

ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 6

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### **Policy Statement:**

South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten is committed to:

- meeting the needs of the local community
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided on enrolment forms
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receive an effective orientation into the service

South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten complies with DEECD funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in government-funded kindergarten places. It aims to give as many children as possible one year of funded four year old kindergarten as available positions allow.

### **Purpose:**

This policy outlines:

- the criteria for enrolment at South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten;
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten, and the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated;
- brief procedures for welcoming new families and children into South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten.

### **Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:**

Applications will be accepted for your child in the two years prior to attending the program, between 1 February and 31 May for first round offers. All applications will then be prioritised according to the criteria as stated in the procedures relating to this policy. Please note: children are required to turn three by 30 April of the year they commence attending the three year old program, and turn four by 30 April of the year they commence attending the four year old program.

Enrolment applications are made online via the South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten website or by completion of an Enrolment Application Form which are forwarded directly to the kindergarten or via email to [info@southportuniting.org.au](mailto:info@southportuniting.org.au). Applications are entered on the waiting list using the eligibility and priority of access criteria. Applications received after the closing date are considered only after all other applicants have been offered a place.

Places will be allocated to applicants in accordance with the eligibility and priority of access criteria of the service. Offers of places in the three year old and four year old programs are made at the same time. Successful applicants are notified by email of a confirmed place or by written letter if no email address is supplied. Second-round offers will be made three weeks after first-round offers. Third-round offers will be made no later than three weeks after second-round offers.

Families not wishing to accept the offer of a place, or intending to withdraw their enrolment, must notify the Enrolment Officer as soon as possible, by email or written letter. Unsuccessful applicants are notified by email or by letter if there is no email address supplied.

Eligibility and priority of access criteria (in order of priority) are as follows:

- High Priority children recommended for priority of access to a funded kindergarten program as stated in The Kindergarten Guidelines 2013 - Refer to Sources, Attachment 3 (3 places)
- 3 places reserved for children identified as vulnerable by South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten
- Up to 5 places are reserved for children attending the Port Phillip Special School
- Children who turn three or four years of age respectively by April 30<sup>th</sup> of the year they will attend kindergarten.
- For the 4 year old program - children who have attended the 3 year old program at the kindergarten
- Children who have siblings who have attended the kindergarten in the last five years.
- Children living in Port Melbourne
- Children living in the City of Port Phillip
- Children being cared for in the City of Port Phillip

Any and all remaining applications will be allocated any remaining places via a ballot.

**Note: Attachment 1 contains a more detailed outline of these procedures.**

## Scope:

This Policy applies to Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 2.

## Background and Legislation:

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 (Regulation 168(2)(k)).

It is intended that all eligible children (refer to *Definitions*) will have access to one year of kindergarten before commencing school. However, a shortage of places in some areas can limit choices for parents/guardians. Where demand is higher than availability, a priority system for access must be determined by the Approved Provider/CEO/Advisory Committee in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places will vary from service to service, but is generally based on a service's philosophy, community needs, and beliefs, and the provisions of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2012*. The Victorian Government requires funded organisations to ensure that their policies and procedures promote equal opportunity for all children. Criteria for access and inclusion are outlined in The Kindergarten Guidelines 2013.

Attachment 3 contains a list of all the legislation relevant to this Policy, including Acts, Regulations, Standards, Guides. It also has a list of sources and references used to inform this policy.

## Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness;
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and related procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required;
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

## Definitions:

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

**Child Care Benefit (CCB):** A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare. All eligible families can receive some Child Care Benefit. Details are available at

[www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/](http://www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/)

**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 *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).

**Eligible child:** A child who meets the criteria outlined in The Kindergarten Guideline 2013

**Enrolment application form:** Information from parents/guardians about their child. Once the form is completed, the child will automatically go onto a waiting list.

**Enrolment record:** Contains information on each child, as required under the National Regulations, including contact details, names of authorised nominees (refer to *General Definitions*), names of persons authorised to consent to medical treatment or to authorise administration of medication, names of persons authorised to 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 etc. (Regulations 160, 161, 162). This information is kept confidential by the service.

**Fees:** A charge for a place within a program at the service

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**Authorisation:** Chief Executive Officer

**Review Date:**

30 April 2015

**This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:**

- *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Fees Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Programming Policy*

## Attachment 1: Procedures relating to this Policy

### 1. Application for a place

- The enrolment applications for three and four year old kindergarten will be accepted between 1 February and 31 May in the two years prior to the child attending the three or four year old program.
- **Funded Four Year Old Groups:** Prior to submitting an enrolment application, you need to identify the year you want your child to start school, and consequently what year you would like her/him to attend a funded kindergarten program for children in the year prior to school. Please note: children are required to turn four years of age by 30 April of the year they attend a funded kindergarten program.
- **Three Year Old Groups:** Prior to submitting an enrolment application, you need to identify the year you want your child to attend the three year old group. Please note: children are required to turn three by 30 April of the year they attend the three year old program.
- Enrolment application can be made via the kindergarten website – <http://www.southportuniting.org.au/kindergarten>, or by completing an Enrolment Application Form
- To facilitate the inclusion of all children into the program, enrolment applications should clearly identify any additional or specific needs of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).
- Completed enrolment application forms are to be forwarded directly to the kindergarten or via email to [info@southportuniting.org.au](mailto:info@southportuniting.org.au). Access to completed enrolment application forms will be restricted to the person responsible for the enrolment process, the Approved Provider, CEO Nominated Supervisor and educators at the service, unless otherwise specified by the Approved Provider.
- All applications will be considered according to the priority of access criteria after applications close on 31 May.

