

Inclusion and Equity Policy

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by Dawson Street Child Care Co-operative (DSCCC) Committee of Management at its meeting on 18 April 2018.

REVIEW DATE

This policy shall be reviewed in four years' time, in April 2019, or earlier if needed.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to state how DSCCC will meet the needs of all children at the Centre in a fair and inclusive manner, including children with additional needs.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All children, including children with additional needs, as defined below, who are attending or whose parents/guardians are seeking for them to attend the centre.
- Parents/guardians of children, including children with additional needs, who are attending or seeking to attend the centre.
- The Management Committee, staff, volunteers, students and any other persons involved in the care and education of children at DSCCC.

In implementing this policy, DSCCC will act in accordance with the requirements specified under relevant Awards, industrial agreements or legislation, and in a fair and equitable manner.

All staff are to act in accordance with this policy.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Education and Care Service National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations: Quality Area 4 and Quality Area 6.*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- *Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986*

DEFINITIONS

Additional needs: Children whose development, in one or more of the following areas, needs specialist support - mobility, expressive and/or receptive communication, social behaviour, behavioural control, fine/gross motor skills, vision, hearing, self-care, cognitive skills.

Disability: Something that incapacitates, for example an intellectual, sensory, physical, social or emotional impairment.

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

Child support group: This group is to be established prior to the application for support, or the child's enrolment or attendance in a funded kindergarten program (a requirement of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Service).

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS): ECIS support children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry and their families.

Gender equity: Gender equity is a set of actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals. It offers a framework for childcare in which all females and males:

- are engaged, reflective learners, regardless of the subject (eg.: trains and dolls)
- develop as respectful, inclusive, and productive individuals, friends, family members, and community members
- receive equitable treatment and achieve equitable outcomes in childcare and beyond.

Gender equality: is the absence of discrimination, on the basis of a person's sex, in opportunities and the allocation of resources or benefits or in access to services. Gender equity leads to equality.

Heterosexism: is a system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favor of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. It can include the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that opposite-sex attractions and relationships are the only norm and therefore superior.

Homophobia: is a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex.

Inclusion: Inclusion is about ensuring that all children can participate and feel they belong. It refers to the right that every child has to:

- be part of a child care community
- join in child care activities
- have a say in what happens to them.

Inclusion support facilitator: Inclusion support facilitators are employed by inclusion support agencies funded by the Commonwealth Government, to provide advice on inclusive practice to childcare services. Inclusion support facilitators also help centres to access a range of practical supports.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services: A program offering supplementary assistance to centres to support the inclusion of children with assessed severe disabilities into a funded kindergarten program.

Multiculturalism: a practice that encourages interest in many cultures within a society rather than in only a mainstream culture.

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO): PSFOs are employed by some Local Government Authorities or other agencies to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in funded kindergarten programs. The PSFO service is part of the kindergarten inclusion support services program.

POLICY

This policy sets out the values, guidelines and strategies for:

- 6.1 Gender equity
- 6.2 Inclusion
- 6.3 Multiculturalism
- 6.4 Preventing heterosexism and homophobia

6.1 Gender Equity

Values

DSCCC is committed to developing the full potential of all children irrespective of gender. It affirms that females and males are treated equally in regard to ability, personality and behavior. It further affirms the right of all children to:

- a) Develop without the limitations of stereotypes based on gender;
- b) Develop a sense of pride in oneself and one's accomplishments, so enhancing feelings of positive self-esteem and self-worth; and
- c) Develop respect for each other's rights and responsibilities.

Guidelines and Strategies

The following strategies assume shared understandings about issues of sexism. In order to assist this, in-service activities of staff and parents should be encouraged.

To further the aims set out in the policy, DSCCC will endeavor to:

- a) Ensure that both boys and girls are equally encouraged to participate in all activities with due consideration for individual needs and interests. For example, encourage both girls and boys to use home corner, outdoor playing equipment and toys such as cars and dolls.
- b) Encourage non-sexist behavior by children and staff by purchasing counter sexism resource materials for staff use and by supplying staff development programs focused "around issues of sexism and education";

For example, if a child behaves in a sexist manner, a staff member should make him/her aware of other modes of behavior (e.g. roles associated with cleaning up and housework) or encouraging all children to express emotions and display affection (e.g. it is alright for boys to cry or need a hug).

