

Access and Inclusion Policy

Quick reference: inclusion | equity | diversity | accessibility | participation | Universal Design for Learning (UDL) | reasonable adjustments | inclusion support | disability rights | Inclusion Support Program (ISP) | inclusive environments | physical accessibility | sensory-friendly spaces | adaptations | assistive technology | visual supports | communication aids | learning modifications | inclusive practices | differentiated learning | Individual Inclusion Plans (IIP) | transition planning | multi-sensory learning | discrimination

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

- (1) To set out how we ensure that every child can access, participate meaningfully in, and experience positive outcomes from our service
- (2) This policy helps us to comply with our legal obligations for equal opportunity and non-discrimination, including those under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and other applicable Victorian human rights, equal opportunity and disability inclusion laws
- (3) It aligns with the National Quality Standard, the Approved Learning Framework, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all of which are underpinned by the principles of equity and inclusion

SCOPE

- (4) This policy applies to:
 - 'Staff': the approved provider, nominated supervisor, paid workers, volunteers, work placement students, and third parties (e.g., contractors, subcontractors, self-employed persons, employees of a labour hire company) who carry out work on our behalf
 - Children in our care, their parents, families and care providers
 - Visitors to our service, including allied health support workers
- (5) This policy covers our duties towards children in our care only, not our duties towards staff or other visitors to our service, who are covered in other policies, including our Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy

DEFINITIONS

- (6) The following definitions apply to this policy and related procedures:
- 'Access' means removing barriers to ensure that everyone can enter, use and participate in our service equitably
 - 'Additional needs' refers to any specific support requirements a child may have to enable them to fully participate at our service (e.g., support for children with disabilities or developmental delays; adjustments for medical conditions; considerations for cultural or religious practices; extension and enrichment for high potential and gifted children; individualised support for behavioural, cognitive, or emotional development; social and cultural supports, including for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children from refugee backgrounds; support for children who are at risk of harm or who are experiencing mental illness, trauma or stress)
 - 'Disability' broadly encompasses total or partial loss of bodily or mental functions, loss of a body part, presence of disease-causing organisms, malfunction/disfigurement of a body part, learning difficulties, or disorders affecting thought processes, perception, emotions, or judgment
 - 'Inclusion' means that every child has access, and can participate meaningfully and experience positive outcomes
 - 'Reasonable adjustment' is a modification or change made to a process, practice, or environment to enable someone with a disability to participate fully and equally
 - 'Universal Design for Learning' is a planning framework that supports educators to enable every child to access the educational program and optimise learning for every child

POLICY STATEMENT

Commitment to access and inclusion

- (7) We are committed to:
- Making sure that every child is included, participates meaningfully and has equitable access at our service
 - Recognising and valuing children's differences and experiences

- Taking into account each child's learning styles, first language, cultural identity, abilities, disabilities, gender, sexual identity, family circumstances and geographic location
 - Making reasonable adjustments to remove barriers to access and participation
 - A zero-tolerance approach to discrimination
- (8) Staff must not discriminate against children with disabilities, either directly (e.g., refusing to enrol a child due to disability) or indirectly (e.g., having a policy that unintentionally excludes a child with a disability) (*Disability Discrimination Act 1992*)
- (9) Staff must follow our Positive Relationships for Children Policy to ensure their interactions with children have regard to each child's physical and intellectual abilities. and maintain at all times the dignity and rights of each child (*National Regulations s 155*)
- (10) The approved provider will ensure that staff have the training and resources they need to maintain an inclusive environment

Enrolment

- (11) No child will be refused enrolment, or unlawfully discriminated against in the terms or conditions of their enrolment, based on disability or any other attribute that is protected under relevant anti-discrimination laws, including sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status
- (12) At the time of a child's enrolment, we must record information about any special considerations for the child, such as whether they have additional needs, or cultural or religious requirements (*National Regulations s 160(3)(h)*)
- (13) The nominated supervisor is responsible for taking steps to ensure children's records are kept up-to-date

Inclusion support

- (14) All children must have equitable access to learning, excursions, daily routines and activities
- (15) If a child requires additional support, we will work with their family, carers and (where relevant) professionals to develop an individual support plan (National Quality Standard 6.2)
- (16) Individual support plans will identify potential barriers to the child's inclusion, and outline our shared goals for their learning, development and participation

