1.10 Enrolment and Orientation

Background

For many children and their families, commencing child care is their first experience of separation. It is an experience that can be daunting and should be managed so that the process is as smooth as possible for all involved, especially the child.

The experiences of families and their children during the enrolment and orientation processes strongly influence the quality of their future relationships with the Service.

Policy statement

This Policy outlines the way the Service welcomes parents and their children, informs them about the Service's policies and procedures, and gathers the information necessary to ensure the safety, education and care of the children

Strategies and practices

The Centre, as part of its obligations to the Commonwealth Government, gives priority of access to care according to the guidelines provided by the Commonwealth. These priorities are as follows:

- **First Priority** – a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect.

- **Second Priority** – A child whose parent/s satisfies the work/training/study test under section 14 of *A New Tax System*

- **Third Priority –** Any other child. Q7.3.2

- **Waiting List**

- The Centre maintains waiting lists for parents seeking care for their children. Parents who wish to be included on the waiting list need to complete an application form and pay the $40.00 Administration Fee. Once this has been completed the information will immediately be keyed into the centre's computer system.

- The Centre cannot guarantee that a child will be enrolled at a particular time. This depends upon vacancies applicable at that time and upon priority of access rules which may apply. Parents/guardians will be notified when a child can be accepted into care.

- An administration fee of $40 is payable per family per enrolment. This fee is non-refundable regardless of whether a position becomes available. The administration fee is not applied to future child care costs. Q7.3.2

Pre-enrolment

- The Service follows the Australian Government's "Priority of Access Guidelines" for allocating childcare places. Once these Guidelines are met, the Service prioritises siblings of children who are already attending. QA 7.3.2

- During the initial contact, parents are provided with basic information about the Service, its programs, routines, meals, fees, operation, opening and closing times, policies and procedures and documentation required before commencing at the Service. Parents are also

at this time provided a tour of the centre. Possible start dates are discussed. Parents are also invited to ask any questions they may have. They are directed to our website and Educa to access all current policies and procedures for their perusal, along with their enrollment pack. QA 6.1.1, 7.3.5

- The Nominated Supervisor ascertains if the child has any special education and care requirements (e.g. medical, English as a second language) so that these needs can be met by the Service from the child's first day of attendance. QA 2.1.1, 5.1.3, 6.1.1

- Parents are given a reminder to contact the Family Assistance Office to have their eligibility for Child Care Benefit assessed, if their child has not previously attended care. This information is required prior to formal enrolment. QA 6.2.2

- The Nominated Supervisor informs parents that every child and family responds differently to starting childcare, especially if it is the first time that children and families have been separated for any lengthy period. They are also told that, at enrolment time, educators and parents will plan to ensure the child settles in as smoothly and as quickly as possible. QA 6.1.1

Enrolment

- Once parents decide to enrol their child into care or for the waiting list, they complete an enrolment form prior to their child commencing at the Service.

    o Ensure enrolment form is filled in fully and correctly

    o The full competition of an enrolment form is necessary before a child can be accepted into or put on the waiting list for any type of care.

- Parents are to provide the following health information.

    o Name, address and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner or medical service and the child's Medicare details.

    o Details of any specific healthcare needs or known medical conditions such as allergies, asthma, diagnosed as at risk of anaphylaxis.

    o Any Medical Management Plan or Risk Minimisation Plan to be followed with respect to a specific healthcare need or medical condition (e.g. asthma, allergy, anaphylaxis).

    o Details of any dietary restrictions for the child. The service will review any dietary restrictions and notify the family if unable to support the child's needs.

    o Immunisation status of the child. Refer to the Service's *Immunisation of Children and Staff Policy*. QA 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, 2.3.3, 6.2.1

    o Birth Certificate

    o Health Care Card

- Parents are to provide direct debit details and these are entered into the system as the fee payment option for Acorn QA 6.1.3

- The Service's Policies and Procedures are discussed. Parents are then shown where they can readily access these Policies and Procedures, the Parent Library and other resources. QA 6.1.3, 2.1.3, 7.3.5

