

Inclusion & Valuing Diversity Policy

Policy Statement & Commitments

Brunswick East Outside School Hours Care Service (BEPS OSHC Service) is committed to providing all children with the opportunity to access quality wellbeing, learning and development opportunities through the educational program. It is important that any specific information required to assist Educators in planning for children with be provided to BEPS OSHC Service upon enrolment to ensure that the appropriate education and care of that child can be arranged.

Educators recognise that all children will learn and develop in different ways and at different rates, and all children will be encouraged to achieve their full potential in consultation with families and where appropriate additional resource services.

The Framework for School Age Care in Australia, *My Time, Our Place*, suggests that inclusion involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes.

BEPS OSHC Service is committed to ensuring that:

- All children are provided with appropriate programs and experiences in consultation with parents/guardians and specialist support services, and with appropriate physical resources if required
- Families are involved in, and fully informed about any strategies or professional support which is being planned for their child; that they give consent to any assessment or reports on their child, and have a right to copies of such documents; that they have the power to decide who will receive information about their child; and that they have the right to retain information that they do not wish to divulge which includes guaranteed confidentiality in all matters to do with their child
- Educators are provided with support and training for working with children with additional needs, and professional resources are identified and made available.
- We encourage respect for each other and the importance of developing equitable and respectful relationships, promoting inclusion and diversity within a non-biased and culturally competent environment. We promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. We promote the safety of children with a disability.

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Definitions

Additional Needs

Children whose development, in one or more of the following areas, needs specialist support:

- mobility
- safe behaviour
- hearing
- communication
- fine motor skills
- self-care
- social behaviour
- vision
- cognitive skills

Inclusion

The incorporation of children with additional needs into the program ensures that they have equal opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Inclusion Indicators

The Australian Government uses 'inclusion indicators' for statistical purposes on children's enrolments, which are separated into the following areas of need:

- **Indigenous Indicator** – this is based on a family's self-identification. The commonly accepted definition is that the person is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. The family identifies as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as such by the community in which they live.
- **Disability Indicator** – this is based on a child's underlying long-term health condition or disability which presents the need for additional assistance compared to children of a similar age. The disability or health condition can occur in the areas of: learning and applying knowledge, education; communication; mobility; self-care; interpersonal interactions and relationships. This can also include difficulties that manifest in general tasks, domestic life, community and social life. This does not include children with a medical condition that is short term or episodic such as asthma, allergies, eczema or infectious diseases.
- **Special Needs Indicator** – this is based on the child's priority grouping. Examples include: children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; children with a refugee background who have been subject to trauma; indigenous children; children whose place has been sought by a state or territory child protection worker; a child in the care of the state or other forms of out of home care.

The use of these descriptors, or any label however, should be used with caution to ensure that assumptions are not made about children and their families on the basis of a label alone. Labelling a

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child by their needs ignores other important aspects of the child’s identity. It also suggests that all people with the same need are part of a homogenous group.

Responsibilities

The Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that enrolment procedures are followed, so that information about children and families is relative to the education and care the child will receive once enrolled at BEPS OSHC Service.

Educators are responsible for supporting children and families, and recognising and responding to barriers to children achieving educational success. Educators need to challenge practices that contribute to inequities, and make curriculum decisions that promote inclusion and participation of all children. By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in partnership with children, families, communities, other services and agencies, they will continually strive to create equitable and effective opportunities for all children to achieve learning outcomes.

Families are responsible for accepting BEPS OSHC Service’s policies and procedures, and sharing information about their child with BEPS OSHC Service to ensure the appropriate education and care for their child can be provided with the consideration of additional needs.

BEPS OSHC Service has a responsibility to ensure that:

- equity is modeled in interactions with children, adults and other staff members
- fairness is encouraged in children’s play and recreation
- posters and other materials which portray equity are displayed in all environments
- children are encouraged to participate in all experiences provided in the program
- access to the programs is available in the community in accordance with the Australian Government ‘Priority of Access Guidelines.’

Cultural and Religious Diversity

BEPS OSHC Service is non-denominational and therefore does not teach religion to the children. BEPS OSHC offers a non-biased approach to programming which is sensitive to all cultures, religions and ethnic groups. BEPS OSHC provides materials that depict the multicultural and diverse society that we live in. Staff encourage children to respect and value each other, and are aware of the diverse and blended family structures that are present within BEPS OSHC Service. Staff and families have access to interpreter and translation services as required.