- (17) The nominated supervisor, educational leader and room leaders must ensure that support plans are communicated, understood and implemented by the educators who are caring for the child
- (18) Support plans will be continually refined and reviewed in partnership with families and (where relevant) professionals through a process of observation, documentation and communication
- (19) Where a family or educator believes that a child may need additional support, they may ask the nominated supervisor to make a referral to external services or professionals (e.g., speech therapists, occupational therapists, disability support services, family support agencies, child protection agencies)
- (20) The nominated supervisor must follow our procedures for making or accepting referrals, and must obtain parental consent unless there is a reason not to (e.g., a child is at risk of harm)
- (21) If more resources are needed for a child, the nominated supervisor or approved provider may apply for funding (e.g., through the [Inclusion Support Program](#), which offers three categories of support: professional support, specialist equipment and funding)
- (22) Our service has implemented a Strategic Inclusion Plan, which we review annually. Staff and families can access the plan
- (23) If parents continually decline to engage with our service or external support professionals, and this affects the ability of the child or other children to participate safely or meaningfully, the nominated supervisor may, as a last resort, consider suspending or terminating the child's enrolment

Inclusive learning and play culture

- (24) Our educational program and practice must be based on the Approved Learning Framework, including its principles of 'Equity, inclusion and high expectations' and 'Respect for diversity'
- (25) Our program and practice must:
 - Recognise and support each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interest (National Quality Standard 1.1.2)
 - Be based on the developmental needs of each child and take into account the individual differences of each child (*National Law s 168*)
- (26) Educators will follow the Universal Design for Learning principles, including by providing:
 - Multiple means of representation of the learning material to give children various ways of acquiring the core concepts of the lesson

- Multiple ways for children to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding
- Multiple means for children to be engaged in, challenged by and motivated for the learning process

- (27) Children's individual support plans will be embedded within our daily program
- (28) Educators will give all children the encouragement they need to realise their own potential
- (29) Educators will offer differentiated instruction to suit each child's learning style, while ensuring that everyone is involved in the same lesson and each child is challenged at their level. They check to make sure every child understands their instructions or if they need help
- (30) Every child will be supported to make decisions, express their interests, ideas, needs, and preferences. Educators respond to children's unique ways of communicating, including through non-verbal cues
- (31) Educators will sensitively intervene if they see a child being excluded, objectified or 'singled out' by other staff or children. They encourage peer support, cooperative learning and child-led inclusive play and learning
- (32) Educators will help children feel a sense of belonging, build positive relationships within the centre, and provide positive behaviour guidance (National Quality Standard Area 5)

Inclusive physical environment

- (33) Our service must be organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments (National Quality Standard 3.2.1)
- (34) We must ensure that our indoor and outdoor spaces, buildings and fixtures support the access of every child (National Quality Standard 3.1.1)
- (35) We must ensure that each child has access to furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment (*National Regulations s 105*)
- (36) We will provide sensory-friendly spaces and quiet areas for any children who need them
- (37) Our spaces, equipment and resources will reflect the diverse abilities, circumstances, cultures, identities and backgrounds of our children, families, staff, and the wider community

