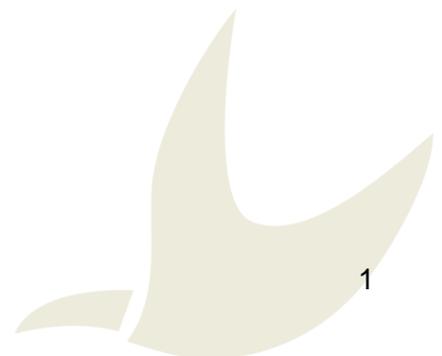


Kindergarten Inclusion Support Parent Information Handbook



Contents

Overview	2
Mission and Values	2
Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program Overview	3
Commitment to Partnerships	3
Code of Ethics	3
Privacy Statement	4
Regional Advisory Group	4
Additional Assistant Educators	4
Mandatory Requirements of the Program	5
Program Support Group	5
Child Absences	5
Short Term Absence	5
Long Term Absence	5
Transportation of children	6
Feedback	6
General Feedback	6
Satisfaction Survey	6
Contact Details	6



Overview

‘As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world.’
(Belonging, Being, Becoming 2009)

Lentara UnitingCare (Lentara) is a Uniting Church community service agency with more than 100 years of experience in providing a wide range of services to children, families and individuals primarily in the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne.

Lentara provides a diverse range of community services including Emergency Relief and Material Aid, Financial Counselling, No Interest Loans, Asylum Seeker Programs, Integrated Family Services, Community Development, the Sunshine Mission, a Communal Justice Project, the Brimbank Men’s Shed, the Devonshire House Tea Rooms, Orana Care Leaver services, Bargain Centres, Communities for Children and a range of Early Childhood Services.

The early years are when there is the most rapid progression of a child’s learning and development. Children learn as they play, explore, make friends and have fun.

We know that ‘...play shapes the architecture of the brain in unique ways; it links social, creative and cognitive skills’ (Bartlett 2010).

Lentara recognises that every child is an individual and will achieve learning outcomes in different ways, at different rates and at different times. Lentara acknowledges that children’s families are their first and most important educators.

Lentara’s Early Childhood Services support children and families to participate in work, study and connect to their local community. Lentara’s Early Childhood Services encompass a number of centres that include Kindergartens and Long Day Care centres. The Early Childhood Services also encompass the Kindergarten Inclusion Support program for the Northern and Western regions of Melbourne and four Preschool Field Officers servicing the cities of Banyule, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Melbourne and Maribyrnong.

Mission and Values

Lentara’s Mission is creating opportunities for children, families and individuals to flourish in a fair and generous community.

Lentara’s Values and guiding behaviours underpin how staff treat each other, service users and the communities that they serve.

Our Values

Respect Respect incorporates effective communication, being valued, listened to and shown fairness. Respect builds over time as positive relationships form.	Integrity Integrity is our ability to be non-judgemental in the way we deal with things and to communicate and deliver in a way that builds reliability and trustworthiness.	Collaboration Collaboration is working together to provide an honest and open communication which encourages values and provides support for a united outcome.	Compassion Compassion is being sensitive and tolerant of others situation while listening and supporting people in their journey.
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Lentara staff:

- Affirm cultural diversity;
- Show compassion for the vulnerable;
- Encourage people to value and use their strengths;
- Advocate on behalf of those who are disadvantaged; and
- Challenge inequity and injustice and work for social change.

Lentara's services are provided to all people irrespective of cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program Overview

Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) is a program funded by the Victorian Government through the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Commonwealth National Education Agreement.

The management of the KIS program is auspiced to Lentara, which coordinates both the North Western Victoria and South Western Victoria regions. KIS Coordinators are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program.

The KIS service provides supplementary support to assist children with a disability and/or complex medical needs to access and participate in State Government funded kindergarten programs.

The objective of the KIS Packages is to build the capacity of funded kindergartens to support the access and participation of children with disabilities and/or complex medical needs in an inclusive kindergarten program.

Support from the KIS Packages is in addition to the existing resources available to the kindergarten and may not provide full coverage of all costs that are incurred to support the child.

In most cases, the supplementary support is the provision of an Additional Assistant Educator (AAE) assigned to the kindergarten for a percentage of time. The allocation of an AAE is designed to increase the staff to child ratio at the kindergarten, **not to work with children on an individual basis.**

Allocation of an AAE is provided to increase the capacity of the kindergarten during contact hours only and is not available outside session times.

Funding can also provide resources in the form of specialist training, consultancy or minor building modifications.

Commitment to Partnerships

Lentara aims to work collaboratively with local communities, families and children to provide inclusive, accessible and flexible early childhood services.

Partnerships involve Educators, Families and Additional Assistant Educator Educators (AAE) working together to explore the learning potential in every child and how best to support children with additional needs (Early Years Learning Framework 2009).

Code of Ethics

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics provides a framework for reflection about ethical responsibilities of early childhood professionals and is to be used as a guide by the early childhood educators employed by Lentara to monitor and set the standard of their professional behaviour. A copy of the Code of Ethics can be accessed on the Early Childhood Australia website.

Privacy Statement

Lentara UnitingCare is committed to maintaining the privacy of all individuals according to our statutory requirements regarding how we collect, hold, use, disclose, correct, transfer and dispose of information. Principally, we manage your personal and sometimes sensitive information in accordance with the 13 Australian Privacy Principles identified in The Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012 (*Commonwealth*); *the Adoption Act 1984 (Vic)*; and *the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*.