- c) Ensure that all language used within DSCCC, both verbal and written, is gender inclusive.
- d) Encourage use of materials which portray females and males in roles, situations and jobs which are not stereotyped.

For example, borrowing and purchasing children's literature, posters and toys which reflect this (e.g. Sugar and Snails).

- e) Select resources where both girls and boys are seen both as initiators and nurturers. For example, borrowing and purchasing children's literature, posters and toys.
- f) Ensure that both girls and boys equally share staff time, indoor/outdoor playing space and equipment with due regard to individual needs and interests. For example, staff development program regarding research and strategies developed elsewhere around such concerns (e.g. Equal Opportunity Resource Centres).

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

- g) Encourage the employment of both female and male staff and ensure that jobs carried out by staff are not related to gender.
- h) Encourage educational or information projects that further the aims of this policy. For example, hold parent information nights on general topics of child development, including issues of socialisation.

6.2 Inclusion

Values

DSCCC welcomes all children and aims to provide an inclusive environment which caters to the needs of all children. It is desirable for all children to be included into generic child care services, and all parents to have access to the local service of their choosing.

DSCCC affirms that the individuality of children should be valued, their needs considered and their rights respected.

It further affirms that programs and practices should as far as possible:

- take a flexible approach to education and care;
- make appropriate expectations for each child;
- assist staff to develop the relevant skills and knowledge for working with all children and their families, and
- support staff to make contact with specialist services as needed.

Guidelines and Strategies

To further the aims set in the policy, DSCCC will endeavor to:

- Work with the Inclusion Support Facilitator (employed by the Council) to aid in the inclusion of children with additional needs.
- Include all children on a physical, functional, social, personal and organisational level.
- Promote understanding in children relating to children with additional needs.
- Encourage acceptable behavior that fosters sensitivity and assists in the development of appropriate societal values.
- Offer training on two levels, being:
 - General awareness training: general information about working with children with additional needs.
 - Specific training for when a new child is to attend DSCCC: training on issues of a child's additional needs should be made available to the relevant staff.

In these circumstances, time should be made available, with the provision of relief staff, for staff to attend training or to visit/observe the child in other situations so as to best assess the requirements of the child.

Furthermore, training offered by peers, who have a knowledge of working with children with additional needs and an understanding of the needs of the centre, should be maximised as a means of informing/training staff in this area.

- Support staff to make contact with specialist services as needed, and to see parents and other key informed people (e.g. inclusion support facilitator) as resources.
- Provide information and support to families so as to achieve participation in the planning and evaluating of program decisions that affect their child's settlement into DSCCC. The process

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

will as far as possible be collaborative and take into account parent expectations and the needs of the child.

- Organise parent information or discussion nights where awareness of inclusion issues can be promoted.

Inclusion Procedures for Children with Additional Needs

The Management Committee/Director are responsible for:

- Providing clearly defined enrolment procedures in their enrolment policy, which facilitates access for all children.
- Reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs.
- Regularly reviewing with staff, the planning and resourcing provided for children with additional needs participating in the program.
- Being available to participate in identified child support groups.
- Providing assistance as required to child support group(s) in identifying and applying for additional resources available through the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services for supplementary funding (funded kindergarten programs only) and through the Early Childhood Intervention Services (birth to school entry).
- Working with staff and families to identify and apply for additional resources/support for children with additional needs (where a separate child support group is not required).
- Providing appropriate physical and staffing resources within the budget constraints of the centre. In providing these resources:
 - o Consultation will be sought with the staff, the parents/guardians of the child, and other professionals and/or agencies working with the family to determine additional resources required to meet the functional and developmental needs of the child (usually the child's support group as outlined on following pages).
- Supporting staff to gain appropriate knowledge and skills to implement this policy.

