff members (one qualified and one unqualified) remain in attendance as per the requirements of the Children's Services Regulations 1998. (*Refer to Background Information*).
- Continuing to attempt to contact the parents/guardians and authorised persons.
- Notifying the regional Children's Services Adviser (CSA) at DHS of the current situation and informing the CSA of the procedures being undertaken. If the CSA is not contactable, documenting the date, time, and reason for the call, and contacting the CSA as soon as is practicable.
- Contacting the DHS Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (this operates 24 hours, 7 days a week) if the parents/guardians/authorised persons are still not contactable after 45 minutes.
- The licensee representative/staff will follow the advice given to them by the Child Protection Crisis Line.

The parents/guardians/authorised persons/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring the child/ren's enrolment form includes details of persons who have lawful authority to collect the child/ren (usually the parents/guardians) and any other persons authorised to collect the child/ren.
- Completing the attendance book on arrival and departure as per the requirements of this policy.
- Ensuring staff are aware that the child has arrived/or been collected from the centre.

Before and after the program

- Supervising any child in their care if they are in attendance at the centre prior to the commencement or conclusion of the program.
- Supervising any child in their care once they have been signed out of the attendance book.
- Supervising any child/ren who are not enrolled in the program operating at that time, for example siblings of the child enrolled in the program.

Late collection

- Contacting the centre as soon as practicable if the person collecting the child will be late.
 - Paying the late fine as outlined in this policy.
6. Related documents
- DHS *Children's Services Guide, Practice Note, Delivery and Collection of Children*, www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood
 - Victorian Legal Aid and DHS, 1998, *Legal Aspects of Child Care*, available from Victorian Legal Aid or online at www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/children

Centre policies

- Enrolment
 - Fees
 - Privacy
7. Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the Parkdale Pre School committee, at the committee meeting on 10th October 2007.

8. Review date

This policy will be reviewed in 2010, or varied earlier if necessary, and the committee will within 28 days of making any change, notify the parents/guardians of the children attending, of that change. (Regulation 20(3)).

9. Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee/board will:

- If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents/guardians survey.
- Take into consideration feedback regarding the policy from staff, parents/guardians and committee/board members.
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy.

Duty of care: supervision of children

The policy clearly places responsibility for the supervision of child/ren with their parents/guardians or other person, from their arrival at the centre, until the parents/guardians or carer has entered the time of arrival and signed the attendance book, or when the parents/guardians or other person has left the child at the centre.

On collection, the parents/guardians or authorised person is responsible for their child/ren once they have entered the time of departure and signed the attendance book, or departed with their child.

Despite clearly defining in the policy when the supervision of their child is the responsibility of the parents/guardians/other person/or authorised person, the committee/board/staff must accept a level of responsibility while the parents/guardians/other person/authorised person and the child are on the premises, including the playground. Therefore it would not be advisable for the committee/board/staff to ignore any situation where the child could be at risk, even though the policy defines the supervision of the child as the responsibility of the parents/guardians/other person/or authorised person.

Duty of care: collection from the centre

The committee/board and staff have a duty of care in relation to the children, this duty of care also exists when the child is collected from the centre into the care of another person. If the staff or committee/board does not hand over a child to a person who has the joint or sole responsibility for the day-to-day care and control of a child, or an authorised person on the child's enrolment form, this could lead to legal action against the centre. Conversely, if the centre was to release a child to someone who the centre ought reasonably to have known did not have the required responsibility for the child, the centre may be held legally responsible for any consequences.

The DHS *Practice Note, Delivery and Collection of Children* (2006), outlines the need for staff to exercise their duty of care by not endangering a child by placing them in a situation that could be potentially dangerous. The *Practice Note* suggests that if a licensee or staff member has reasonable doubts that a child could be placed in danger, then the child should not be given to that person, even if the person has lawful authority. It is recommended that centres develop procedures to deal with such situations. A number of situations where concern may arise are outlined in Appendix 3.

Please refer to the Victorian Legal Aid/DHS publication *Legal Aspects of Child Care* for further information.

Procedure for late collection of a child

Centres need to comply with the minimum staff requirements (regulation 23) and the child/staff ratios (regulation 24) whenever children are being cared for or educated by the centre. The Children's Services Regulations 1998 provides a definition of a staff member as "a person aged 15 years or more who is employed or has been appointed or engaged to be responsible for the care or education of children by the children's service". This can include a person employed by the children's service to care for or educate children, including people on traineeships, or a representative who has been assessed as fit and proper in accordance with the Act.