Duty to make reasonable adjustments

- (38) We must make adjustments where necessary to ensure that everyone can access and participate on the same basis as others (*Disability Discrimination Act 1992*). Adjustments may include:
- To our physical spaces, furniture, materials and equipment an – e.g., ramps, modified seating, sensory-friendly areas
 - Learning modifications – e.g., changing activities in line with needs, giving extra time to complete activities, changing routines, providing an equivalent alternative activity
 - Providing different ways to access information – e.g., adaptive or assistive technology (such as voice recognition software, screen readers), sign language, multimedia, braille, illustrated text, visual aids
 - Supporting and facilitating specialised professional development/training for staff
- (39) While we are committed to making reasonable adjustments, if an adjustment causes 'unjustifiable hardship' to our service, we are not legally obliged to make it. Limitations on our obligations include:
- Financial cost (excessive or beyond our resources)
 - Impact on others (if the adjustment would significantly disadvantage others)
 - Compromise to health and safety of others (e.g., poses an unacceptable risk to the supervision of children or our emergency procedures)
 - Causes a fundamental alteration to the nature of what our service provides (e.g., requires us to entirely redesign our program) or staff roles (e.g., changes the inherent requirements of a person's job)
 - Is beyond our expertise and cannot be supported through external services
- (40) When we are considering adjustments, the approved provider or nominated supervisor will consult with the child's family and relevant professionals, assess the feasibility of the request, explore external support or funding options, consider alternative solutions if the initial request is considered unreasonable, document the decision and communicate the outcome to the person/s making the request
- (41) If we decline a person/s' request due to unjustifiable hardship, we will provide them with written justification for our decision, offer alternative adjustments where possible, and help them to access external support or funding
- (42) If a family disagrees with our decision, they may request a review. The approved provider or nominated supervisor will consult further with the family and other relevant professionals. Where necessary, families will be referred to external advocacy or mediation services

Supporting transitions

- (43) We must ensure that children have continuity of learning and staff support them through transitions by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities with families and external professionals and services (National Quality Standard 6.2.1)
- (44) Children with disabilities or additional needs will be helped to adapt to new environments, routines, or other changes while they are in our care (common transitions are starting at our service, drop off and pick up times, excursions, travelling, moving rooms, going to school, staff changes, new routines or activities, mealtimes, rest etc)
- (45) Where necessary, educators will invite families (and other professionals or support services, if relevant) to discuss transition plans before a significant transition occurs (e.g., before a child moves rooms)
- (46) Transition plans will be tailored to each child's needs and outline specific strategies to support the child through the transition (e.g., orientation, appointing a key support person, buddy system, visual schedules, flexible arrangements for collection/drop off, emotional and sensory support etc)
- (47) Educators will ensure children can adapt to the changes at their own pace by introducing changes gradually, using consistent routines and communicating the changes in ways the child understands
- (48) We will keep up-to-date records for each child so that key information can be easily handed over for smooth transitions

Engaging with families and the community

- (49) Our partnerships with families, communities and external professionals and services must be strong and effective to ensure every child can access, be included, and participate in, our service (National Quality Standard 6.2.2)
- (50) Staff must follow our [Family and Community Partnerships Policy](#), which sets out how we collaborate with families, communities and external professionals and services
- (51) We are aware that children with additional needs usually have distinct requirements and diverse experiences accessing our service
- (52) We will collaborate in our planning and problem-solving to make sure there is a consistent approach for addressing each child's unique learning and development needs. We recognise that support families' role in learning at home and see our staff, families, carers and other support staff as equal, trusted partners in the child's learning and development
- (53) We will consider the child and family to be at the core of all our actions

- (54) We will build a trusting relationship with the family by finding out what their child needs and tailoring our care for the child accordingly
- (55) We will give families regular updates about what their child is learning, their strengths, ideas, abilities, interests, and development. Likewise, we will enquire about families' perspective and experiences at home with their child
- (56) We will always discuss the adjustments we are making to support a child with their family, and actively consult with the child, their family and other experts about how we can improve our environments, processes and activities

Language and communication

- (57) Our communication – verbal and non-verbal – will be warm, empathetic and positive
- (58) We will ask families and children about how they would like us to communicate with them (e.g., in person, via email, phone or video conferencing, or other) and their preferred language regarding disability
- (59) We will use person-first and identity first language and avoid using negative terms such as 'suffers from'. Instead, we will use neutral or strength-based terms
- (60) We will provide alternative communication methods to suit the individual needs of children and their families, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds

PRINCIPLES

- (61) Every child has the right to access and participate meaningfully in our service
- (62) We uphold the dignity and rights of all children in our care. We have a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and uphold equal opportunity for all
- (63) We make adjustments where they are needed and apply the Universal Design for Learning principles to ensure all children can participate on an equal basis
- (64) Our physical spaces, equipment and resources are designed and adapted to accommodate all children
- (65) We recognise and support each child's strengths, needs and preferences, including their language and culture
- (66) We encourage children to express their needs, make choices and develop independence

