

Extended Absence Fee Policy

1. Background

Circumstances sometimes arise where families wish to take their child or children out of the Centre for an extended period of time. This may be due to holiday or work commitments overseas or interstate. These families may not wish to relinquish their placement at the Centre. This policy sets out guidelines allowing the Director to make an arrangement for another child to take the place of the leaving child during his or her absence.

2. Long Absence Policy

The centre will only approve replacement arrangements for an extended absence in limited circumstances. The following guidelines indicate when such an arrangement may be approved:

- The period of absence must be a minimum period of 6 weeks and no more than 6 months.
- Child care fees must not be in arrears
- The Director will use their discretion as to whether the extended absence period will straddle a calendar year
- For absences longer than the minimum period of 6 weeks, a 6 week deposit is required to be paid in full by cheque and presented to the office prior to the leave commencing. If a direct debit arrangement is in place this will be acceptable to pay the 6 week deposit
- Arrangements will only be made for a period of whole weeks and not for a period which includes part of a week
- The replacement child must be already a familiar with the Centre
- The absentee family must leave forwarding contact details with the Centre and make contact on a monthly basis
- This policy will not take affect if there are existing child care vacancies on the days the child or children are on extended absence from the centre. Filling permanent places will take priority
- Due to the work involved in establishing and administering replacement arrangements, preference will be given to simple rather than complex arrangements. For example, if a family is absent for 3 months and has 2 placement days per week to fill, a

preferred arrangement would involve one child taking the two days for the whole 3 months.

- If any days are not filled by the Director, the absentee family will be required to continue paying child care fees for those days. However, as stated above preference will be given to simple rather than complex arrangements.
- The replacement family must undertake to be responsible for the payment of fees for the placement days acquired under an extended absence fee arrangement for the period of time. Fees are payable, therefore, when the replacement child is absent from the Centre due to illness or other reason, and
- If at any time during the absence, the arrangement with the replacement family ceases, the Director will notify the absent family. If the absentee family wishes to retain the places, they will be required to continue paying the fees from 2 weeks after notification until the end of the leave period. If fortnightly fees are not received commencing 2 weeks after notification, the places will be forfeited
- At the end of the long absence replacement agreement childcare schedules for both the absentee and the replacement families return to the previous arrangement, unless the arrangement has not been terminated earlier by the either family
- The centre reserves the right to terminate this arrangement at any time.

3. The Role of the Director

The Director is responsible for organising a long absence replacement arrangement. Families seeking such an arrangement should approach the Director at least 6 weeks prior to the period of leave. Organising an arrangement is completely at the discretion of the Director.

The Annie Dennis Children's Centre operates on a break-even budget. Fees are payable for every week that the centre is open. The Centre closes for approximately 2 weeks over the Christmas period and fees are not payable for this period. However, normal fees apply when a child or children are absent from the Centre due to illness or holidays.

4. Payment of Fees

As the budget is tight, this policy must ensure that fees continue to be paid under any long absence replacement arrangement. If the

Director can organise such an arrangement, the following fee arrangement will be required:

- The replacement family will be required to establish a direct debit arrangement for the fortnightly payment of fees during the long absence arrangement
- The absent family will be required to pay a 6 week deposit equivalent to 6 weeks of child care fees. If the replacement family uses the entire specified period of leave, then the absentee family will effectively be in credit 6 weeks of childcare fees upon resuming child care

5. Childcare Benefit

Families should note that Child Care Benefit is paid for up to 42 days of "allowable absences" for each child in one financial year, which can be used for any reason and without proof of circumstances (includes public holidays). Once the initial 42 absence days have been exhausted, additional absences may be claimed in certain circumstances.

Additional Absence reasons are:

- Illness (with medical certificate)
- Non-immunisation
- Any other absences due to sickness of the child, a parent or sibling, supported by medical certificates
- Rostered days off
- Rotating shift work
- Temporary closure of a school or pupil free days
- Periods of local emergency
- Court ordered shared custody, consent order or parenting order
- Attendance at preschool.
- Exceptional circumstances

The initial 42 absence days must be exhausted before additional absences can be claimed.

Date: 19 October 2005

Next review date: October 2007

Reviewed: October 2007

Date: Approved by the COM 20 February 2008

Next review date: February 2010

Reviewed and amended 20 August 2008 by the COM