



Waiting List & Priority of Access Policy

Rationale:

'Sometimes, there may be a waiting list for child care services and to ensure the system is fair, the Australian Government has "Priority of Access Guidelines" for allocating places in these circumstances. The guidelines only apply to Child Care Benefit approved childcare. They are used when there is a waiting list for a child care service or when a number of parents are applying for a limited number of vacant places.' (DEEWR)

The BEPS OSHC Service utilization has significantly increased over the last few years and programs have been highly booked. As a result, the Service has implemented the Government Priority of Access Guidelines and waiting list process.

Aims:

- To ensure a fair, equitable and transparent process for maintaining a waiting list and determining Priority of Access Status.
- To have clear processes' in place for allocating limited places equitably.

Priority of Access Guidelines Policy

In determining priority of access the BEPS OSHC Service is bound by and will adhere to the guidelines of the day set down by the Australian Government – (currently) Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

The Australian Government has determined Priority of Access Guidelines for allocating places in child care services. These guidelines set out the following three levels of priority:

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 *A New Tax System* (Family Assistance Act 1999)

Priority 3 - any other child

Within these main categories priority should also be given to the following children:

- Children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families (letter of Aboriginality)
- Children in Families which include a disabled person (letter from doctor/psychologist/psychiatrist stating disability)

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- Children in Families which include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the lower income threshold or who or whose partner are on income support (Health Care card - copy to be attached)
- Children in Families with a non-English speaking background (write a letter stating non-english speaking history)
- Children in socially isolated Families (statutory declaration)
- Children of single parents (Centrelink letter/statutory declaration)

When there are no vacancies, a child who is in a lower priority may be required to leave the Service, or to have days altered in order to provide a place for a child in a higher priority (as required by DEEWR legislation).

The decision to ask a child to leave the Service to create a place for a child in a higher priority must be approved by the OSHC Sub-Committee of Management and the School Council. This provision only applies if:

- a) The person liable to pay the childcare fee for that child was notified on enrolment that the Service followed this policy
- b) The Service gives that person at least 14 days' notice, of the requirement for the child to leave that Service or alter days of care.

Implementation:

- All families when enrolling into the OSHC Service will receive a ***Determining Priority of Access*** form to fill in and return to the Service. Status cannot be assessed unless this form and supporting documentation is returned by the due dates. This form requires families to identify and provide evidence of their Priority of Access status as outlined by the guidelines set down by DEEWR. Families may be required to provide further evidence of their status.
- The Service will document all Families details; Priority of Access status, together with time and date of receipt of enrolment forms, expression of interest, and/or Acceptance letters if applicable. This information will be used to determine placement within the OSHC Service.
- It is understood that the Co-ordinator may also take into account individual Families circumstances when filling vacancies. The OSHC Sub-Committee of Management and the School Council must be consulted before any decision taken is actioned.
- Families will receive notification if they do or do not get a place at the Service.
- Families may be asked to give up their place or alter days to provide a place to a child from a higher priority (See *BEPS OSHC Waiting List and Priority of Access Policy*). This refers to the last families that made or were offered a Permanent booking on each day in the Service (See *BEPS OSHC Waiting List and Priority of Access Policy*).

Waiting List Policy

The BEPS OSHC Service will maintain a waiting list. Waiting Lists will be maintained for permanent places when the program has reached daily maximum capacity and there is demand for places throughout the year.

If, after following the DEEWR policy, demand exceeds supply and more than one Family fall into the same priority the Service will give priority to:

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- Children who have a sibling enrolled at the Service
- Children in Families who have previously used the Service
- The Families position on the waiting list entered by request and in order of receipt of Acceptance letters for places for Round One and Two Offers and Enrolments taken throughout the year.

Implementation:

- Families will be placed on a waiting list for each day they have requested (if they have chosen this option), when the programs have reached daily maximum bookings for permanent places.
- Families will receive notification that they have been placed on a waiting list.
- Families will be contacted when spots become available.

Principles:

- This policy applies to all Families enrolling and re-enrolling their child into the Service.
- When Permanent Places become available throughout the year, Families on the waiting list are contacted and an offer of the place is made. The Family has 48hrs to accept or decline the offer. If no response is received from the Family, the offer will be deemed as declined. The place will then be offered to the next family of the waiting list. The Family will lose their place on the waiting list for that day, going to the bottom of the list. If the Family declines the offer but still wishes to stay on the list, they will go to the bottom of the waiting list. Families wishing to accept the offer, but are unable to attend the booking until a later date, will have to pay for the place to secure the booking, unless the place can be re-sold in the interim.
- Waiting Lists are for the duration of the year. Families on the waiting list for particular days will be contacted via email at the end of each term to review if they still wish to remain on the waiting list. If families do not respond by the start of the next term, they will be removed from the waiting list.
- Families who have remained on the waiting list, and did not receive a place for the current year, can be carried over into the next year's waiting list if they still require the place for the next year, but have been unsuccessful during the round offers.
- Vacancies may become available on a casual basis, however these are managed as casual bookings, and families may book into these if they wish to utilize a casual spot. (see BEPS OSHC Enrolment Policy)

Internal Control and Reporting

- The **OSHC sub-committee** of Management will ensure that the Waiting List and Priority of Access Guidelines are adhered to.
- Waiting List decisions will be at the discretion of the OSHC Coordinator and in particular circumstances in consultation with the OSHC Sub Committee of Management, and School Council.

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- All matters will be dealt with in a private and confidential matter. (see BEPS OSHC Privacy & Confidentiality Policy)

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed by the OSHC Sub-Committee of Management in consultation with School Council as part of the OSHC Service’s annual review cycle, and in the event of changing needs of the Service.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Record Keeping & Confidentiality Policy
- Enrolment, Re-enrolment & Orientation Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy
- Grievance Policy

Sources & Legislative References

DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2012 – 2013; – Retrieved from www.deewr.gov.au

UNICEF (n.d.). *Fact sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

Early Childhood Australia (ECA). (2006). *The Code of Ethics*. – Retrieved from: http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code_of_ethics/early_childhood_australias_code_of_ethics.html

National Professional Support Coordinator Alliance (2012) *Getting started with policies for the NQF: Policies in Practice template – Enrolment and Orientation*. Accessed February 2012 from www.pscalliance.gov.au

<i>DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2011-2012 – Sections 5.5, 5.6, 6.6, 6.10 & 9</i>
<i>Education & Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Vic) – Part 1 – Preliminary – 3(3)(a)&(c); 175</i>
<i>Education & Care Services National Regulations (2011) – Regulations 75, 88, 102, 168(2)(k), 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 177, 180 & 181</i>
<i>National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care & School Age Care (2010) – Elements 4.2.1, 6.1.1, 7.3.1 & 7.3.3</i>
<i>Framework for School Age Care in Australia (2012) – Holistic & Responsive Practices; Outcome 1</i>
<i>Family Assistance Law – Priority of Access & Administration of Child Care Benefit</i>
<i>Children, Youth & Family Act (2005) – Reporting & Referral</i>
<i>Information Privacy Act Vic (2000) – Information Privacy Principles</i>

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