- (67) We work in partnership with families and external professionals to support our inclusive practice. We regularly review and refine our practices to ensure they remain effective and responsive to the needs of children
- (68) Our policies and procedures are based on the latest guidelines and recommendations, and we comply with the relevant laws, regulations and standards

POLICY COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND MONITORING

- (69) This policy and related documents can be found in our front office
- (70) The approved provider and nominated supervisor provide information, training and other resources and support regarding the Access and Inclusion for Children Policy and related documents
- (71) All staff (including volunteers and students) are formally inducted. They are given access to review, understand and formally acknowledge this Access and Inclusion for Children Policy and related documents
- (72) The nominated supervisor runs a professional development program for each staff member, which covers this policy
- (73) Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in this policy and in individual position descriptions. They are communicated during staff inductions and in ongoing training
- (74) The approved provider and nominated supervisor monitor and audit staff practices and address non-compliance. Breaches of this policy are taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action against a staff member
- (75) At enrolment, families are given access to our Access and Inclusion for Children Policy and related documents
- (76) Families are notified in line with our obligations under the *National Regulations* when changes are made to our policies and procedures

LEGISLATION (OVERVIEW)

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

Regulations	
s 73	Educational program

ss 90 - 91	Medical conditions policy
ss 103 - 110	Physical environment – Centre-based services and family day care services
ss 111 – 115	Physical environment - Additional requirements for centre-based services
s 155	Interactions with children
s 156	Relationships in groups
s 162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
ss 181 ,183 - 184	Confidentiality and storage of records

Other applicable laws and regulations

Act / Regulation / Standard	Description
<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i>	Describes the primary duty of care to people in the workplace
<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i>	Prohibits discrimination based on disability, including in education and care settings
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i>	Principal act protecting the handling of personal information
<i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</i>	Enforces anti-discrimination laws and promotes human rights
<i>Racial discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</i>	Prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity or national origin
<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</i>	Includes provisions for gender-based discrimination, pregnancy and family responsibilities
<i>National Disabilities Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (Cth)</i>	Supports children with disabilities through NDIS-funded services
<i>UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i>	Ratified in Australia in 2008 – protection from discrimination and recognises persons with disabilities freedoms and rights, including to equality and education
<i>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>	Ratified in Australia in 1990 – recognises children’s rights to education, participation and non-discrimination

<i>Disability Act 2006 (Vic)</i>	Establishes rights and services for people with disabilities, including the NDIS, early intervention and support
<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)</i>	Prohibits discrimination based on disability, culture, and other attributes in education and care settings
<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)</i>	Protects rights including equality, education and cultural recognition

National Quality Standard

- Equity, diversity and inclusion are demonstrated across all 7 quality areas. The following lists elements that explicitly mention inclusion, access, participation or children’s rights

Standard / Element	Concept	Description
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child is maintained
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.

My Time, Our Place (MTO) V2.0

- Inclusion, equity and respect for diversity are guiding principles for the Approved Learning Framework and are the core of all learning outcomes

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Most relevant principles

Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Key Policies	Child Safe Environment Policy Continuity of Education and Care Enrolment Policy Orientation Policy Physical Environment Policy Medical Conditions Policy Positive Relationships for Children Policy Families and Communities Partnerships Policy Physical Activity Policy Education Curriculum and Learning Policy
Procedures	Roles and Responsibilities – Access and Inclusion for Children (attached) Medical management plans (in Medical Conditions Policy) Positive Relationships with Children Procedure (in Positive Relationships with Children Policy) Enrolment Procedure (in Enrolment Policy) Orientation Procedure (in Orientation Policy) Physical Activity Procedure (in Physical Activity Policy)
Resources	BeYou Disability Inclusion Guide

SOURCES

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations | National Quality Standard | Other relevant legislation (as listed in Legislation (overview section) | Be You Disability Inclusion Guide | Engaging with families of children with disability to support early learning and development in ECEC – Australian Education Research Organisation 2022 | ACECQA resources to support inclusion in children’s education and care services | Disability Standards for Education 2005 | Inclusion Support Program – Dept of Education

POLICY INFORMATION

Approval	Dina Kahn
Review	Reviewed annually and when there are changes that may affect this policy or related procedures. The review will include checks to ensure the document reflects current legislation, continues to be effective, or whether any changes and additional training are required
	Last reviewed: 25th March 2026 Date for next review: 25th March 2027

