

Early Years Services – QA 6.2 Enrolment and Orientation

TRIM Reference: D22/217989 Due for Review: 7 September 2024
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to ensure that there is an effective enrolment and orientation process that is based on active communication, consultation and collaboration with families that meets regulatory requirements and supports all children and families accessing the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services.

Policy Principles

National Quality Standards: 2.6.1, 6.1.1, 6.2.3, 7.3.5
Education and Care Services National Regulations: 99, 168-172
Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020: r 63

Scope

This policy applies to all children and their families accessing Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services and staff.

Policy

We aim to ensure that our enrolment and orientation processes meet the unique needs of each child and family. This will support them during their transition to the service, help to develop collaborative partnerships, and promote a sense of belonging to the service community. Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services provide a fair and transparent process for allocating placements for children within their services. Each service has an individual priority of access to allocate placement.

Priority of Access

Surf Coast Shire Council supports the Victorian State Government policy directions which articulate that children with additional needs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, children known to Child Protection and those eligible for fee subsidy, benefit most from being involved in early childhood programs. Families that provide evidence where possible that they have a child in one of these categories will be allocated as a priority.

Kindergarten Priority Groups – This includes 3 year old and 4 year old children

- 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 including Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)
- Children with additional needs, defined as children who:
 - Require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the program
 - Require a combination of services which are individually planned
 - Have an identified specific disability or developmental delay
- Children requiring a second year of kindergarten, approved by the Department of Education (DE).
- Children applying for a 4 year old program who are currently attending a 3 year old program at a Surf Coast Shire Council kindergarten
- Siblings who have previously attended the same kindergarten
- Surf Coast Shire residents or those employed within the municipality
- Residential proximity

Children must turn 3 or 4 years old prior to 30 April in the year they are starting kinder to be eligible for funded kindergarten.

In mixed-age groups, the Priority of Access guidelines equally prioritise 3 and 4 year old children considered vulnerable under the policy.

Occasional Care Priority Groups

- 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 with additional needs
- A child from a family currently enrolled in the service
- Surf Coast Shire residents or those employed within the municipality.

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services General Procedure

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services will:

- Allocate children according to the priority of access for each service.
- Maintain a waiting list of families not allocated a placement. If a family chooses not to accept the position allocated the family can opt to be on a waiting list for a different session.
- Make available to families information including service philosophy and access to policies.
- Ensure all documentation, including authorisations, immunisation history statements and medical action plans (if required) are completed during the enrolment process.

Families are required to:

- Complete all documentation required by the service.
- Provide any required authorisations, such as for the approved provider, nominated supervisor or an educator to seek medical treatment for the child from a registered medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service and, if required, transportation by an ambulance service.
- Notify the service upon enrolment of any specific health care needs of the child, including any medical conditions and allergies and any medical management plans that need to be followed.
- Ensure all information about the child and family held by the service is kept up-to-date, including any parenting plans or court orders.
- Provide at least two authorised nominees prior to commencing at the service.

Kindergarten Programs

Fees

Surf Coast Shire Council offer 15 hours of free Four-Year-Old kindergarten and between 5-15 hours of free Three-Year-Old kindergarten.

If families attend more than one kindergarten or long day care service they must choose where their child will take part in the funded kindergarten program and get the Free Kinder funding.

Any donations are voluntary and not required for participation in the kindergarten program.

No other fees will be charged.

Accepting full fee paying children

Surf Coast Shire will not accept full fee paying children in a funded kindergarten program. Only in exceptional circumstances may your request be considered. This request must be in writing.

Parents/Guardians are required to complete the approved enrolment forms prior to the commencement of services and to provide updated details if information changes; including all relevant documentation and the Immunisation History Statement. Children will not be accepted into the service until the approved enrolment form and all relevant documentation has been completed and signed by the parent or guardian.

A current Immunisation History Statement must be provided to access all early childhood education and care services in Victoria as per the [‘No Jab, No Play’ law](#).

No Jab, No Play

The 'No Jab, No Play' legislation aims to reduce the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases through increased immunisation rates in the community.

The legislation requires all children enrolling in early childhood education and care services to be up to date with their vaccinations or to meet the criteria for exemption at the point of enrolment. Services can obtain an up to date immunisation status from families up to two months prior to the first day of attendance at kindergarten in order to confirm kindergarten enrolment. The legislation does not require services to monitor or document the ongoing immunisation status of children following enrolment.

Kindergarten Funding Guidelines

Prior to confirming enrolment, service providers must obtain evidence that the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age (via an immunisation status certificate), or
- is immunised in accordance with a recognised catch-up schedule if the child has fallen behind with their vaccinations, or
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated.

Service providers:

- may give eligible children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage a 16 week grace period to produce proof of up-to-date immunisation and
- should provide information and assistance to families about the immunisation process and
- must keep immunisation documentation with the child's enrolment record in accordance with the applicable regulations

Attendance for 2 year olds in the Kindergarten Program

Children under three will not be able to attend a funded kindergarten program until their third birthday due to ratio requirements.

All records containing personal information about children/families are kept in secure storage according to the Surf Coast Shire Early Years Confidentiality, Management and Storage of Records Policy.

Surf Coast Shire Privacy Statement

Surf Coast Shire Council considers that the responsible handling of personal information is a key aspect of democratic governance, and is strongly committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy. Council will comply with the Information Privacy Principles as set out in the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. The information will be used for the primary purpose it was collected or any related purpose for which the individual would reasonably expect Council to use or disclose the information. The information will not be disclosed to any other party unless Council is required to do so by law.

