

	<h2>Enrolment and Orientation Policy and Procedure</h2>
Version No.	Version 3.0 12 April 2023 (approved)
Authorisation	Director City Life
Expiry Date	Policy to be reviewed by 1 December 2025
Responsible Officer	Manager Families and Children
Policy Owner	Early Childhood Coordinator

1. Purpose

Melton City Council is committed to:

- following the process set when enrolling a child at Melton City Council children's services, and the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- compliance with the Commonwealth Priority of Access Criteria as required for our service approvals with the Department of Social Services (DSS)
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into Melton City Council children's services.
- equal access for all children
- meeting the needs of the local community
- Complying with Department of Education of Training (DET) funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in Government funded programs
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided on Enrolment Forms
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receive an effective orientation into the service.

1.1. This policy has been adapted from *PolicyWorks* Manual - National Quality Framework released by the Early Learning Association Australia.

2. Scope

This policy applies to services responsible for the direct education and care of children and applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person / Person in day to day charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Melton City Council children's services, including during offsite excursions and activities.

Melton City Council has the right to accept or decline Enrolments where Staff/Educators safety or wellbeing is compromised in line with Melton City Council's code of conduct and health and safety and wellbeing policies.

3. 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 (National Regulation 168).

- Childcare services providing Approved Care
Approved Care services must abide by the *Family Assistance Law (Child Care Subsidy)*.

4. Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and related procedures. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *Glossary of Terms*.

Word/Term	Definition
Approved Care	Care given by a service provider that has been approved by the Family Assistance Office to receive CCS payments on behalf of eligible families. Family Day Care and Vacation Care are approved providers. Further details are available on the Department of Human Services website (see <i>Sources</i>).
Child Care Subsidy (CCS)	A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare services. All eligible families can receive some CCS. Further details are available on the Department of Human Services website (see <i>Sources</i>).
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 <i>Inclusion and Equity Policy</i>).
Commonwealth Priority of Access Criteria	It is a condition of approval and continued approval for Child Care Benefit (CCB) purposes that services must comply with Family Assistance Law. The Priority of Access Guidelines are set out in the Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000. The Commonwealth criteria require that services must give priority as follows: Priority 1 – a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect Priority 2 – a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work, training, study test Priority 3 – any other child. Within these categories, priority should also be given to children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, families with a member that has a disability, low-income families, families from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, socially isolated families and single parent families.
Eligible Child	A child who meets the criteria outlined in the Kindergarten Guide (see <i>Sources</i>), procedures and funding criteria.
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, personal and medical information from parents/guardians about their child. This is completed during the enrolment process. The information on this form is placed on the child's Enrolment Record (see below) and is kept confidential by the service.
Enrolment Record	Contains information on each child, as required under the National Regulations, including but not limited to contact details, names of

Word/Term	Definition
	authorised nominees (persons authorised to consent to medical treatment, administration of medication or take the child outside the service), details of any court orders, personal and health information including specific healthcare needs, medical management plans and dietary restrictions (National Regulations 160, 161). This information is kept confidential by the service.
Fees	A charge for a place and care provided within a program at the service.
Victorian Priority Criteria for Kindergarten	<p>The Victorian Government has priority of access criteria that apply only to funded kindergarten places. The criteria require services to give priority of access to children in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out of Home Care • Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children • Asylum seeker and refugee children • Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy • Children with additional needs, defined as children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program • require a combination of services which are individually planned • have an identified specific disability or developmental delay. <p>After offering places to children on the priority list, services may choose to allocate priority to children on whatever basis they choose as stated in their policy. This could be those with a link to the service, proximity to the service or other criteria.</p> <p>Where there are insufficient places for eligible children, after prioritising using the criteria above, services must work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other local kindergarten services, and • the regional Department office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

5. Responsibility/Accountability

5.1. The Approved Provider, according to Regulations is responsible for the implementation of this policy. This will be achieved through the Leadership Group and their service staff:

- determining the criteria for access to programs at Melton Children's Services, based on funding requirements, the service's philosophy, the Commonwealth Priority of Access Criteria (DSS) and the Victorian Priority Criteria for Kindergarten
- developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access, an early childhood program, and considering any barriers to access that may exist and the priority of access criteria
- 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 / Responsible Person, Person in day to day charge 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

- that Enrolment Forms comply with the requirements of National Regulations 160, 161 and 162
- reviewing the Enrolment Form to determine its effectiveness in meeting the regulatory and management requirements of the service
- that Enrolment Records 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 (National Regulation 183)
- 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
- 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 / Responsible Person, Person in day to day charge or educators under the Law (National Regulation 157).

5.2. The persons responsible for the enrolment process is accountable for the following:

- providing Enrolment Application Forms
- collating enrolments
- maintaining a waiting list, if required
- offering places in line with this policy and criteria for access, and providing relevant paperwork to families in accordance with this policy
- storing completed Enrolment Application Forms in a secure file as soon as is practicable
- complying with the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service.

