

# Parents/Guardians Access and Involvement Policy

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## 1. Policy statement

### Values

This centre is committed to:

- Promoting and providing opportunities for parents/guardians involvement in all components of program delivery and the management of the centre.
- Recognising parents/guardians are the first and continuing carers and educators of their children.
- Listening to parents/guardians knowledge of their child to ensure the program provided is responsive to the individual needs of each child.
- Fostering a spirit of cooperation between the parents/guardians of the children attending the centre, the staff and the committee/board.
- Compliance with all funding and legislative requirements.
- Supporting a culture which is sensitive to the cultural and social background of families attending the centre.

While the centre acknowledges parents/guardians access and involvement is an integral part of the operation of the centre, the staff and the committee/board's duty of care to the children is of prime consideration and it will take precedence over parents/guardians participation in the program if this is deemed to place children at risk.

### Purpose

This policy will outline how parents/guardians access and involvement is to be provided.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to parents/guardians, staff and the committee/board of the centre.

## 3. Background and legislation

Centres in receipt of kindergarten funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are required to ensure that:

- The children's centre is sensitive to the cultural and social backgrounds of the families, their lifestyles and their child-rearing practices and that parents/guardians are involved in addressing issues relating to their child's care and development.
- A range of communication strategies is in place to enable and encourage parents/guardians participation in kindergarten activities, including input into kindergarten policy, decision-making, quality assessment processes, and user satisfaction surveys, parents/guardians participation in the planning and operation of the centre, and in addressing issues relating to children's care and development.
- They have in place access and equity policies that are clear, fair and comply with legislative requirements; are developed on the basis of consultation (with regard to hours of operation and models of centre delivery), and are communicated to families and the community.

(DHS, *Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria 2007-2009*)

### Legislation and regulations

- *Children's Services Act 1996*
- *Children's Services Regulations 2009*

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Regulation 71 requires the proprietor to ensure that any parent or guardian of a child being cared for or educated by the children's service can:

- a) Enter the children's service at any time during the hours of operation; and
- b) Exchange information about the child with a staff member

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Family Law Act 1995*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Victoria)*
- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)*

#### **4. Definitions**

**Access:** The right of entry to a centre

**Association member:** A member of the incorporated association as defined in the centre's constitution

**DHS:** Department of Human Services

**DEECD:** Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

**Involvement:** Participation in any aspect of the management and planning of the centre, and the delivery of the program

**Proprietor:** This includes the owner of the centre and any person who manages or controls the centre. The term proprietor includes the licensee, the primary nominee and the nominee(s) of a licensed centre.

#### **5. Procedures**

**The committee/board are responsible for:**

- Ensuring parents/guardians are able to access the centre at any time during the hours of operation.
- Ensuring a range of communication strategies are in place to enable and encourage parents/guardians participation and involvement in all aspects of the centre. Participation will be welcome at all levels, be it active involvement on the committee/board as determined by the constitution of the centre, support at working bees, or involvement in the children's program.
- Ensuring opportunities are provided for communication between parents/guardians, the staff and the committee/board. This can be facilitated through such things as informal discussions, surveys, noticeboard displays, social events, newsletters.
- Reviewing the programs provided (that is, the sessions and times that children attend at the centre), taking into account feedback from parents/guardians in the development of future program models.

**The staff are responsible for:**

- Providing access for parents/guardians to the centre at any time their child is attending a program at the centre.
- Ensuring all communication with parents/guardians is sensitive to the cultural and social backgrounds of each individual family, their lifestyles and their child-rearing practices.

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- Providing access to interpreters, translated materials and other resources as needed to implement this policy.
  - Providing parents/guardians with information about how the educational program at the centre is developed and the philosophy on which it is based.
  - Developing the educational program, in consultation with parents/guardians, incorporating the development of children's language, physical skills, emotional and cognitive processes and social interaction skills.
  - Offering a variety of opportunities for parents/guardians to participate directly in the children's program, including spending time with the children, assisting with activities, excursions and special events and volunteering special skills to share with the children. In addition, providing opportunities for them to offer feedback to the staff concerning the program.
  - Encouraging parents/guardians to contribute their suggestions regarding any aspect of the program through discussions with the staff and/or the committee/board.
  - Providing the parents/guardians with opportunities for communication about their child, either informally before or after the program, or by appointment during the staff member's non-contact time with the children and encouraging parents/guardians to take up these opportunities.
  - Developing strategies which contribute to a partnership approach with parents/guardians to create a two-way process of knowledge and information sharing. For example individual journals (photos, daily stories) which children are able to take home and share with their family on a regular basis.
  - Providing opportunities for parents/guardians to discuss the individual records the qualified staff member has recorded of their child.
  - Providing information regarding the educational program through bulletin boards and regular newsletters, which will show an understanding of, and consideration for, the relevant languages and cultural diversity of the families using the centre.

**The parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Reading information provided from the centre, this can include information handbooks, newsletters, policies, children's program, noticeboard displays etc.
- Participating in centre events, for example working bees, the children's program, committee/board positions.
- Communicating information about their child/ren with staff, including significant events in the child's life, such as the arrival of a new baby, grandparents visiting from overseas.
- Contributing feedback and ideas for the children's program.

**6. Related documents**

- DHS *Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist and Workbook*
- DHS, *Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria 2007-2009*
- 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](http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/children)

**Centre policies**

- Code of Conduct (Parent/Guardians and Volunteers)
- Communication

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## **7. Authorisation**

This policy was adopted by the Parkdale Preschool committee, at the committee meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

## **8. Review date**

This policy shall be reviewed in 2012 or earlier if required.

## **9. Evaluation**

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

- Use a quality assessment tool, for example the Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist.
- Assess whether a satisfactory resolution of issues raised in relation to parents/guardians access and involvement has been achieved.
- If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents/guardians survey.
- Take into account feedback from staff regarding the policy.
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the access and involvement of parents/guardians.