- The Nominated Supervisor then speaks to the parents about the various ways the Service communicates with them (e.g. face-to-face, notice boards, emails, newsletters, Facebook and Educa) and ways that parents can converse with the Service (e.g. face-to-face, suggestion box, email, communication forms, and surveys). The information provided by the Service is intended to be easily understood by all parents, including those for whom English is a second language. QA 6.1.3

- Parents are also asked the most suitable way to exchange information about their child's specific needs so that the educators can work with the parents to meet those needs. QA 6.2.1

- At this time, the Nominated Supervisor, the educators in the child's room and the parents devise an orientation plan to help the child settle during the transition from home to the Service (particularly during the initial settling in period), and how best to maintain continuity between home and the Service. Some children may need to visit the Service a number of times before feeling sufficiently secure to be left by their parents. Others can be left after the first visit. Others again may need to build from a short visit to a full day. The plan is flexible and can be altered at any time. It is crucial that the child feels secure, and that positive interactions are established between all parties – child, parents and educators. QA 6.1.1

- Once the child commences at the Service, parents are contacted at any time the child becomes overly distressed. Parents are also informed about their child's day when they collect the child, and are welcome to telephone the Service throughout the day for updates. QA 6.1.1

- At the end of the enrolment and orientation, parents are asked to complete an <u>Enrolment and Orientation Checklist</u> which provides feedback on how to improve these processes and ensure all areas are covered. QA 7.2.3

Transitioning to a New Room

- Children are transitioned to the next age group when they are developmentally ready to move to the next age group and a vacancy occurs. When educators identify that a child is ready to begin transition, and a vacancy is imminent, they contact parents to discuss the desirability of the move and to obtain their input. QA 6.1.2, 6.2.1, 6.3.2

- Once all parties have agreed that the move is in the child's best interests, a letter is composed formalising the agreement. It details the day and date of the move, the names of the educators in the new room and any other relevant information. Parents are also asked to complete the Service's "Child's about me" on Educa. QA 6.2.1, 6.3.2

- Before children are officially moved to a new room, their current educators talk to them about the impending move and the children then visit the next age group a number of times. The frequency depends on individual children. QA 1.1.6, 5.1.2, 5.1.3

- Immediately prior to the child's official move, parents are encouraged to visit the child's new room and to meet the educators to ensure that they are aware of such matters as room routine, location of lockers, and sign- in and sign-out procedure. QA 5.1.3

Transition to school

Attending school for the first time is a major change for the child and the family. The Service recognises that parents play a vital role in the success of the transition, and supports and works with parents to prepare children for school entry.

- Wherever possible, the Service provides families with information about the schools within the local community.

- The Service provides information to parents about children's readiness for school.

- Educators speak to children about starting school and ensure that the information they provide to children is positive and accurate.

- The Service coordinates the transition statements to be completed by the educator and provides these to the parents to provide to the child's school. QA 1.1.4, 6.2.2, 6.3.2

Responsibilities of parents

- To provide the Service with information about their family and their child's needs and interests.

- To provide all of the required documentation.

- To read and discuss Service policies and procedures.

Links to other policies

- Administration of Medication Policy

- Educational Program Policy

- Excursion Policy

- Food Preparation, Storage and Handling

- Immunisation for Children and Staff Policy

- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness

- Interactions with Families Policy

- Managing Infectious Diseases Policy

- Medical Conditions Policy

- Nutrition, Food and Beverages Policy Relationships with Children Policy

- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

- Sleep and Rest Policy

- Sun Protection Policy

Sources

- Early Years Learning Framework 2009

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011.

- Boyle, L. (2009). *NCAC Factsheet: Settling your child into care*

http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/family-resources/factsheets/settling.pdf accessed 22 November 2013

Australia Government Department of Human Services. (2013) *Information for Families using child care: What is CCB?* http://www.saasso.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/What-is-the-Child-Care-Rebate.pdf accessed 23 November 2013

Further reading and useful websites

- Department of Human Services – http://www.humanservices.gov.au/ accessed 23 November 2013

- Office for Early Education and Care – *My Child's First Day*. Tip Sheet from the series Getting Started in Early education and care. http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/tip-sheets/tip-sheet-childs-first-day.pdf accessed 22 October 2014

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