5.3. The Nominated Supervisor / Responsible Person, Person in day to day charge and other 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
- reviewing enrolment applications to identify Priority of access requirements e.g. Children with Additional Needs
- responding to parent/guardian enquiries regarding their child's readiness for the program that they are considering enrolling their child in
- ensuring that Enrolment Forms are completed prior to the child's commencement at the service
- 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/ Responsible Person, Person in day to day charge or educators under the Law (National Regulation 157)
- 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
- discussing the individual child's needs with educators/staff and develop an orientation program to assist the child to settle into the program
- encouraging parents/guardians to:
 - stay with their child during the settling in period as agreed with the educator/staff
 - 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
- providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members
- sharing information with parents/guardians regarding their child's progress with regard to settling into the service
- discussing support services for children with parents/guardians, where required
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information.

5.4. Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with this *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- completing Enrolment Forms prior to their child's commencement at the service
- ensuring that all 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.

6. Procedure

In terms of Enrolment

- Families wishing to enrol in Melton City Council children's services programs are required to complete an Enrolment Form and return it to the service.
- Educators need to ensure they have a child's Enrolment Form prior to care starting.
- Enrolment Forms need to be updated as changes occur and where programs require, a new form is completed annually if needed.
- Enrolment Forms are confidential and are kept in a secure place on the premises.
- Parent/guardians are required to notify the service in writing of any changes or amendments to their Enrolment Forms.
- Educators must have up to date details of parent/guardians and/or emergency contacts for communication in cases of an emergency.
- The service needs to be notified of all medical needs of the children in care.
- To facilitate the inclusion of all children into the program, enrolment applications should clearly identify any additional or specific needs of the child.
- Enrolment Forms must be fully completed. Incomplete forms will be returned to parents/guardians to complete and this may delay the enrolment process and the child's commencement into care.
- Note: Places will not be allocated to children until any debt owed to Council by the family is paid, or a payment plan is agreed to between the family and Council.

In terms of Family Day Care (FDC) Enrolment

- All requests for care are required to come through the FDC Coordination Unit.
- Once a placement is made, families are directed by the FDC Coordination Unit to organise a time to meet the educators in their homes to decide whether the qualities or environment are appropriate for their child's needs.
- Once selection has been finalised, parent/guardians need to meet with the FDC Coordination Unit to enrol their child.
- A renegotiation form or online process is required to be completed for any updates or changes to bookings that occur after enrolment.
- Parents/guardians are to provide one week's notice of any changes or cancellations to their child's regular care days of attendance.

In terms of Vacation Care (VAC) Enrolment

- Enrolment Forms and booking sheets with permission forms are available online or upon request via email or post approximately five weeks before commencement of the school holiday period.
- Enrolment Forms should be completed by the closing date. Enrolments received after the closing date will only be accepted at Team Leader or Supervisor's discretion.
- Successful families are informed by online software or upon request by mail with an initial/estimate invoice which shows the days of booked care and advises the cost of the booking, and the specified date that Fees are required to be paid in full.
- This invoice is online and considered the initial/estimate invoice as it is based on information provided from the Department of Human Services (DHS) which is open to change up until the day of booked care has occurred. Changes can occur for a number of reasons; however the most likely reason is change to parent/guardian's reported income.
- Once care has occurred and the program closes, a further "final" statement is available online or sent to families which confirms the correct amount of CCS they are entitled to and requests payment is an adjustment has occurred to Fees.
- Further information about CCS can be found on the DHS website (see *Sources*).
- If Fees are not paid in full by this date the allocated place will be offered to a family on the waiting list.
- Families unsuccessful in gaining a place are added to a waiting list and advised if a vacancy arises.

In terms of bookings and absences

- To ensure that quality programs can be planned appropriately in accordance with attendance levels, Council operates a booked care enrolment system. This means that parents/guardians will be charged for all days they book. If parents/guardians do not use the booked days (due to changed holiday plans, child illness etc), payment for the total booking still applies.
- Children are allocated 42 absences per financial year and once the first 42 absence days have been used, CCS is only payable for additional absences where:
 - the absence relates to a day on which care would otherwise have been provided if the child was not absent, and
 - the absence is one taken for an approved additional absence reason and supporting medical certificates/documentation is provided as soon as possible.

- If the CCS percentage reduces during the school holiday/booked period parents/guardians are required to pay additional Fees.
- Cancellation of care, where no cost to parent/guardian will be incurred, can only be made up until the date specified on the Enrolment Form.

- In terms of Orientation

Melton City Council children's services aim to ensure a smooth orientation of children and their families into programs by:

- providing families with access to a comprehensive policy and procedures on the council website and at times a handbook that includes detailed program procedures, requirements and expectations of staff/educators, families and children
- confirming enrolments after all medical and additional needs requirements have been discussed and appropriate documentation and information has been collected and assessed
- introducing new children to the staff/educators and other children at the service
- planning a smooth transition into care with each orientation based upon the individual needs of the child. Parents/guardians and staff/educators will jointly plan the transition to care to secure a successful long-term experience for the child
- encouraging families or upon request to make an appointment to visit the programs before commencing care. During this visit parents/guardians can experience a tour of the service, meet staff/educators, ask questions and discuss the individual needs of the child
- encouraging parents/guardians to spend time with their child at a session in order to settle and familiarise the child with their new surroundings.

7. References, Sources, Links to Legislation and Other Documents

7.1. Please refer to Reference and Sources page.

7.2. Related service policies:

- *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy and Procedure*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy and Procedure*
- *Excursion and Service Events and Procedure*
- *Fees Policy and Procedure*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy and Procedure*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure*