

## ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

### Mandatory – Quality Area 6

~~~~~

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

### Overarching Policy Statement:

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

### Policy Statement:

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- equal access for all children
- 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 Centre
- providing children with quality child care and/or kindergarten experiences
- complying with DET funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in government-funded kindergarten places.
- complying with Commonwealth Government funding requirements in relation to the administration of Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR).

### Purpose:

This policy outlines:

- the criteria for enrolment at Uniting Early Learning
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child and the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated;
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children

### Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

Uniting Early Learning will ensure enrolment and orientation processes and procedures promote equal opportunity for all children.

A copy of the Enrolment Form attached to this policy (Attachment 5) must be completed and returned before a child commences in any program at the service. Parents must also provide a copy of the child's birth certificate and an immunisation status certificate (refer to *Definitions*) indicating the child is age appropriately immunised before enrolment can be confirmed.

*Attachment 3 contains general enrolment procedures for long day care, three year old kindergarten and four year old kindergarten programs at Uniting Early Learning.*

**Scope:**

*This Policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Enrolment Officer and Certified Supervisor, educators, staff and parents who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at the service.*

*The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.*

**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. Where demand is higher than availability, a priority system for access must be determined by the Approved Provider 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, values and beliefs, community needs, 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 Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Services participating in central enrolment schemes are required to comply with the enrolment procedures of that scheme.

Childcare services providing approved care (refer to *Definitions*) must abide by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011* (refer to *Legislation and standards*) and the Commonwealth Government's *Priority for allocating places in child care services* (refer to *Sources*).

Attachment 2 contains a list of 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 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. From January 2016 claims for CCB will not be approved unless the child is immunised, on an immunisation catch up schedule, or is exempt from the immunisation requirements. Children will no longer be exempt if their parents have registered an objection to the vaccination on the basis of personal or philosophical beliefs. 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/)

**Child Care Rebate (CCR):** A Commonwealth Government payment covering 50% of out of pocket child care expenses for approved child care, up to an annual limit per child, in addition to any other child care assistance. Eligibility will be affected if a child's immunisations are not up to date. Eligibility requirements and further details are available at:  
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-rebate>

**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 Guide*.

**Enrolment application form:** Submitted by parents to a service to express interest in a place within a particular program for their child. Once the form is completed the child will be placed on the waiting list. An enrolment application form for Uniting Early Learning is provided in Attachment 4. Services participating in a centralised Local Government scheme will follow those processes.

**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). Most information will be gathered from parents via an **Enrolment form**. All information provided will be kept confidential by the service.

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

**Health Care Card:** A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. Details are available at:  
[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/health-care-card](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/health-care-card)

**Immunisation status certificate:** To be considered acceptable as an Immunisation Status Certificate for the purposes of enrolment at an early childhood education and care service the document/s need to:

- include the child's full name, date of birth and address
- list vaccines the child has received and when the vaccine was given (can be an attachment)
- show the date of the child's next due vaccine OR include a statement saying the child has completed all their childhood vaccinations
- if relevant, list any vaccines the child cannot receive for medical reasons
- include the immunisation provider's name, organisation name and Medicare provider number or Australian Childhood Immunisation Register number
- be signed and dated by the immunisation provider

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children-adolescents/no-jab-no-play/early-childhood-professionals>

### **Authorisation:**

This policy was adopted by Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited on: 1/7/2017

### **Review date: September 2017**

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*

## Attachment 1: Responsibilities relating to the Enrolment and Orientation Policy

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Approved Provider | Nom'ated S'visor | Enrolment Officer | Certified S'visor, Educator | Parents |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Determine criteria for priority of access to programs at the service based on funding requirements and service philosophy (refer to Attachment 3)                                                                                                                                                   | x                 |                  |                   |                             |         |
| Develop procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and able to access, an early childhood program, addressing any barriers to access                                                                                                                                                | x                 |                  |                   |                             |         |
| Comply with all relevant Acts, Regulations, policies and funding agreements                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | x                 |                  |                   |                             |         |
| Appoint a person to be responsible for the enrolment process and the day-to-day implementation of this policy                                                                                                                                                                                       | x                 |                  |                   |                             |         |
| Enable interested families to attend the service during operational hours to observe the program and become familiar with the service prior to their child commencing                                                                                                                               | x                 | x                |                   |                             |         |
| Ensure the enrolment form (refer to Attachment 5) complies with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161, 162 and is reviewed regularly to meet the service's regulatory and management requirements                                                                                                | x                 | x                |                   |                             |         |
| Ensure that enrolment records (refer to <i>Definitions</i> ) are stored in a safe and secure place, and kept for three years after the last date on which the child was educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 183)                                                                      | x                 |                  |                   |                             |         |
| Ensure that the orientation program and plans meet the individual needs of children and families, and complies with State and Commonwealth 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 of a child at the service can enter the premises at any time 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 parents with enrolment application forms (refer to Attachment 4)                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                   |                  | x                 |                             |         |