A licensee representative could relieve an unqualified staff member. Some centres may be in the situation where a licensee representative is qualified and able to relieve the qualified staff member if required. KPV suggests centres develop a contact list of staff/licensee representatives to be contacted if a staff member needs to be relieved. It is suggested to contact staff members/licensee representative(s) that the child is familiar with, if possible.

If staff are required to stay after their rostered hours, the committee/board will need to arrange for the staff member to either reschedule their hours of work to cover this, or to be paid in accordance with their industrial entitlements. Staff who have an unpaid lunch break, and are required to remain on duty

during their lunch break to supervise children will need to have their hours of work rescheduled, or be paid in accordance with their industrial entitlements. If assistance is required in relation to the calculation of additional payment to staff, advice can be sought from KPV.

The committee/board should discuss and determine at what time after the staff's normal rostered hours, the DHS Child Protection Crisis Line would be contacted. This is a very important step that should be carefully considered as it could alert Child Protection Crisis Line to a possible accident or an abandoned child.

The committee/board may wish to keep a register relating to the late collection of children in order to monitor this and have a record of actions taken.

Late collection fee

Prior to adopting the attached policy, the committee/board may wish to change the time at which a late fee comes into operation and the fee to be charged.

The policy states the circumstances under which a late collection fee may be applied. The committee/board needs to develop guidelines for the application of the late collection fee. It may take into account how often the parent/guardian or carer is late and why they were late.

Procedure to gain authorisation when a person not listed on the child's enrolment form as authorised to collect the child will be collecting the child

If a person who is not listed as an authorised person arrives to collect a child staff will contact parent/guardian to gain authorisation.

The centre will request the parent/guardian for one of the following:

- Fax authorisation detailing the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting the child.
- Email confirmation detailing the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting the child.
- Parent/guardian to include details of the person on the child's enrolment form when they are next at the centre, or the parent/guardian will need to sign the authorisation form below and this will be added to the child's records.

Staff will verify the identify of the person collecting the child by checking, for example, driver's licence.

If a parent telephones the centre to notify that a person who is not listed as an authorised person will be collecting a child, staff will verify the identity of the parent. For example if the staff member is not familiar with the parent/guardian who has telephoned they will request their telephone number and call them back. If this telephone number does not match with the child's enrolment form, a record of the number will be documented on the child's file.

The centre will request the parent/guardian for one of the following:

- Fax authorisation detailing the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting the child.
- Email confirmation detailing the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting the child.
- Parent/guardian to include details of the person on the child's enrolment form when they are next at the centre, or the parent/guardian will need to sign the authorisation form below and this will be added to the child's records.