Qualified staff are responsible for:

- Identifying, if additional support is required, the type of support required and consulting with families and liaising with the Director/Management Committee in order to access this.
- Establishing a support group for children with high support needs, which may include:
 - o Parents or guardians
 - o Carer of the child (if applicable)
 - o Kindergarten teacher
 - o Specialist staff from an early childhood intervention service (if the child is receiving a service)
 - o Additional staff
 - o Preschool Field Officer (if no other early intervention specialist is involved with the family), or
 - o Parent/guardian advocate (if applicable)
 - o Management Committee member

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

- o Others as appropriate.

(Note: It is a requirement of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services Program to establish a support group before an application is submitted for support, enrolment or attendance at the centre).

- Organising for the child's support group to meet. Generally this would involve a number of meetings prior to the child's commencement at the centre and at least one meeting per term.
- Ensuring that any support or resources available for a child are accessed in consultation with the parents/guardians, for example through the Preschool Field Officer Program and the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Service.
- Ensuring that the parents/guardians are fully informed about the program planned and provided for their child and have given written consent for any action, support or intervention for their child.
- To plan and implement a program which incorporates the individual goals for the child with additional needs.
- Ensuring the program provides opportunities for participation and interaction with other children.
- Responding to parents/guardians needs and providing support and guidance, where appropriate.
- Providing support and guidance to other staff.
- Encouraging a collaborative family-centred approach in implementing the program at the centre.
- Ensuring that, in consultation with persons involved in the care and education of the child, any specialised medical and nutritional needs of the child are catered for in the day-to-day program.
- Ensuring that the program incorporates opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all persons involved in the child's care and education.

All staff are responsible for:

- Working collaboratively with staff/parents/guardians/other professionals to implement the program provided for the children.
- Reporting and discussing any concerns regarding a child's behaviour with other staff.
- Ensuring the Privacy Policy is complied with at all times.

The parents/guardians will:

- Share information about their child and their child's needs within the centre, whilst maintaining the right to decide who will receive information about their child.
- Have the right to retain information that they do not wish to divulge.
- Raise any issues/concerns they have about their child's participation in the program.
- Participate in the child support group meetings.
- Be involved in, and fully informed about, any intervention or support proposed for their child.

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

- Be given the opportunity to consent to any assessments or reports on their child or the program and have a right to copies of such documents.

Members of the child's support group are responsible for:

- Attending support group meetings, which will generally occur at least once a term once the child commences at the centre.
- Facilitating the successful inclusion of the child into the centre.
- Planning for the needs and requirements of the child in the centre.
- Deciding together whether an application for support is required.
- Seeking the Management Committee's support for any application that would involve the committee in the provision of that support, for example employing staff.
- Assisting the kindergarten teacher to complete the application form.
- Monitoring and evaluating the child's progress and setting appropriate planning objectives in an individual education program plan.

6.3 Multiculturalism

Values

Australia is a society in which all people have the right to maintain their cultural and ethnic diversity. As providers of a service for young children and their families it is important to facilitate equal opportunity, acceptance and justice by helping overcome many of the barriers that prevent the enjoyment of full equality.

When planning programs, measures must be undertaken to ensure that the programs developed reflect a multicultural perspective. The children's program will promote cultural awareness and help children value cultural diversity.

It therefore will be built on the following principles:

- fostering the development of every child's self-esteem in family, ethnic and linguistic heritage;
- maintaining and encouraging a child's ability to utilise his/her first language while providing an environment whereby the dominant language can be acquired;
- enhancing cultural tolerance and the status of all cultures; and
- extending the cultural experiences of children.

Guidelines and Strategies

To further the aims set in the policy, DSCCC will endeavor to:

- Actively value and encourage multi-lingual skills in children where appropriate with, for example:
 - use of books and songs in languages other than English;
 - using staff who speak a language other than English to teach songs in that language;
 - using visual aids in languages other than English; and
 - displaying welcoming signs around DSCCC in different languages.