APPENDIX A

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – Access and inclusion for children**Approved provider responsibilities (not limited to)**

Ensure our service meets its obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, and relevant anti-discrimination, disability and human rights laws

Ensure that our service's governance, management, operations, policies, plans, (including risk management/action plans), systems, practices and procedures for access and inclusion are appropriate in practice, up-to-date, best practice, and comply with all relevant legislation, standards and guidelines

Promote a service culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. Act on any incidents of discrimination

Ensure this [Access and Inclusion for Children Policy](#) is in place and available to access

Take reasonable steps to ensure our [Access and Inclusion for Children Policy](#) and related procedures are followed (e.g. through clear and accessible communication, and systemised inductions, training and monitoring of all staff – including volunteers, students)

Ensure that all children have access to sufficient developmentally appropriate equipment and an inclusive educational program and practice

Ensure that our service makes reasonable adjustments to our physical environment and/or practices where it is necessary to a child's equitable access or participation

Ensure that we have access to appropriate funding (e.g., Inclusion Support Program, NDIS support) to meet any additional needs and that all funds are correctly acquitted

Ensure we have adequate staffing, training and resources for an inclusive environment and practices

Regularly review this [Access and Inclusion for Children Policy](#) and related procedures in consultation with children, families, communities and staff

Notify families at least 14 days before changing this [Access and Inclusion for Children Policy](#) if the changes will: affect the fees charged or the way they are collected; or significantly impact the service's education and care of children; or significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service

Nominated supervisor / persons in day-to-day charge responsibilities (not limited to)

Ensure our service meets its obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, and relevant anti-discrimination, disability and human rights laws

Support the approved provider to ensure that our service's governance, management, operations, policies, plans, (including risk management/action plans), systems, practices and procedures for access and inclusion are appropriate in practice, up-to-date, best practice, and comply with all relevant legislation, standards and guidelines

Promote a service culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. Act on any incidents of discrimination

Implement this [Access and Inclusion for Children Policy](#) and related procedures

Take reasonable steps to ensure our [Access and Inclusion for Children Policy](#) and related procedures are followed (e.g. through clear and accessible communication, and systemised inductions, training and monitoring of all staff – including volunteers, students)

Ensure that we record any additional needs on a child's enrolment record and that the record is kept up-to date (e.g., by regularly reminding parents to update us)

Oversee individual and strategic support plans, and making reasonable adjustments for children with additional needs

Work with parents and the approved provider to access funding to support the additional needs of a child, if necessary

Support educators in identifying and responding to children with additional needs, and ensure inclusive practices are embedded in our daily program

Be the main point of contact for families about additional support and liaise with early intervention professionals, allied health specialists and external support agencies

Oversee record keeping, including observations and referrals for children who need additional support

Contribute to policies and procedure reviews and risk assessments and plans in consultation with children, families, communities and staff. Support the approved provider to notify families of reviews and changes according to legislation and our policies and procedures

Educator / other staff responsibilities (not limited to)

Follow this [Access and Inclusion for Children Policy](#) and related procedures, including for positive relationships for children and managing medical conditions

Promote a service culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. Act on any incidents of discrimination



Implement strategies to support children with additional needs and provide reasonable adjustments according to any support plans we have in place for children

Observe and document children's participation, learning and interaction. Identify children who may need additional support and discuss with your room leader and the nominated supervisor

Work with families to understand each child's unique needs and preferences, and collaborate with external professionals/services who support children at our service

Engage in professional development and training on inclusion, disability awareness and child development. Engage in critical reflection about your practices

Contribute to policy and procedure reviews and risk assessments and plans

Families responsibilities (not limited to)

Share any relevant information about your child's needs with our service, and communicate any changes in your child's development, health or support requirements either to an educator or the nominated supervisor

If necessary, work with educators and (if relevant, external services/professionals) to develop support plans for your child. Participate in meetings and decision-making. Raise any concerns you have about your child or our strategies early. Reinforce the strategies at home, if necessary

Access any available services or funding, if necessary, to support your child at our service