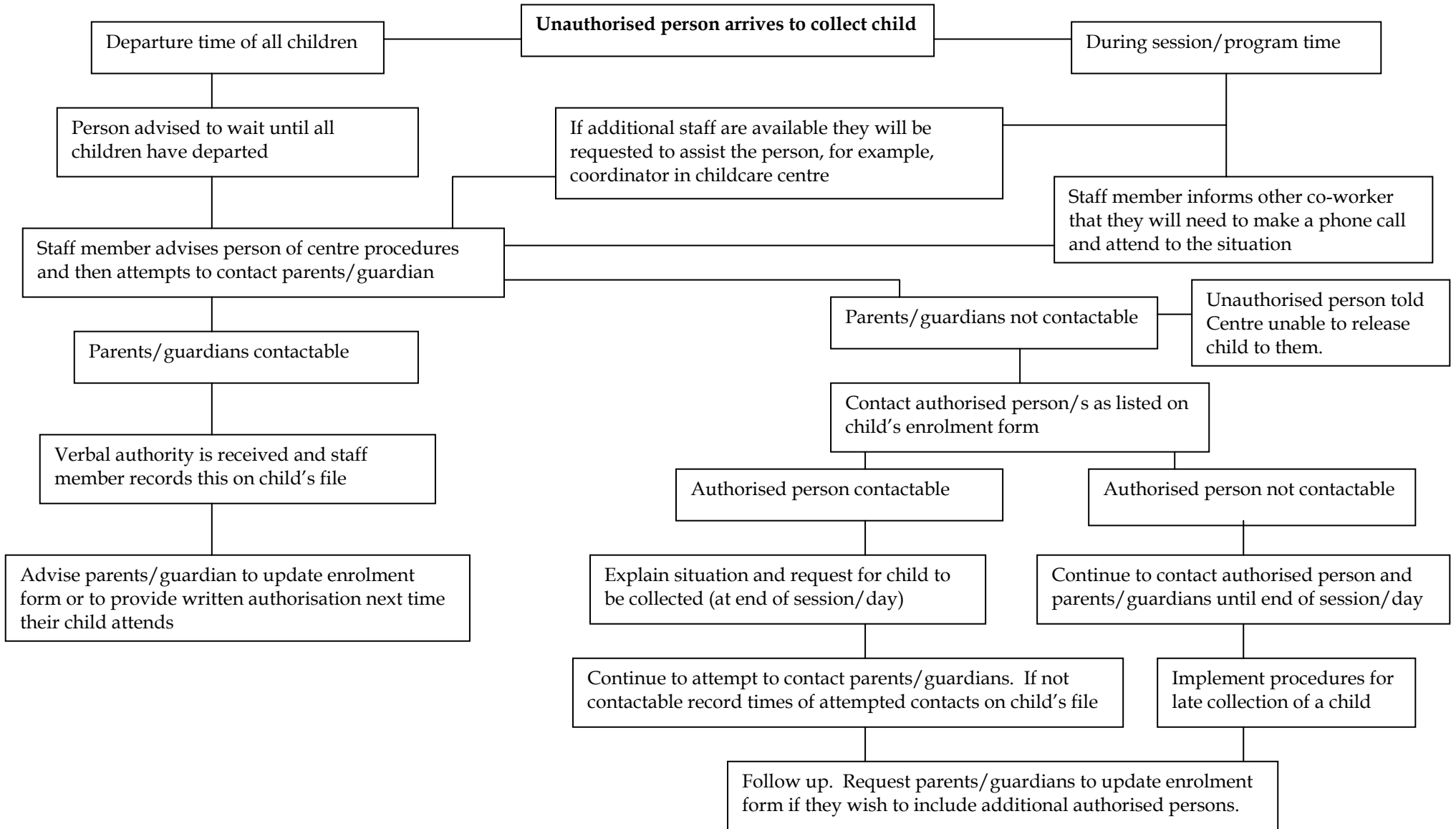
The parent/guardian will need to inform the person collecting the child that they will need to carry some form of identification with them, for example, driver's licence.

If a fax or email is not received the staff member will need to document the telephone conversation on the child's file and follow-up as per the policy procedure.

AUTHORISATION FORM

Refer to attached copy of authorisation form.

UNAUTHORISED PERSON ARRIVES TO COLLECT CHILD



Parents/guardians or authorised person arrive to collect the child

Staff member believes that the parents/guardians or authorised person may be ill, affected by alcohol or drugs, and does not appear to be able to safely care for the child.

- If practicable, the staff member consults another staff member or committee/board member.
- If practicable, the staff member advises the person collecting the child of their concerns and suggests contacting another authorised person to collect the child.
- If the staff member or committee/board member believes that the situation places the centre in a position where they fear for the safety of the child, their own safety and that of others at the centre, they should immediately contact the police.
- Record the details of the incident and place on file with the child's enrolment form.
- As soon as practicable, inform the committee/board of the incident.

A young person who is authorised to collect the child, for example a sibling, arrives to collect the child and does not seem sufficiently mature to safely care for the child.

- If practicable, the staff member consults another staff member or committee/board member.
- If practicable, the staff member advises the young person collecting the child of their concerns and that they will be contacting another authorised person to collect the child.
- Follow-up with a discussion with the parents/guardians on the centres concerns with regard to the young person being authorised to collect the child. Advise the parents/guardians that if the young person presents again to collect the child, centre procedure will be followed.
- Record details of the incident and place on file with the child's enrolment form.
- As soon as practicable, inform the committee/board of the incident.

These procedures are based on the DHS *Practice Note for the Delivery and Collection of Children*, available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood. KPV recommends informing your local Children's Services Adviser if the above procedures are implemented.