Additionally, as part of our government funding agreements, the following Acts may also apply as if Lentara UnitingCare was an organisation within the meaning of that Act: *Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)*; *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)*; *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Commonwealth)*; *Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)*; *Archives Act 1983 (Commonwealth)*. Visit www.lentarauc.org.au to view Lentara UnitingCare's Privacy Policy in full.

Regional Advisory Group

The role of the Regional Advisory Group is to determine the eligibility and the level of additional resources for each application, including appeals and late applications.

The Regional Advisory Group consists of a minimum of four and up to a maximum of nine regional representatives including the Regional Advisory Group Convener.

Applications are recommended for various levels of support, therefore the role of the Regional Advisory Group is to:

- Provide recommendations on applications requesting assistance to include a child with a disability or complex medical needs into kindergarten.
 - These applications are prioritised according to the KIS Guidelines;
 - within expected financial constraints;
 - taking into account all applications in the region;
 - other services available; and
 - using flexible models of allocation to facilitate access;
- Provide advice on any additional requests contained within an application for support to kindergartens;
- Provide advice on the need for specialist consultancy to support the inclusion of all children; and
- Consider and provide recommendations on reviews, requests for variations and late applications within the region during the year.

The Regional Advisory Group Convener is employed by Lentara and is responsible for the establishment of the Regional Advisory Group, to organise the meetings throughout the year and to disseminate information to the relevant agencies and families.

Additional Assistant Educators

The AAE is placed in the kindergarten as an extra support person to help facilitate the safety, wellbeing and successful inclusion of all children.

An AAE is not employed to specifically work one-on-one with your child, but rather to support the kindergarten to provide an inclusive program that includes your child.

An AAE is appointed as a member of the team at the kindergarten that has an eligible child and works under the guidance and supervision of the Early Childhood Educator.

AAE's are considered to be a 'Visiting Early Intervention Support Worker'. No formal qualifications are required, however, previous experience with kindergarten children is an advantage. A current Working with

Children Check for Employment is required. AAE's are employed by Lentara and training is provided each term.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) have provided a fact sheet on 'The Role of the Additional Assistant Educator' which can be located on the Lentara website.

Mandatory Requirements of the Program

Program Support Group

A condition of KIS funding is that the Early Childhood Educator convenes the Program Support Group (PSG) to meet once a term.

The Early Childhood Educator is responsible for establishing the PSG prior to submitting a KIS application.

The PSG consists of:

- Parent or guardian;
- Carer of the child (if applicable);
- Early Childhood Educator;
- Staff from an Early Childhood Intervention Service, where applicable; and
- Others as appropriate, for example Family Services Coordinator, PSFO, therapist or medical practitioner.

As required by the KIS program, the PSG meets each term to discuss, plan and review your child's attendance and participation in the program. Discussion should also include a contingency plan if the AAE is absent and a reliever is not available.

The purpose of these meetings is to:

- Promote the successful inclusion of your child into the kindergarten program;
- Meet on a regular basis with you, the kindergarten staff, specialist agency staff or services who may be involved in your child's care;
- Plan for your child's needs and requirements in the kindergarten; and
- Monitor and evaluate your child's progress and set appropriate planning objectives in an individual educational program plan.

The PSG has an ongoing role in supporting your child's inclusion into the kindergarten program throughout the whole kindergarten year.

It is not a requirement that the AAE attend these meetings, however, the AAE should be informed of the outcomes and objectives set at these meetings.

A fact sheet regarding the role of the PSG can be located on the Lentara website.

Child Absences

Short Term Absence

If your child is absent for a day or short period (e.g. less than two weeks) the AAE will still attend the kindergarten program and continue to work with the group.

Long Term Absence

If your child is absent for a long-term period (e.g. two weeks or more), the KIS Coordinator must be notified by the Early Childhood Educator and support will be withdrawn. Funding will be placed on hold until your child returns to the kindergarten program.

Transportation of children

AAE's are not permitted to transport children to or from the kindergarten. This includes assisting children from the car park or from the kindergarten building.

Feedback

General Feedback

Lentara values feedback about its services. Feedback is seen as a compliment, a suggestion or a complaint.

Compliments: Admiration, praise, or happiness in relation to the services or in the way staff undertake their work. Please share your thoughts on what is being done well.

Suggestions: Do you have any ideas on how services could be improved, or how things could be done differently?

Complaints: Dissatisfaction with the service provided or how work is carried out.

What to expect when you make a complaint:

- To be treated with fairness, respect and dignity;
- To have your complaint treated with sensitivity and confidentiality; and
- To have a response to your complaint within a reasonable timeframe.

The process of providing any form of feedback is to:

- Discuss your feedback/matter with the relevant Early Childhood Educator at the service;
- Contact the KIS Coordinator on 03 9351 3600 or email info@linterauc.org.au ; and
- Contact the General Manager Children's Services on 03 9351 3600 or email info@linterauc.org.au

Complaints alleging that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child is being compromised, or that the law has been breached, will be reported to the DET Quality Assessment and Regulations Division in the relevant region.

Satisfaction Survey

Later in the year, you will receive a client feedback questionnaire. This questionnaire forms the basis of a satisfaction report provided to the DET regarding the KIS program. We hope that when you receive this questionnaire you will be able to complete it and return it to the KIS office in the specified timeframes.

Contact Details

General Manager Children's Services 03 9351 3600

KIS Coordinators

North Western Victoria region 03 9351 3624

South Western Victoria region 03 9351 3623

Fax 03 9351 3651

Postal address

Lentara UnitingCare
Kindergarten Inclusion Support
PO Box 3217
Broadmeadows VIC 3047