



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 Little Learners Day Care Centre ('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

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.
- During the initial contact, parents are provided with basic information about the Service, its programs, routines and fees, and are shown through the Service. When parents indicate their interest in enrolling their child, they are shown through the Service and provided with information about its operation (e.g. opening and closing times, program, meals, policies and procedures, fees, documentation required before commencing at the Service and tailored orientation). Possible start dates are discussed. Parents are also invited to ask any questions they may have. They are given a copy of the Parent Handbook to keep.
- Parents are given a reminder to contact Centrelink to have their eligibility for Child Care Subsidy assessed. This information is required prior to formal enrolment.
- 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.

Enrolment and Orientation

Enrolment/Orientation

- Once parents decide to enrol their child, they complete an enrolment form prior to their child commencing at the Service. The enrolment form contains the following details:
 - Full name, date of birth and address of the child
 - Name, address and contact details of: each known parent of the child; any person who is to be notified of an emergency involving the child if neither parent of the child can be immediately contacted; and, any person who is an authorised nominee.
 - The name of any person who is authorised to consent to medical treatment of, or to authorise administration of medication to, the child; and, any person who is authorised to authorise an educator to take the child outside the education and care service premises.
 - Details of any court orders, parenting orders or parenting plans provided to the approved provider relating to powers, duties, responsibilities or authorities of any person in relation to the child or access to the child.
 - Details of any other court orders provided to the approved provider relating to the child's residence or the child's contact with a parent or other person.
 - Gender of the child.
 - Language used in the child's home
 - Cultural background of the child and, if applicable, of the child's parents.
 - Any special considerations for the child, such as any cultural, religious or dietary requirements or additional needs.
 - Parents are asked to sign an agreement on the enrolment form authorising the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or an educator to: seek medical treatment for the child from a registered medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service; arrange transportation of the child by an ambulance service; and, if relevant, take the child on regular outings. Refer to the *Service's Excursion Policy*.

- Parents are to provide the following health information.
 - Name, address and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner or medical service and the child's Medicare details.
 - Details of any specific healthcare needs or known medical conditions such as allergies, asthma, diagnosed as at risk of anaphylaxis.
 - 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).
 - Details of any dietary restrictions for the child.
 - Immunisation status of the child. Refer to the *Service's Immunisation of Children and Staff Policy*.

- Parents are asked to complete a Family and Child Information Summary which provides some background about the family and child:
 - Information about the child's interests, needs, likes and dislikes
 - Cultural background, and any special customs and religious requirements to be respected
 - Food preferences
 - Routines at home
 - Toilet training needs

Enrolment and Orientation

- Parents are provided with written information about fee structure, payment regularity and options available (Direct Debit only).
- The Service's Policies and Procedures are discussed, and parents' attention drawn to specific policies (e.g. *Sun Protection, Nutrition, Food and Beverages*) and aspects of those policies that require their support and cooperation (e.g. ensuring current contact information, provide nappy cream, providing a hat (12 months or younger), labelling of all clothes and other personal items). Parents are then shown where they can readily access these Policies and Procedures, the Parent Room and other resources.
- Management then speaks to the parents about the various ways the Service communicates with them (e.g. face-to-face, over the phone, family information boards & emails) and ways that parents can converse with the Service (e.g. face-to-face, email). The information provided by the Service is intended to be easily understood by all parents, including those for whom English is a second language.
- 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.
- 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.
- Our preferred orientation times are at 9.00, 10.00 or 2.00 & 3.00pm, we offer as many of these orientation visits as required prior to the commencement of care. These sessions are for 1 hr. Parents must stay on the Centre premises during their child's orientation as this is a free session.
- Once the child has started care at Little Learners, parents will be kept informed about how their child is settling in via phone conversations or on collection of their child. Parents are welcome to call the Centre throughout the day to see how their child is going.
- Once the child commences at the Service, parents are contacted at any time the child becomes distressed and unable to cope. 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.

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.
- 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.

Enrolment and Orientation

- 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 digital sign- in and sign-out.
- Change is harder for some than others, however by making this transition as smooth as possible for children and families, we are helping build the child's success. We will orientate the child into their new room as much as possible prior to room movements.

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 liaises with the nearest government school and, towards the end of the year, arranges with the school for a number of familiarisation visits for the children who will attend the following year.
- The Service coordinates the transition statements to be completed by the educator, parent and child, and provides these to the school.

Additional safe practices for babies

- To be diligent in obtaining information from parents upon enrolment all relevant information about their child, especially details on immunisation and medical conditions, together with dietary needs, and current sleep patterns, bottle times and other care routines.

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.
- Update personal details when required (address, phone number..)

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 2018
 - 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

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur, and any issues identified as part of the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.