

Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs Policy

1. Policy statement

Values

This centre is committed to:

- Providing all children with the opportunity to access a centre regardless of their ability
- Respecting the rights of all children to participate in a quality children's program
- Providing a family-centred approach which recognises that parents know their children best and want the best for their children
- Recognising that families are different and unique
- Recognising that all children learn in different ways and at different rates
- A child's right to social inclusion.

Purpose

To provide guidelines for the successful inclusion of children with additional needs into the centre.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Children with additional needs, as defined below, who are attending or whose parents/guardians are seeking for them to attend the centre.
- Parents/guardians of children with additional needs who are attending or seeking to attend the centre.
- The committee/board, staff, volunteers, students and any other persons involved in the care and education of children with additional needs at the centre.

3. Background and legislation

- *Children's Services Act 1996*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Children's Services Regulations 1998*
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- *Intellectually Disabled Persons Act, 1986*: A Victorian Act of Parliament that establishes the basis upon which services to people with intellectual disabilities or significant delay in their development are provided.
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Victoria)*

4. Definitions

Additional needs: Children whose development, in one or more of the following areas, needs specialist support - mobility, expressive and/or receptive communication, social behaviour, behavioural control, fine/gross motor skills, vision, hearing, self care, cognitive skills.

Disability: Something that incapacitates, for example an intellectual, sensory, physical, social or emotional impairment.

Child support group: This group is to be established prior to the application for support, or the child's enrolment or attendance in a funded kindergarten program. (A requirement of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Service)

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS): ECIS support children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry and their families

Inclusion: The incorporation of children with additional needs into the centre to ensure that they have equal opportunities to achieve their maximum potential

Inclusion support facilitator (previously known as CSRDOs): Inclusion support facilitators are employed by inclusion support agencies funded by the Commonwealth Government, to provide advice on inclusive practice to childcare services. Inclusion support facilitators also help centres to access a range of practical supports

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services: A program offering supplementary assistance to centres to support the inclusion of children with assessed severe disabilities into a funded kindergarten program. For information and an application kit visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO): PSFOs are employed by some Local Government Authorities or other agencies to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in funded kindergarten programs. The PSFO service is part of the kindergarten inclusion support services program.

5. Procedures

The committee/board are responsible for:

- Providing clearly defined enrolment procedures in their enrolment policy, which facilitates access for all children.
- Regularly reviewing with staff, the planning and resourcing provided for children with additional needs participating in the program.
- Being available to participate in identified child support groups.
- Providing assistance as required to child support group(s) in identifying and applying for additional resources available through the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services for supplementary funding (funded kindergarten programs only).
- Providing assistance as required to child support group(s) in identifying and applying for additional resources/support for children and families available through the Early Childhood Intervention Services (birth to school entry).
- Working with the staff and families to identify and apply for additional resources/support for children with additional needs (where a separate child support group is not required).
- Providing appropriate physical and staffing resources within the budget constraints of the centre. In providing these resources:
 - o Consultation will be sought with the staff, the parents/guardians of the child, and other professionals and/or agencies working with the family to determine additional resources required to meet the functional and developmental needs of the child. (Usually the child's support group as outlined on following pages).
- Supporting staff to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy.

The qualified staff are responsible for:

- Reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs.
- Identifying, if additional support is required, the type of support required and consulting with families and liaising with the committee/board in order to access this.
- Establishing a support group for children with high support needs, which may include:
 - o Parents or guardians
 - o Carer of the child (if applicable)
 - o Kindergarten teacher
 - o Specialist staff from an early childhood intervention service (if the child is receiving a service)
 - o Additional staff
 - o Preschool Field Officer (if no other early intervention specialist is involved with the family), or
 - o Parent/guardian advocate (if applicable)
 - o Committee/board member
 - o Others as appropriate.

(Note: It is a requirement of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services Program to establish a support group before an application is submitted for support, enrolment or attendance at the centre).

- Organising for the child's support group to meet. Generally this would involve a number of meetings prior to the child's commencement at the centre and at least one meeting per term.
- Ensuring that any support or resources available for a child are accessed in consultation with the parents/guardians, for example through the Preschool Field Officer Program and the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Service.
- Ensuring that the parents/guardians are fully informed about the program planned and provided for their child and have given written consent for any action, support or intervention for their child.
- To plan and implement a program which incorporates the individual goals for the child with additional needs.
- Ensuring the program provides opportunities for participation and interaction with other children.
- Responding to parents/guardians needs and providing support and guidance, where appropriate.
- Providing support and guidance to other staff.
- Encouraging a collaborative family-centred approach in implementing the program at the centre.
- Ensuring that, in consultation with persons involved in the care and education of the child, any specialised medical and nutritional needs of the child are catered for in the day-to-day program.
- Ensuring that the program incorporates opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all persons involved in the child's care and education.

All staff are responsible for:

- Working collaboratively with staff/parents/guardians/other professionals to implement the program provided for the children.
- Reporting and discussing any concerns regarding a child's behaviour with other staff.
- Ensuring the Privacy Policy is complied with at all times.

The parents/guardians will:

- Share information about their child and their child's needs within the centre, whilst maintaining the right to decide who will receive information about their child.
- Have the right to retain information that they do not wish to divulge.
- Raise any issues/concerns they have about their child's participation in the program.
- Participate in the child support group meetings .
- Be involved in, and fully informed about, any intervention or support proposed for their child.
- Be given the opportunity to consent to any assessments or reports on their child and have a right to copies of such documents.

The members of the child's support group are responsible for:

- Attending support group meetings, which will generally occur at least once a term once the child commences at the centre.
- Facilitating the successful inclusion of the child into the centre.
- Planning for the needs and requirements of the child in the centre.
- Deciding together whether an application for support is required.
- Seeking the committee/board's support for any application that would involve the committee/board in the provision of that support, for example employing staff.
- Assisting the kindergarten teacher to complete the application form.
- Monitoring and evaluating the child's progress and setting appropriate planning objectives in an individual education program plan.

6. Related documents

- DHS *Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* 2004-2006
- Information and application kit for *Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services* for children with severe disabilities. Available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood
- Specialist Children's Services Program Standards 1998 www.ecis.vic.gov.au *Through the Maze*, 5th edition, February 2003 is a 30 page resource booklet with information about services for families of children with a disability in Victoria.

Centre policies

- Communication
 - Enrolment
 - Parent/Guardian Access and Involvement
 - 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 shall be reviewed in October 2009.

9. Evaluation

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

- Take into account feedback from parents/ guardians, staff, child support groups and any other persons involved in the care and education of children at the service.

The DHS website, www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood provides detailed information on the provision of Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) in Victoria. Contact numbers for regional offices are available from this site. The KPV *Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs Policy* is written to reflect the ECIS vision:

“Families caring for a child with a disability or developmental delay are able to access flexible and responsive specialist supports within the universal platform of services, to support them in raising their child within the family and community and enabling them to achieve their developmental, social and emotional potential.”

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood, accessed May 2006.

Centres providing a funded kindergarten program can apply for supplementary assistance through the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services program. Information on the eligibility criteria is summarised in the DHS, *Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria 2004-2006* and an information kit can be accessed from the DHS site. The inclusion support is funded through the Department of Human Services and the Commonwealth Government.

Relevant contact numbers

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS)

Department of Human Services

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

1800 783 783 (ask for Specialist Children’s Services)

www.ecis.vic.gov.au

Association for Children with a Disability

590 Orrong Road

Armadale 3143

Phone: 03 9500 1240

Freecall: 1800 654 013

Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian chapter)

Phone: 03 9509 5584

Email: eciavic@bigpond.com