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Approved Provider | Nom'ated S'visor | Enrolment Officer | Certified S'visor, Educator | Parents |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Maintain a waiting list of families applying for a place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                   |                  | x                 |                             |         |
| Provide a monthly report to the Nominated Supervisor regarding the status of enrolment applications and any difficulties encountered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |                  | x                 |                             |         |
| Collate enrolment applications and offer places in line with eligibility and priority of access criteria (refer to Attachment 3)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                   |                  | x                 |                             |         |
| Provide Enrolment forms (refer to Attachment 5) and the Enrolment and Orientation Policy to parents accepting the offer of a place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                   |                  | x                 |                             |         |
| Work with parents, where required, to ensure the enrolment form is filled out correctly                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                   | x                |                   |                             |         |
| Comply with the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy of the service, in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information, including storing completed forms in a lockable filing cabinet as soon as practicable                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | x                 | x                | x                 | x                           |         |
| Collect, receipt and bank all fees                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                   |                  | x                 |                             |         |
| Respond to enrolment enquiries on a day-to-day basis and referring people to the enrolment officer, as required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |
| Review enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs in line with Inclusion and Equity Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |
| Respond to parent enquiries regarding their child's readiness for the program in which they are considering enrolling their child                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |
| Ensure that enrolment forms are completed prior to the child's commencement at the service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |
| Ensure that a child's enrolment at the service is not confirmed unless a parent has provided an immunisation status certificate (refer to <i>Definitions</i> ) indicating that the child is age appropriately immunised                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | x                 | x                |                   | 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</li> </ul> |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                | Approved Provider | Nom'ated S'visor | Enrolment Officer | Certified S'visor, Educator | Parents |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| learning                                                                                                                                                                                              |                   |                  |                   |                             |         |
| Discuss the individual child's needs with parents and develop an orientation program to assist them to settle into the program                                                                        |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |
| Encourage parents 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                |                   | x                           |         |
| Assist parents 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                |                   | x                           |         |
| Share information with parents regarding their child's progress in settling in to the service                                                                                                         |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |
| Discuss support services for children with parents, where required                                                                                                                                    |                   | x                |                   | x                           |         |
| Read, 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 including a copy of the child's birth certificate and immunisation status certificate (refer to <i>Definitions</i> )                  |                   |                  |                   |                             | 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 2: Legislation and Sources

### Legislation and standards

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 -
  - Standard 6.1: Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained
  - Element 6.1.1: There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015* (Vic)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- *Social Services Legislation Amendment (No Jab, No Pay) Bill 2015* (Cth)

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

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

### Sources

- Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000, included in the Legislative Extracts:  
[www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/](http://www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/)
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011:  
[www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*:  
[www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services*:  
<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit>
- *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved June 2015:  
<http://victasintranet/hr/Documents/Keeping%20Children%20Safe%20Policy.pdf>
- *Priority for allocating places in child care services*:  
<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programmes-services/early-childhood-child-care/priority-for-allocating-places>
- *The Kindergarten Guide* :  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>
- Victorian Government (DET) programs and initiatives:  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/default.aspx>

## Attachment 3: General enrolment procedures

This attachment provides general enrolment information and procedures for Uniting Early Learning.

## 1. Application for a place

**Long Day Care:** Enrolments applications are taken all year round subject to the availability of places.

**Four Year Old Kindergarten:** A year of kindergarten, subsidised by Government, is available to all children in the year prior to commencing school. This program will be delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for a minimum of 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year). To be eligible, children are required to turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they attend the program. While there is a closing date for enrolment applications (see below) enrolments will be taken all year round if places are available.

**Three Year Old Kindergarten:** Three year old kindergarten programs are not government funded and are charged at full fee unless the child is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (refer to *Definitions*). Children are required to turn three by 30 April in the year they attend the three year old program. While there is a closing date for enrolment applications (see below) enrolments will be taken all year round if places are available.

### All programs:

- Enrolment application forms (refer to Attachment 4) are available directly from the service. They must be completed for each child wishing to attend a program and submitted to the service by the date specified (see 2 below).
- 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*).
- The information provided on enrolment application forms will only be shared for operational purposes (fee collection, government data collection, program management). The information will not be disclosed to any other party as required by law.
- A copy of the child's birth certificate and immunisation status certificate (refer to *Definitions*) must be provided with all applications.
- All applications will be considered according to the priority of access criteria after the due date on which applications close.

## 2. Closing dates for enrolment applications

The closing dates for enrolment applications are:

- [Date] for children to attend the long day care program in [insert year]
- [Date] for children to attend the funded four year old kindergarten program in [insert year]
- [Date] for children to attend the three year old kindergarten program in [insert year]

**NB:** New enrolments will be taken for programs at any time throughout the year, subject to availability of places.

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

Enrolment forms received after the specified closing date will be considered after all other applicants have been offered a place in line within the priority of access criteria – see 7 below.

