

Inclusion and Equity policy

1. Policy Statement

Annie Dennis Children's Centre supports the principles of social justice whereby children of all abilities are valued and included in all aspects of the Centre and the community.

All children and families have a right to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, race, language, beliefs, additional needs and family structure or lifestyle.

All children, families, staff, students, volunteers and visitors are treated with respect, and appreciated as individuals with unique abilities, skills and knowledge.

We recognise and value the differences and similarities that exist in children, families, staff and the community and we do not tolerate behaviours, language or practices that label, stereotype or demean others.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Inclusion and Equity Policy is to:

- ensure that all children, families, staff, students, volunteers are treated equitably and with a level of mutual respect;
- reduce bias and prejudice;
- develop a range of practices and guidelines that actively counteract bias or prejudice;
- promote inclusive practices;
- encourage all children, families, staff, students and volunteers to communicate respectfully and fairly.

3. Scope

This policy is applicable to all staff, families, the Committee of Management, student/relieving staff, volunteers and any visitors to Annie Dennis Children's Centre.

4. Strategies

Annie Dennis Children's Centre has adopted the following strategies and practices to ensure its commitment to being an inclusive organisation.

Children and families

• *Enrolling families and children into the service*

Enrolment and orientation is often a family's first impression of the Centre. To ensure that the enrolment and orientation process is equitable and fair for all families, the Centre will undertake the following:

- Consult families about whether the Centre requires additional means to support their child's participation in the program, eg staff training, equipment, and assistance with medical needs, information and specialist assistance.
- If applicable, form a support group to assist with the inclusion of each child with additional needs. Such a group should consist of the child's parent/guardian, the child's carers, the Director and any other persons this group deems necessary. This group will be responsible for applying for additional assistance and other resources that may be required.
- If applicable, provide information and enrolment forms in other languages to assist families who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Provide, where possible, additional support staff and seek supplementary funding for children who will require assistance on an individual basis.

• *Orientating children and families into the service*

Orientation can be an anxious experience for children and families. In order to provide an orientation process that will meet the individual needs of children and families and assist to make the process a positive experience, the Centre will:

- Consult with families to discuss an appropriate orientation process suited to their needs and of their child eg short visits to the Centre with their parent/guardian, extending to half days and then full days.
- Encourage families to contact the Centre by phone to discuss their child's progress.
- Encourage families to provide 'comfort' items that can be brought from home for their child eg toy, music or family photograph.
- Encourage families to participate in an orientation program and interview at the commencement of care. This creates an opportunity to exchange information to assist staff to have a better understanding of the needs of the family.

- Assist families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by accessing an interpreter.
- Encourage families to speak to the Director and staff if they require additional support.
- Evaluate the orientation process by asking families to complete a survey, which will be used to improve the process for children and families.

The policy of ADCC is to support the diverse needs of all families within the community in all aspects of its operation, and within the children's program. The input of families is therefore valued and encouraged.

• ***Settling children and families into the service***

The settling-in process can be stressful for many families, particularly those who have different cultural or language backgrounds. In consultation with families the Centre may identify strategies that actively promote the emotional wellbeing of children and families during the settling-in process.

At ADCC we understand that settling children and families into care is a process that continues after the orientation program and should be maintained throughout the families' enrolment in care. At times, children who have been attending the Centre for an extended period of time can still have days when they are upset or distressed. All children will be provided with the same attention and comfort as a child who is orientating or settling into care.

To continually meet the individual needs of children and families, the Centre will:

- Organise parent/staff meetings during the year (February, May, and September). These times will be utilised to update each child's background information form and to ensure there is a continual flow of information between families and carers.
- Invite families to make regular times to meet with the room leader to discuss any aspect of their child or family.
- Provide regular information to families via the Centre newsletter, website and notices in the foyer or in individual children's pockets.
- Provide information in home languages that are appropriate to the enrolled families.
- Regularly and respectfully seek information from families about their home life.

Staff/carers, students and volunteers

- *Selection and recruitment*

ADCC is an equal opportunity employer: the Centre and its Committee of Management does not discriminate on the grounds of sex, race, religion or disability. The Centre values bilingual and bicultural skills.

All staff will be provided with an induction process, which will provide them with the information they require to become effective members within the team. It will also provide a unique opportunity for the Centre to learn about the values, beliefs and practices of all staff, and to reaffirm the value of skills and experiences that staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds bring to the Centre.

Staff will be provided with all the information they need to perform to the best of their ability in their role. If applicable, this information can be translated to ensure they receive clear messages about the expectations and requirements of the Centre.

- *Relief staff, students and volunteers*

ADCC supports and encourages the inclusion of students and volunteers. We aim to ensure that the Centre is well positioned to provide high quality learning support that responds effectively to the individual needs of students and volunteers.