Orientation to the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services

Staff and educators within the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services will ensure that all children and their families are made welcome and orientated to the service (and the routines) upon commencement and provide the required support to families during the settling in period.

Our educational program accounts for each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests. We view enrolment and orientation as an important opportunity to begin to gather this information from the child and their family.

When planning for orientation, a family's cultural and linguistic background will be taken into account. Early Years staff/educators may need to seek external support to facilitate the enrolment and orientation process.

Enrolling families will be encouraged to:

- Visit and become familiar with the service before their child commences.
- Talk with the staff/educators about the values and expectations they hold in relation to the service; their child's experience at the service and individual transitional needs based on each individual family.
- Share information about other child-related services accessed by the family.
- Share understandings of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs.
- Contact the primary staff member / educator during the day if they wish.

Staff/Educators will:

- Assist families to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child.
- Closely observe and offer reassurance to a child who is distressed on separating from their parent/guardian.
- Share information with families about how their child is settling into the service.

Occasional Care

- New families are invited to visit the service and participate in the program at times mutually suitable to both parties before the child starts at the service.
- Where appropriate, opportunities for families to settle children into the service gradually will be facilitated.
- Early Years staff/educators encourage parents to say goodbye to children before they leave.

Kindergarten Programs

- For children commencing in Kindergarten programs orientation arrangements will be provided at the time of enrolment.
- Children and families individual needs will be taken into consideration and plans made for collection of additional information and resources to support a child's inclusion and participation in the program where required.
- Kindergartens may stagger entry times for children at the beginning of term one in some cases to support children in a smooth transition into the program.

Family Participation

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services actively encourages the input of all families associated with the service in our decision-making processes.

The Service Team Leader in collaboration with staff/educators has the responsibility to ensure that:

- Families are encouraged to participate in surveys and quality improvement activities and processes.
- Annual evaluations are conducted to allow families to have input into the future planning of the service.
- Informal evaluations of the service occur throughout the year.
- Families are encouraged to participate in ways that acknowledge and value diversity.
- Families are encouraged to attend the service throughout the year, view the service and meet the staff/educators.

Parent/Guardian Requests

- Staff/educators will consider all requests from parents/guardians in regard to their children and where a request cannot be fulfilled an explanation will be provided.
- Discussions will be held with families in regard to the benefits of the experiences provided to the children in the service and/or documentation will be displayed or available.
- Respect is given to families in regard to their right to make decisions on behalf of their child.

Access to Children

Families enrolled in Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services are welcome to attend the applicable service at any time.

Refer to: [Early Years Services - Delivery of children to, and collection from, education and care service premises policy](#)

Definitions

Enrolment	An enrolment occurs when the provider has an arrangement with an individual or organisation to provide education and care to a child.
Orientation	Process to support the child's transition to the service, whereby families spend time at the service with the child a few times before leaving the child on their own. The time required for orientation and settling in will vary for each child and their family.

Grace period: allows specific categories of children of families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to enrol and attend the service without an AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) or when the statement is assessed as not being up-to-date. The 16-week grace period starts on the first day of the child's attendance at the service. During the grace period, the service is required to take reasonable steps to obtain the AIR Immunisation History Statement and to encourage families to access immunisation services.

Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement: is the only form of acceptable evidence of immunisation. The AIR is a national register administered by Medicare that records all vaccinations given in Australia, including to children. Parents/carers must provide a copy of their most recent AIR Immunisation History Statement, which shows that the child is up to date with their immunisations upon enrolment and when a child has received or been due to receive a vaccination while attending the service. In the case of medical contraindication, an authorised medical practitioner completes and signs a Medical Exemption Form, and supplies it to the AIR. In order to confirm enrolment, the Immunisation History Statement must show the child is up to date with the vaccines they can have medical contraindication and indicate the due date for the next vaccinations the child is able to receive in the future if applicable.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

D23/84589	Early Years Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) Policy
D14/ 94981	Early Years Emergency Management and Evacuations Policy
D15/16286	Early Years Access and Inclusion Policy
D14/94973	Early Years Delivery of children to, and collection from, education and care service premises policy
D15/42541	Early Years Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy
D15/16337	Early Years Confidentiality, Management and Storage of Records Policy
D15/32925	Early Years Medical Conditions and Medication Policy
D15/15748	Payment of Fees

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D16/20238	Kindergarten Central Application Process
D15/117400	All About Me Form – Family Day Care
D18/92421	Early Years Immunisation – No jab, No play Work Instruction
D17/30062	Early Years Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan
D17/86148	Entering Births into CDIS Work Instruction
D14/28947	Occasional Care Waiting List Process Work Instruction
Online	Occasional Care Application Enrolment and Consent Form
Online	Confidential Enrolment & Consent Form - Kindergarten

Other References

Education and Care Services National Law 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Victoria Children Services Regulations 2020
National Quality Standards 2011
Child Care Services Handbook (Department of Education)
AECA Code of Ethics
UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child
Privacy and Data Protection Act (2014)
ACECQA National; Quality Framework Resource Kit
Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
Early Year Learning Framework for Australia
My Time, Our Place

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	New Policy – combining Enrolment and Orientation Policy	Manager Community Strengthening - 7 March 2023