## 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 (see 7 below).

## 5. Offer of places

- Places will be allocated to applicants in accordance with the eligibility and priority of access criteria of the service (see 7 below).
- Applicants who are successful will be notified in writing and offered a place in the relevant program.
- Parents 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 letter. An applicant can decline an offer and request instead to remain on the waiting list.
- Second and third round offers will be made subject to availability of places.
- An **enrolment form**, service handbook and other relevant information will be provided following acceptance of the offer of a place.
- Fee payment details will be provided with the offer of a place.
- Places will not be offered 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*).
- Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.
- 

## 6. Immunisation Status

The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab No Play) Act 2015 (Vic) was introduced to increase immunisation rates for young children in the community. This means that the person in charge of an early childhood service must ensure that the enrolment of a child is not confirmed unless a parent of the child has provided a copy of an immunisation status certificate indicating that the child has been age appropriately immunised not more than 2 months before commencing at the service.

There are exemptions allowed for under Section 143C of the Act and in these cases the person in charge of the early childhood service must take reasonable steps to ensure that an immunisation certificate is provided by a parent of the child within 16 weeks of the child first attending the service. Exemptions include where a child:

- is in the care of a parent who is the holder of: a health care card, pensioner concession card, a Gold Card or a White Card,
- was a multiple birth (triplets or more)
- and parent/s are evacuated from place of residence due to an emergency
- is in emergency care
- is in the care of an adult who is not the child's parent due to exceptional circumstances such as illness or incapacity
- is descended from, identifies as or is accepted as an Aborigine or Torres Strait Islander

Under Commonwealth No Jab, No Pay legislation, from January 2016, claims for Child Care Benefit will not be approved unless the child is immunised, on an immunisation catch up schedule, or is exempt from the immunisation requirements. 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/)

## 7. Eligibility and priority of access criteria

### Long Day Care

Where there is a waiting list or a limited number of vacant places at a service the Australian Government has established '*Priority of Access Guidelines*' for Child Care Benefit approved child care. Every Child Care Benefit approved service has to abide by the guidelines and tell you about them when you enrol your child into care. The priorities are:

- First Priority: a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- Second Priority: a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999'
- Third Priority: any other child.

Within these main categories priority should also be given to the following children:

- children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- children in families which include a disabled person
- children in families which include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the lower income threshold of \$43,727 for 2015-2016, or who or whose partner are on income support
- children in families from a non-English speaking background
- children in socially isolated families
- children of single parents.

A child care service may require a Priority 3 child to vacate a place to make room for a child with a higher priority. They can only do so if you:

- are notified when your child first entered care that your service follows this policy
- are given at least 14 days notice of the need for your child to vacate.
- 

### **Three year old kindergarten**

When there are more children seeking a place in the three year old kindergarten program/s than there are places available, children will be prioritised in the following way:

1. Children who have turned three years of age by the 30 April in the year of attendance.
2. Children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten:
  - if your child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or
  - your family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by them to Child First).

Early Start Kindergarten is provided free or at very low cost to eligible children. Children who have accessed Early Start Kindergarten are also eligible for free or very low cost 4 year old kindergarten.

3. Children with siblings who have attended the service within the last 5 years
5. Children living in the local area [specify area]
6. Children being cared for in the local area [specify area]

**Note:** Children can only attend the three-year-old program once they have turned three years of age. If a child turns three after the program commences, their place will be held for them subject to full payment of fees. They must still turn three before 30 April.

## Four year old kindergarten

When there are more children seeking a place in the kindergarten program/s than there are places available, children will be prioritised in the following way:

1. Children who turn four years of age by April 30<sup>th</sup> in the year they attend four year old kindergarten.
2. High priority children as detailed in The Kindergarten Guide (refer to *Sources*). This includes:
  - Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out of home care
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
  - Asylum Seeker or Refugee children
  - Children whose parents hold a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veterans Affairs Card
  - Multiple birth children
  - Children with additional needs, including those with an identified specific disability or developmental delay or who required additional assistance or services to participate.
3. Children identified as vulnerable by the service.
4. Children who have attended the 3 year old program at the kindergarten
5. Children with siblings who have attended the service within the last 5 years.
6. Children living in the local area [specify geographic area]
7. Children being cared for in the local area [specify geographic area]
8. All remaining applications will be allocated via a ballot.

Requests for special consideration can be discussed with the **Nominated Supervisor** of the service. Children are only eligible for one year of kindergarten funding. In exceptional circumstances where a child is observed to display delays in key areas of learning and development the possibility of a second year of funded kindergarten may be considered. An assessment of the child would need to be undertaken by the early childhood teacher to determine eligibility.