Relief staff, students and volunteers are provided with a brief induction, which includes an overview of the following:

- the Centre philosophy
- its relevant policies
- and a tour of the Centre.

A student/relief handbook will be provided upon commencement of their placement or period of work.

- *Staff/carer professional development opportunities*

ADCC supports staff in developing diverse and equitable partnerships with children and families, this will be achieved by:

- providing staff with professional development materials and professional development training to increase their awareness of equity issues
- employing staff who can assist to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- creating children's' environments that meet the needs of the families

- encouraging informal discussions with staff about their values and beliefs
- reviewing the Centre's philosophy annually to assist in refreshing the staffs knowledge
- inviting support agencies e.g. FKA to work with staff to discuss equity and inclusion concepts and issues; and
- inviting families or members of the community from diverse backgrounds to discuss their personal experiences.

5. Practices

At ADCC we acknowledge and respect differences and similarities by ensuring that play and learning experiences are child focused, relevant and meaningful.

We aim to create environments where people of different backgrounds are considered equal to others, and therefore their culture and lifestyle acknowledged and celebrated everyday.

The staff will:

- interact with children, families and peers equitably and respectfully;
- discuss with children evidence of biased and prejudiced behaviours and practices;
- actively monitor their responses and behaviours towards biases;
- use language that promotes equity;
- encourage empathy and fairness towards others;
- challenge stereotypes that promote prejudicial and biased behaviours and practices;
- counteract biased or prejudicial behaviour and practices;
- avoid making comparisons between children, families and staff;
- use their diverse life experiences to contribute to and enhance the children's programs and environments;
- support and encourage children to be fair and respectful of others;
- have a thorough understanding and be able to put into practice the Centre's philosophy;
- communicate openly with all families, children and each other;
- assist to develop the Centre's resources to support diversity, equity an inclusive practices;
- work closely with families, external agencies and management to support children and families with additional needs;
- assist children with additional needs to develop autonomy, independence, competency, confidence and pride;
- will use picture books, stories and events that happen in everyday life to discuss and help break down stereotypes;
- encourage and support the participation of families in the children's program;

- discuss with families how special occasions can be celebrated in meaningful and respectful ways;
- provide resources that are non gender bias and reflect diversity;
- support the first language of families by learning key words and asking parents/guardians to make a tape with favourite songs and providing bilingual CDs.

The children will be:

- provided with opportunities to question and explore the social constructions of gender, culture, race, language, lifestyles and additional needs;
- encouraged to understand the right of individuals to have their thoughts, feelings and ideas heard and respected;
- provided with a diverse range of resources that promote positive messages about differences and diversity;
- supported to use their home language, if applicable;
- provided play environments in which all children can succeed;
- supported to actively encourage, accept and support all other children in care;
- provided with opportunities to hear and experience music and songs from a range of cultures;
- exposed to a culturally diverse menu.

The families will be:

- encouraged to participate in every aspect of the Centre e.g participate in the children's programs, join the committee or subcommittee, share in a family celebration
- valued and treated fairly
- listened to
- consulted about their cultural beliefs and child rearing practices
- consulted to discuss their various needs and their expectation of staff eg the amount of information that they would like to receive about their child's day.

The Centre will:

- develop professional links and support networks with other centres and external agencies to extend staff understanding of equity issues, diversity and inclusive practices. Through these links staff will increase their knowledge to develop the children's programs and provide a forum for the Centre to promote the importance of their work;
- provide families with information via the Centre newsletter about the value of diversity and inclusive practices;
- encourage bilingual staff to support the development of a child's home language;

- use visual aids to support families to understand what happens at the Centre eg posters, slide shows using the digital cameras.

6. Glossary of terms

Additional needs – a broad term of reference and can include children and families with:

- intellectual or cognitive delay
- language requirements
- specific medical needs
- diverse family lifestyles and structures
- emotional needs resulting from trauma, abuse or grief
- child-rearing practices that differ to the Centre's practices.

Inclusion – the incorporation of children with additional needs into the Centre to ensure that they have equal opportunities to achieve their maximum potential.

7. Evaluation

In order to assess whether this policy has achieved its purpose, the Director will monitor feedback received from families, staff and committee of management.

8. Policy review

The service will review the Inclusion and Equity Policy every 2 years.

Families are encouraged to collaborate with the Centre to review the policy and procedures.

Staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

Date Approved by the COM on 15 July 2009

Next review date July 2011

Sources and further reading

- *Family Day Care Quality Assurance Factsheet #4*, Diversity in programming, National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc, 2005
- *Culturally Inclusive Practices In Long Day Care*, Community Child Care Resource and Development Unit and FKA Children's Services, 2009
- Morrison, T June 2005, 'Encouraging Inclusive Behaviour', *Putting Children First*, the newsletter of the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) www.ncac.gov.au