The team of OSHC Educators have a responsibility to ensure that:

- practices are reviewed to meet the individual needs of children where appropriate
- children’s religious beliefs are catered for within BEPS OSHC Service where appropriate (e.g. provision of a prayer mat, providing appropriate food choices)
- materials and resources used in BEPS OSHC Service are checked to ensure that they are

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appropriate and reflective of the society we live in

- there is modeling of an attitude that values and respects all cultures and religious practices
- children’s needs and interests are responded to in a culturally sensitive way.
- they research child-rearing and family practices of the families attending BEPS OSHC Service.
- they acknowledge and promote family diversity within the program.

Additional Needs

To support a child with additional needs, the Coordinator and Educators will:

- encourage the child and family to visit BEPS OSHC Service for short periods prior to enrolling as part of the orientation process
- use the enrolment and orientation procedures as an opportunity to find out all necessary information about the child, for example, their needs, interests, abilities, sense of humour, learning style, cultural background, communication preferences, likes and dislikes, etc.
- do an audit of the physical environment to ensure the child is able to access and fully participate in all aspects of the program
- ask an Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) to discuss with BEPS OSHC Service the development of a plan of action detailing what Educators need to do, know and have to support the child’s inclusion in the program
- invest time getting to know the child and building a positive relationship with them, just as they do with other children
- recognise and build on the child’s strengths, abilities and interests, just as they do with other children
- ensure the child has opportunities to see positive images of themselves in their environment, for example through photographs, posters and picture books and so on
- talk as a team about their own individual and shared responsibilities in supporting the child.

To support a family with a child who has additional needs, the Coordinator and Educators will:

- invest time in building a trusting relationship with the family so they feel accepted, respected and valued
- consider the family as the primary consultants and acknowledge them as experts in their child
- ask the family about their goals and expectations for their child, and talk with them about how to work together to make them happen

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- ask the family how they would like to exchange two-way information in an ongoing capacity, acknowledging that some may prefer written communication such as email, while others may prefer oral communication such as informal meetings or telephone
- acknowledge that some families may prefer that there is one educator that they communicate with rather than talking to everyone in the team.

To support other children who share their education and care experience with a child who has additional needs, Educators will:

- understand children need honest answers to questions about diversity and difference. Children are naturally curious, and are generally satisfied with a simple and honest response
- offer children explanations about what the child’s behaviours might mean. This can help them to understand that something they interpret as ‘naughty’ is the child’s way of communicating a particular need or desire
- help other children to see and understand what they have in common with children with additional needs, rather than any differences
- guide other children to help a child with additional needs only if necessary. Educators will suggest to other children that they should ask if help is required, and acknowledge that all children need opportunities to do things in their own way and time
- challenge stereotyped ideas and discriminatory behaviours where they occur, and talk to children about the extent to which this is fair or unfair. They will offer alternative ways of thinking about ability and diversity from a perspective of social justice
- understand their influence as a role model to children in demonstrating respectful relationships and communication with others.

To support the families who do not have a child with additional needs in understanding and accepting the children who have additional needs, the Coordinator and Educators will:

- ensure that clear policies and procedures about inclusion are available and open for discussion, and that relevant information is shared with families prior to enrolment. This gives the Coordinator and Educators the opportunity to answer questions and respond to fears or concerns before a family enrolls in BEPS OSHC Service
- explain the benefits of inclusion for all children, including the family’s own
- consider and utilise a range of ways to address concerns and answer questions families may have. This should be done with consideration and respect to the child with additional needs and their family.

Sources & Legislative References

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Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations 2010, *Child Care Service Handbook 2012-2013*, Barton, ACT, pp.14 & 24.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*, Barton, ACT.

National Professional Support Coordinator Alliance 2012, *Getting started with policies for the NQF: Policies in Practice template – Equity and diversity*, www.pscalliance.org.au

Community Child Care 2011, *Self-Guided Learning Package: Policies & Practices to Promote Equity, Inclusion & Diversity*, www.cccinc.org.au

Association for Children with a Disability: Information, Support and Advocacy for Families of children with a disability (for links to other relevant sites), www.acd.org.au/home/index.htm

<i>Education & Care Services National Regulations (2011) – Regulations 73 – 76, 181 & 183</i>
<i>My Time, Our Place, Framework for School Age Care in Australia</i>
<i>National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care & School Age Care (2010) – Standards 7.3 Elements 6.1.1, 6.1.3, 7.3.1, 7.3.5</i>
<i>DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2012–2013 – Sections 4.9, 5.5, 6.6, 9</i>
<i>Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic) – Management of personal information</i>
<i>A New Tax System Act 2000 (Cwlth) – Family Assistance Administration</i>
<i>Privacy Act 1988 (Cwlth) – Information Privacy Principles</i>
<i>Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) – Personal Information</i>
<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)</i>
<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)</i>
<i>Victorian Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities 2011</i>
<i>Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 – Providing a safe environment</i>

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