### 2. Closing dates for enrolment applications

The closing dates for enrolment applications are:

- For children to attend the funded four year old kindergarten program: 31 May of the year prior to the commencement of that program.
- For children to attend the three year old program: 31 May of the year prior to the commencement of that program.

### 3. Procedure for applications received after the closing date

Applications received after the closing date will be considered after all other applicants have been offered a place in line within the priority of access criteria of South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten.

### 4. Allocation within groups

Where the service provides more than one funded kindergarten program or three year old program, places within the programs will be allocated by the service in line with the priority of access criteria.

### 5. Offer of places

- Places will be allocated to applicants in accordance with the eligibility and priority of access criteria of the service.
- Offers of places in the three year old program/s and the funded kindergarten program will be made at the same time.
- Applicants who are successful will be notified by email of a confirmed place or by written letter if no email address is supplied.
- Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a place, or intend to withdraw their enrolment, are requested to notify the Enrolment Officer as soon as possible, by email or written letter. The cut-off date for accepting a place will be two weeks after the date of offer. Late acceptances will not be taken and will not be followed up. The cut-off date is final.
- Second-round offers will be made no later than three weeks after first-round offers. Third-round offers will be made three weeks after second-round offers.
- First term fees must be paid with the acceptance of the place to hold the place for the following year. Details for payment will be supplied with the Offer of Place form. An enrolment form and other relevant information will be provided at an information evening later in the year of which you will be notified by mail. Note: Places will not be allocated to children until any substantial debt owed to the service by the family is paid, or a payment plan is agreed to between the family and the service (refer to *Fees Policy*)
- Fees will not be refunded if an applicant withdraws from the offer of place after the cut-off date.
- If an offer is declined but the applicant wishes to remain on the waitlist they may do so as long as the request is received at the time of declining the original offer.
- Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email or if there is no email address supplied, by mail if a self-addressed envelope is included with the application form. .

## **6. Eligibility and priority of access criteria for the funded kindergarten program and three year old group**

The following children, in order of priority, are eligible for attendance in the **funded kindergarten (four year old) program**:

1. High Priority Children recommended for priority of access to a funded kindergarten program as stated in The Kindergarten Guide 2013 (3 places)
2. 3 places are reserved for children identified as vulnerable by South Port UnitingCare
3. Up to 5 places are reserved for children attending the Port Phillip Special School
4. Children who turn three or four years of age respectively by April 30<sup>th</sup> of the year they will attend kindergarten.
5. For the 4 year old program - children who have attended the 3 year old program at the kindergarten
6. Children who have siblings who have attended the kindergarten in the last five years.
7. Children living in Port Melbourne
8. Children living in the City of Port Phillip
9. Children being cared for in the City of Port Phillip

All remaining applications will be allocated any remaining places via a ballot.

All special consideration requests must applied for in writing and individual cases will be reviewed by the CEO, Parent Advisory Committee and Nominated Supervisor.

Eligibility and access criteria for **three-year-old kindergarten program:**

1. 3 places are reserved for children identified as vulnerable by South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten
2. Up to 5 places are reserved for children attending the Port Phillip Special School
3. Priority is given to children who have turned three years of age by the April 30<sup>th</sup> of the year they commence.
4. Priority is given to children who have siblings who have attended the kindergarten in the last five years.
5. Priority is given to children living in Port Melbourne
6. Priority is given to children living in the City of Port Phillip

Children are eligible for attendance in the three-year-old program only when they have turned three years of age. If a child turns three after the program commences, their place will be held for them upon full payment of fees, and they will commence upon turning three provided this is before April 30<sup>th</sup>.

Children will only be able to attend a second year of three-year-old kindergarten in exceptional circumstances (after consideration by the CEO, Parent Advisory Committee and Nominated Supervisor) or when all eligible children on the waiting list have been offered a place. All special consideration requests must be received in writing with individual cases reviewed by the Approved Provider, CEO, Parent Advisory Committee and Nominated Supervisor prior to allocation of places for the following year.

