

Rationale

Nought to Five Early Childhood Centre has provided an educational long day care program to the North Ryde community for over 30 years.

As the area continues to grow we will provide equity of access for both the residential and work-based community that is consistent with government regulations and best practice within the early childhood sector.

Policy Statement

Criteria for Enrolment

As an approved child care service we are bound by the Australian Government "Priority of Access Guidelines".

Following enrolment, if a family's situation changes (re priority) each case will be considered individually at the discretion of the Director. Placements will be offered according to these guidelines:

Priority 1 a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect.

Priority 2 a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the Family Assistance Act 1999

Priority 3 any other child.

The centre will also follow the Australian Government's priorities to consider the needs of children who may gain particular benefit from the centre and/ or have restricted alternatives, such as children from:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families;
- families which include a disabled person;
- families which include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the current lower income threshold, or who or whose partner are on income support;
- families from a non-English speaking background;
- socially isolated families; and
- single parent families.

Sibling priority, for families already using the centre will also be considered wherever possible, and where all other enrolment criteria are met.

This policy outlines how children are enrolled in the program at Nought to Five Early Childhood Centre.

All enrolments will strictly adhere to the *Priority of Access Guidelines* to ensure equity and consistency for the community.

Strategies and practices

Filling a place from the waiting list

Applications for enrolment will be taken from the centre's waiting list as places become available. See *Waiting List Policy* on how this is administered.

The process of managing enrolments is a complex one. The Director takes into consideration regulatory obligations, budgetary issues, age/stage of children within the different play rooms, the needs of staff and children in maintaining high quality child care, the needs of families and the preferences waiting list applicants request. Consideration will also be given to siblings of children currently enrolled at Nought to Five provided that all other waitlist and enrolment criteria are met. Placements are offered under the provision that it is a long-term position, not a casual "stop-gap" in a family's child care arrangements.

Enrolment

All offers of enrolment require children to attend for a minimum of two days per week.

We believe children who only attend one day a week find it harder to socialise with peers and get to know the adults who teach them. Enrolment is offered for a maximum period of 50 weeks until re-enrolment takes place at the Annual General Meeting in August each year.

All three day attendance MUST include either a Monday or a Friday in the attendance (ie: Tues, Wed, Thurs, is not a combination of days that will be offered)

Once a place has been offered and accepted, a letter of offer will be posted /emailed to the family. Within seven (7) working days from the date of our letter of offer, the family must pay a two week security deposit and provide documented proof of their child's immunisation status (see *Immunisation Policy* for more details). Failure to provide this documentation and payment will result in the forfeiture of the position.

Once the deposit is received, the child will be transferred from the waiting list to enrolment status.

After accepting a placement and the two (2) week Security deposit has been paid, should the family choose not to commence, the following will apply:-

- Less than or equal to four weeks notice prior to commencement, you will forfeit your entire deposit.
- Greater than four weeks notice prior to commencement, you will forfeit \$100.00 of your deposit.

Parents will be expected to provide the following information during orientation days:

- family doctor's name, address and telephone number
- Medicare/ private medical insurance numbers
- Any relevant health information, including allergies or food intolerances.
- four emergency contacts/ authorised to collect the child (apart from mother or father) ie: friend, grandparent, uncle, aunt including names, addresses and telephone numbers.
- If applicable, copies of custody/ restraining orders (by law, access to a child cannot be restricted unless there are legally binding orders to this effect)
- the child's first week of fees (at least one week in advance).

Changes to Enrolment

Children currently attending the centre are required to give four (4) weeks' notice in writing of any request to change their attendance patterns. Approval of these changes is at the discretion of the Director and subject to availability.

The Director is bound by the guidelines within this policy when approving changes and must consider the needs of the individual family along with those of the whole group. Requests that are unable to be approved will be discussed with the family with the intention of negotiating a solution that works for the centre and the family.

Once approved, there may be alterations to weekly fees and the security deposit. Families should speak with the Office Administrator for further details.

Premature Withdrawal from Care

The entire waitlist/ enrolment procedure requires considerable time and expense from both administration and teaching staff within the centre. The non-refundable *Waiting List Fee* only covers a small portion of what is actually outlaid, however, the centre endeavours to keep these charges to parents at a minimum.

If notification of *Withdrawal from Care* is received within one (1) month after the child's commencement date, an administration charge of \$50.00 will be deducted from the security deposit prior to a refund being issued. If, however, the child is withdrawn within two (2) weeks of commencement, the full security deposit will be forfeited.

A minimum of four (4) weeks written termination notice is required.

Re-Enrolment

Re-enrolment for all children returning to the centre the following year occurs at the Annual General meeting in August. Requests may be made to change attendance patterns for the following year. These changes are not guaranteed but every effort is made to accommodate them for the following year. Re-enrolment also allows the centre to update the children's files with the necessary family, medical and health details and to plan for the forthcoming year.

A parent representative must be in attendance at the AGM/re-enrolment evening. Failure to attend the re-enrolment night may jeopardise the child's place for the following year, unless prior written apology is sent to the Management Committee.

Withdrawal from Care

When a place is granted, continuity of enrolment will be maintained until either terminated by the parent, Management Committee, or the child reaches school age. Enrolment is ultimately at the discretion of the

Management Committee. In extreme cases, where the ongoing health and safety of staff and children are at risk, a child's place may be terminated by the centre (refer to Children with Additional Needs Policy).

Parents are required to give four (4) weeks' notice, in writing, of their decision to terminate their child's attendance at the centre. A notice of **Withdrawal of Care** form can be located at the sign-in desk or collected from the Office Administrator.

Security Deposit

A two (2) week fee equivalent, security deposit, must be paid, together with the first weeks fees prior to commencement.

The security deposit is held throughout the child's time at the centre until notification of termination is received. At this time it will be refunded to the parent, once all outstanding fees are paid.

This security payment is not eligible for the Child Care Benefit subsidy until the actual care is provided in the final two (2) weeks. Any amount left after final fees are paid will be refunded to the parent within two (2) weeks of leaving the centre.

Failure to notify the centre, in writing, of the intention to terminate care will result in forfeiture of the security deposit.

As annual incremental adjustments are made to fees, this security deposit must be upgraded proportionally.

Links to other policies

Orientation; Waitlist; Children with Additional Needs; Child Protection; Immunisation: Access to Children

Related National Quality Standard

- 5.1.1 Interactions with each child are warm & responsive & build trusting relationships
- 6.1.1 There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families
- 6.1.3 Current information about the service is available to families
- 7.3.2 Administrative systems are established and maintained to ensure the effective operation of the service

Sources

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/Priorityforallocatingplacesinchildcareservices.aspx> 20/1/10

Family Assistance Law

Department of Education and Communities Funding Agreement

Revision History

April 03 - accreditation committee general revision of entire policy; **January 04** - updated according to current procedures; **January 10** - adjusted with new procedures set by Management committee; **April 12** - peer review; **December 12** - updated with changes to length of notice for Termination of a position; **July 13** - updated with changes to immunisation documentation requirements