Cheltenham Community Centre Early Learning Childcare

E21. Inclusion and Equity

1. Policy

1.1 Cheltenham Community Centre (CCC) Early Learning Childcare is committed to:

- Creating an inclusive and supportive environment that values diversity, promotes respect, and prioritises wellbeing.
- Ensure all adults and children at CCC Early Learning Childcare are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability, additional needs, family structure, or lifestyle.
- Promote inclusive practices to support the successful participation of all children in our programs.
- Foster a positive mental health and wellbeing environment for children, educators, staff, and families.

1.2 We strive to:

- Uphold Children's Rights: Recognise and respect every child's right to access and participate in quality early childhood education and care.
- Promote Equity and Inclusion: Create an environment that reflects and supports equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices.
- Encourage Belonging: Build a sense of belonging for all children, families, and staff by respecting and valuing diverse identities, backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and interests.
- Support Cultural Responsiveness: Ensure our programs reflect and respond to the values and cultural beliefs of families, the local community, and broader society.
- Prevent Discrimination: Actively work to ensure no child is discriminated against based on background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, health, abilities, additional needs, family structure, or lifestyle.
- Prioritise Mental Health and Wellbeing: Consider and support the mental health and wellbeing needs of all children, families, and staff in our care.

1.3 This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Cheltenham Community Centre (CCC) Early Learning Childcare Centre.

1.4 In order to assess whether the values and purposes of this policy have been achieved, we will:

- Welcome feedback from everyone affected by this policy regarding its effectiveness
- Monitor the implementations, 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 procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required, and
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

2. Procedures

2.1 Educators

- Model Inclusive Practices
  - Treat all children, families, and colleagues with respect and equity.
  - Use language and actions that promote acceptance and inclusion.

- Create Inclusive Environments
  - Incorporate diverse cultural, linguistic, and ability-related materials into daily activities.
  - Adapt programs and learning experiences to accommodate individual needs, interests, and abilities.
  - Promote positive interactions and relationships among children.
- Support Wellbeing
  - Observe and support children's mental health by identifying signs of stress, anxiety, or exclusion.
  - Provide a safe, nurturing, and predictable environment.
  - Seek assistance or guidance if additional support is needed for a child or family.
- Communicate Respectfully
  - Engage with families to understand their values, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds.
  - Share information about their child's participation, progress, and wellbeing.
- Ongoing Professional Development
  - Attend training on cultural awareness, equity, inclusion, and mental health.
  - Reflect on and improve personal practices to align with the policy.

2.2 Volunteers and Students

- Follow Educator Guidance
  - Work under the direction of educators to implement inclusive practices.
  - Respect the diverse backgrounds and abilities of all children and families.
- Engage Positively
  - Use positive and inclusive language and behaviour when interacting with children and families.
  - Encourage participation of all children in group activities.
- Learn and Reflect
  - Seek opportunities to understand and adopt inclusive practices.
  - Ask for feedback to improve interactions and alignment with the policy.

2.3 Families

- Collaborate with Educators
  - Share relevant information about cultural values, beliefs, or specific needs to support their child's participation.
  - Communicate openly about any concerns related to inclusion or wellbeing.
- Participate in the Program
  - Contribute to cultural activities or share resources to enrich the program's diversity.
  - Support their child's understanding of diversity and inclusion at home.
- Respect and Support the Policy
  - Treat all staff, children, and families respectfully, regardless of differences.
  - Address concerns constructively through appropriate channels, as outlined in the CCC communication process.

2.4 Management Responsibilities

- Policy Promotion
  - Display and communicate the Inclusivity and Wellbeing Policy to staff, volunteers, and families.
  - Include policy-related training during onboarding and annual reviews.
- Provide Resources

    - Ensure educators have access to materials and training to support inclusive practices.
    - Facilitate partnerships with specialists (e.g., speech therapists, mental health professionals, Inclusion support agencies) to support children with additional needs.
- Monitor Implementation
    - Regularly review practices and gather feedback to ensure alignment with the policy.
    - Address concerns or conflicts promptly and equitably.

3. Legislation

3.1 CCC Early Learning Childcare operates in compliance with all relevant legislation, standards, and regulations to ensure the inclusion, safety, and wellbeing of all children in our care.

3.2 The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national approach to early childhood education and care, ensuring high-quality, inclusive practices. It recognises the capacity and rights of all children to succeed, regardless of their diverse circumstances.