## Attachment 2: Responsibilities relating to the Enrolment and Orientation Policy

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Approved Provider | Nominated/<br>Certified<br>Supervisor;<br>Educators | Person responsible for Enrolments | Parents/<br>Guardians |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Determine priority of access criteria to programs at South Port UnitingCare Kindergarten, based on funding requirements and service philosophy                                                                                                                                                                            | x                 |                                                     |                                   |                       |
| Developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access, an early childhood program, and addressing any barriers to access                                                                                                                                                           | x                 |                                                     |                                   |                       |
| Comply with all relevant Acts, Regulations & Policies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | x                 |                                                     |                                   |                       |
| Appoint a person to be responsible for the enrolment process and the day-to-day implementation of this policy                                                                                                                                                                                                             | x                 |                                                     |                                   |                       |
| Provide 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 the program                                                                                                                                    | x                 | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Ensure that Enrolment Form complies with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161,162; review the Form to ensure effectiveness in meeting the service's regulatory and management requirements                                                                                                                            | x                 | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Ensure that the orientation program and plans meet the individual needs of children and families, and complies with DEECD funding criteria                                                                                                                                                                                | x                 |                                                     |                                   |                       |
| Review the orientation processes for new families and children to ensure the objectives of this policy are met                                                                                                                                                                                                            | x                 |                                                     |                                   |                       |
| Ensure that parents/guardians of a child attending the service can enter the premises at any time that the child is attending, 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 or educators under the Law (Regulation 157) | x                 | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Provide Enrolment Application Forms and provide a copy of the <i>Enrolment and Orientation Policy</i> with each form                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                   |                                                     | x                                 |                       |
| Collate enrolments and offer places in line with this policy and for priority of access criteria; provide relevant                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |                                                     | x                                 |                       |



| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Approved Provider | Nominated/<br>Certified<br>Supervisor;<br>Educators | Person responsible for Enrolments | Parents/<br>Guardians |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| paperwork to families in accordance with this policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |                                                     |                                   |                       |
| Maintain a waiting list of families applying for a place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                   |                                                     | x                                 |                       |
| Provide a monthly report to the Advisory Board regarding the status of enrolments and any difficulties encountered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                   |                                                     | x                                 |                       |
| Comply with the <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> of the service, in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information, including storing completed enrolment application forms in a lockable filing cabinet as soon as practicable                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                   | x                                                   | x                                 |                       |
| Respond to enrolment enquiries on a day-to-day basis and refer people to the person responsible for the enrolment process, as required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                   | x                                                   | x                                 |                       |
| Review enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs in line with <i>Inclusion and Equity Policy</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                   | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Responding to parent/guardian enquiries regarding their child's readiness for the program in which they are considering enrolling their child                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Ensure that enrolment forms are completed prior to the child's commencement at the service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Develop strategies to assist new families to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel welcomed into the service</li> <li>• become familiar with service policies and procedures</li> <li>• share information about their family beliefs, values and culture</li> <li>• share their understanding of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs</li> <li>• discuss the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's learning</li> </ul> |                   | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Discuss the individual child's needs with parents/guardians and develop an orientation program to assist them to settle into the program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                   | x                                                   |                                   |                       |
| Encourage parents/guardians to stay with their child as long as required during the settling in period and to make contact with educators and carers at the service, when required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                   | x                                                   |                                   |                       |

| <b>Action</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Approved Provider</b> | <b>Nominated/<br/>Certified<br/>Supervisor;<br/>Educators</b> | <b>Person responsible for Enrolments</b> | <b>Parents/<br/>Guardians</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Assist parents/guardians to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child; provide comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members |                          | x                                                             |                                          |                               |
| Share information with parents/guardians regarding their child's progress in settling in to the service                                                                                                         |                          | x                                                             |                                          |                               |
| Discuss support services for children with parents/guardians, where required                                                                                                                                    |                          | x                                                             |                                          |                               |
| Reading, understand and comply with this <i>Enrolment and Orientation Policy</i>                                                                                                                                |                          |                                                               |                                          | x                             |
| Complete enrolment forms prior to their child's commencement at the service                                                                                                                                     |                          |                                                               |                                          | x                             |
| Ensure that all required information is provided to the service                                                                                                                                                 |                          |                                                               |                                          | x                             |
| Update information by notifying the service of any changes as they occur                                                                                                                                        |                          |                                                               |                                          | x                             |

Note: Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

### ATTACHMENT 3: LEGISLATION AND SOURCES

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006(Vic)*, as amended 2011
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005(Vic)*, as amended 2011
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005(Vic)*, as amended 2012
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 160, 161, 162, 177, 183
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010(Vic)*
- *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities* -
  - (1) Standard 6.1: Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained
  - (2) Element 6.1.1: There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*

Sources used in relation to this policy are:

- *Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000*, included in the *Legislative Extracts*:  
[www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/InstructionSheets.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/InstructionSheets.aspx)
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*:  
[www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/](http://www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/)
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*:  
[www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/](http://www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/)
- *Priority for allocating places in child care services*:  
[www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/Priorityforallocatingplacesinchildcareservices.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/Priorityforallocatingplacesinchildcareservices.aspx)
- *The Kindergarten Guidelines 2013* :  
[www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/)