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

- Expose children to cultural traditions which differ from those of the dominant culture, in particular, those traditions represented by the children and staff at DSCCC by:
 - purchasing and using relevant props (e.g. dolls, dress-ups, musical instruments);
 - encouraging families to bring in props on loan;
 - encouraging folk dancing and songs;
 - providing in-service for staff about various cultural traditions they would like to learn more about;
 - purchasing resource books for staff use;
 - inviting community members and parents to share particular aspects of their traditions with the children; and
 - linking foods of different traditions and countries to the menu.
- Provide English as a second language support for children whose first language is not English. For example, assist the development of inclusive communicative games and/or activities that assist non-English speakers to enhance their English language skills.
- Provide information to parents in languages other than English where necessary and possible.
- Encourage educational and information projects that further the aims of this policy. For example, organise parent information nights that promote an awareness of multicultural issues.
- Select a team of staff at DSCCC that ideally reflects the nature of the wider community; within the framework of Equal Employment Opportunity, fluency in languages other than English should be considered positively when recruiting staff.

6.4 Preventing heterosexism and homophobia

Values

Heterosexism and homophobia are linked to poor health and education outcomes and create unhealthy environments for young children and their families.

Children of lesbian and gay parents should be supported by diverse representations of family in their care setting, and by programs which embrace difference, facilitate equal opportunity, participation and justice for all children and their families.

Guidelines and strategies

To further the aims set in the policy, DSCCC will endeavor to:

- Refrain from making heterosexist assumptions about the sexual orientation of parents and caregivers (e.g. through administrative forms which ask for mother / father).
- Promote positive role images of 'rainbow families' through posters, books, stories and programmes.
- Encourage non-heterosexist behavior by children and staff:
 - Through purchase of counter heterosexist resource materials for staff use;
 - by supplying staff development programs focused around anti-heterosexist care environments for young children
- Encourage diversity in employment of staff.

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

- Encourage educational or information projects that further the aims of this policy, for example, hold parent information nights on general topics of child development and the benefits of diversity

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES

The Management Committee is responsible for:

- The implementation and maintenance of the policy within the service.

The Staff are responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation of this policy.

RESOURCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

External references:

- DET Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016
- Information and application kit for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages. Available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/Pages/kinderinclusion.aspx>
- The DET website provides detailed information on the provision of Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) in Victoria:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/Pages/ecis.aspx>
- Association for Children with a Disability
Phone: 03 9880 7000
<https://acd.org.au>
- Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victoria/Tasmania chapter)
Phone: 03 8559 2620
<https://www.eciavic.org.au>
- The Early Learning Association of Australia and the Community Child Care Association will also provide advice and support when required.

Related DSCCC policies:

- *Behaviour Guidance and Interaction with Children Policy*
- *Child Orientation and Enrolment Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy – Parents, Guardians and Volunteers*
- *Communication Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Curriculum Development Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Staff Conduct Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether this policy has achieved the purposed outlined in this policy under Section 5 Policy Statement, the Management Committee/Director will:

- Monitor feedback from those affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- Assess whether the strategies and procedures outlined in this policy were upheld
- Take into account feedback from staff regarding the policy
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the operation of the policy.

Inclusion and Equity Policy (previously Inclusion Policy)

Date Reviewed	Details of Changes (if any)	Date of Next Review
April 2018	Implementation review conducted	April 2019 (to update with NDIS information)
March 2014	Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs Policy incorporated into policy, Renamed Inclusion and Equity Policy	April 2018
August 2012	Inclusion of definitions at section 5. Addition of prevention of heterosexism and homophobia at sections 5 and 6.	August 2014
February 2010	None	February 2012
November 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy name changed from DSCCC Access & Equity Policy v1.0 to Inclusion & Reducing Bias Policy v2.0; • Delete reference under (3) Multi-culturalism – “ It will narrow the gap between home and DSCCC”. 	November 2009
October 2006	DSCCC Management Committee initiated & drafted Policy – 1 st version based on DSCCC Policy Manual 2004 content reviewed & incorporated where possible.	October 2007

Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs Policy

Date Reviewed	Details of Changes (if any)	Date of Next Review
March 2014	Incorporated into Inclusion and Equity Policy	Nil
February 2012	Including details of new legislative framework and updates to external references	January 2014
January 2010	Updating some changed contact numbers for support services	2 years October 2011
October 2007	Initial DSCCC policy based on 2006 KPV Inclusion of children with additional	2 years October 2009

Dawson Street Child Care Co-Operative Policy Manual

	needs.	
--	--------	--