3.3 Child Safe Standards (Victoria) these standards require organisations to:

- Create environments where children feel safe, valued, and included.
- Promote participation and celebrate the identities of all children.
- Address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3.4 Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Charter for Children in Out-of-home Care (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards (Vic)
- Dardee Boorai: the Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Vic)
- Disability Act 2006 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards Quality Areas 1-7
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation

4. Definitions

4.1 **Additional needs:** A broad term relating to challenges experienced across a number of areas including physical health, mental health, disability, developmental concern, or emotional need (resulting from trauma, abuse or grief), family displacement (due to war or refugee status), domestic violence, mental illness, family separation or divorce, which affects a person's ability to participate or learn.

4.2 **Culture:** The values and traditions of groups of people that are passed from one generation to another.

4.3 **Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD):** Refers to individuals and groups who are from diverse racial, religious, linguistic and/or ethnic backgrounds.

4.4 **Developmental delay:** A delay in the development of a child under the age of 6 years that:

- is attributable to a mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, and
- is manifested before the child attains the age of 6 years, and
- results in substantial functional limitations in one or more of the following areas of major life activity:
    - self-care
    - receptive and expressive language
    - cognitive development
    - motor development, and
- reflects the child's need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services that are of extended duration and are individually planned and co-ordinated (Disability Act 2006 (Vic)).

4.5 **Disability:** In relation to a person, refers to:

- a sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury, or any combination thereof,
  that:
    - is, or is likely to be, permanent, and
    - causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication, and
    - requires significant ongoing or long-term episodic support, and
        - is not related to ageing, or
        - an intellectual disability, or
        - a developmental delay (Disability Act 2006 (Vic)).

4.6 **Diversity:** Refers to all characteristics that make individuals different from one another, including race, religion, language, ethnicity, beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, level of ability, additional needs,

4.7 **Equity:** (In the context of human rights) is the behaviour of acting in a fair and just manner towards others.

4.8 **Inclusion:** The engagement and involvement of children and families to ensure that all individuals have an equal opportunity to participate and achieve their maximum potential.

4.9 **Inclusion support agencies:** Funded by the Commonwealth Government to work at a local level with early childhood education and care services. ISAs provide practical advice on inclusive practices and support childcare services to build their capacity and to access training. The ISA may also recommend that services access resources, bi-cultural support and specialist equipment, administered by the Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs), to better facilitate a child's inclusion in a service. Further information and eligibility requirements are available at: http://education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program

4.10 **Inclusion support subsidy (ISS):** Assists eligible child care services to improve their capacity to include children with ongoing high support needs, including those with disability, so they can be cared for appropriately within a service. Further details are available at: http://education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program

4.11 **Mental health:** in early childhood can be understood as a young child's ability to experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn
– all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children. Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development (from Be You – refer to Sources).

4.12 **Out-of-Home Care:** Is the term used in Victoria when a child or young person is placed in care away from their parents. It includes placement in kinship care, home-based care such as foster care and residential care. For these children, the State of Victoria is legal their parent, and with this comes the responsibilities of a parent to care for and protect them, and to ensure that they have access to all the services they need for their immediate and longer term benefit (Early Childhood Agreement on Out-of-Home Care – refer to Source)

5. Sources and related policies

5.1 Sources

- Be You: www.beyou.edu.au
- Commission for Children and Young People, Child Safe Standards: www.ccyp.vic.gov.au
- Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care (January 2019). Endorsed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Human Services, Municipal Association of Victoria, Early Learning Association Australia, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Community Child Care Association, Vic Tas Primary Health Network Alliance, Victorian Healthcare Association and Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated: www.education.vic.gov.au
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and Early Childhood Intervention Australia's (ECIA) Position Statement on the Inclusion of Children with a Disability in Early Childhood Education and Care – available at: Search 'statement on inclusion of children with disability' at: https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-work/inclusion-resources/
- fka Children's Services: www.fka.org.au
- Guide to the National Quality Framework: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Guide to the National Quality Standard: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Principal Practice Guide: Equity and Diversity: www.education.vic.gov.au

Related Policies

- Child Safe and Wellbeing
- Child Safe Environment
- Childcare Code of Conduct
- Parental Complaints
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases and including minimum exclusion periods
- Responding to Medical Conditions – including Anaphylaxis, Allergies, Asthma & Diabetes
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions and Incursions
- Fees
- Interactions with Children

- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Confidentiality Policy and Guidelines
- Staffing
- Relaxation and sleep
- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations

Revision History

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