



Parent Information Handbook



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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 that has over 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, bargain centres, ‘Communities for Children’ and a range of early childhood services. Employees are encouraged to embrace the diversity of our local communities.

The early years are 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 and study and to connect to their local community. Lentara’s early childhood services encompass a number of centres that include kindergartens and Long Day Care centres. It also includes the Kindergarten Inclusion Support program for the northern and western regions of Melbourne and four Preschool Field Officers who service the municipalities of Banyule, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Melbourne and Maribyrnong.

Mission and Values

Our mission is creating opportunities for children, families and individuals to flourish in a fair and generous community. Our values and guiding behaviours underpin how we treat each other, our service users and the communities that we serve. Our values are:

Our Values

Respect

- I will embrace diversity and value the beliefs, contributions and opinions of all
- I will treat others as I like to be treated
- I will endeavour at all times to be welcoming to everyone I am in contact with
- I will treat all people with courtesy, politeness and kindness
- I will never insult people, name call, disparage or put people down or their ideas

Integrity

- I will demonstrate ethical behaviour and act honestly at all times
- I will act in a fair and reasonable manner
- I will reflect upon my own behaviours and the impact these have on others
- I will seek feedback about my behaviours and actions in an endeavour to improve
- I will do the right thing even when no-one is looking

Collaboration

- I will work together with all stakeholders to achieve common goals
- I will be an active participant in the Lentara team
- I will acknowledge the efforts and achievements of others
- I will always communicate in a way that demonstrates respect and honesty

Compassion

- I will endeavour to understand every persons point of view
- I will listen without judging
- I will consistently show empathy
- I will put the needs of my clients at the forefront of everything I do
- I will care for my colleagues and clients

At Lentara we:

- affirm cultural diversity
- show compassion for the vulnerable
- encourage people to value and use their strengths
- advocate on behalf of those who are disadvantaged
- challenge inequity and injustice and work for social change.

The services of Lentara are provided to all people irrespective of cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability. Lentara is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and individuals.

Child Safety Standards

The Victorian Government has introduced child safety standards to improve the way organisations providing services for children prevent and respond to child abuse that may occur within their organisation.

The standards are compulsory for all organisations providing services to children, and aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. This will assist organisations to:

- prevent child abuse
- encourage reporting of any abuse that does occur
- improve responses to any allegations of child abuse.

The child safe standards are a central feature of the Victorian Government's response to the Family and Community Development Committee of the Victorian Parliament's *Betrayal of Trust: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations* (Betrayal of Trust Inquiry). For more information visit <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards>

Commitment to Child Safety

The Keeping Children Safe Policy is the Uniting Church's binding and public commitment to the provision of safety for children. It builds on the good work already done to develop our church communities and establishments as safe places for children.

Lentara is currently developing a Keeping Children Safe Statement of Commitment. This statement will guide all staff, volunteers and students in their engagement with children and underpin how we work with service users and the communities that we serve.

The Lentara statement of commitment to keeping children safe provides the expected behaviours and actions by all employees, staff volunteers and students to maximise children's safety by embedding these practices and thoughts into their everyday practice:

- We are committed to implementing the Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.
- We are committed to safeguarding children from abuse and neglect, promoting child safety and well-being and safeguarding them against exposure to domestic abuse.
- We will take appropriate action to protect children with whom we have contact from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect.
- We will work to ensure that there is a clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

- We require clear boundaries between children and employees, volunteers, congregation members and people in specified ministries.
- We will work to build the capacity of our people to recognise and respond to situations of abuse and neglect and to be aware of their responsibilities.
- We encourage our people to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns so that it becomes more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.
- We encourage children to express their views and make suggestions especially on matters that directly affect them.
- We will teach children about their rights and what they can do if they feel unsafe or something is worrying them. We will listen to, and act on, any concerns that children or others may raise with us.
- We will develop and regularly review clear procedures to implement our commitment.

Introduction: Kindergarten and Child Care Services

Commitment to Partnerships

Thank you for choosing a Lentara service to educate and care for your child.

Lentara agrees that families are children's first and most influential teachers (*Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) page 12*).

All families are encouraged to be active in making decisions about their child's wellbeing, interests and needs. The relationships between families and educators provides important information to form the Education and Care program that focuses on each child's strengths and provides a foundation for positive learning outcomes for all children.

Objectives

Lentara aims to work collaboratively with local communities, families and children to provide inclusive, accessible and flexible early childhood services. Children and their families will have a place of belonging and feel connected to, and supported by, their centre community.

The objectives of the early childhood services are to:

- form collaborative partnerships with families and embrace diversity and inclusion, to support each child's education and care
- inspire children to learn and to interact with others, showing care, empathy and respect
- promote a sense of belonging to the community and encourage social responsibility and care for the environment
- assist children to aspire to become confident and involved learners
- support educators to work in partnership with their peers and other professionals to draw on each other's skills and expertise.

Benefits of Play

'Young children's play allows them to explore, identify, negotiate, take risks and create meaning. The intellectual and cognitive benefits of playing have been well documented. Children who engage in quality play experiences are more likely to have well-developed memory skills, language development, and are able to regulate their behaviour, leading to enhanced school adjustment and academic learning' (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

Research suggests that play shapes the structural design of the brain. Secure attachments and stimulation are significant aspects of brain development. Play provides active exploration that assists in building and strengthening brain pathways. Play creates a brain that has "...increased flexibility and improved potential for learning in later life' (Lester & Russell, 2008, page 9).

Educational benefits include:

- Providing a meaningful context for children to learn concepts and skills
- Making learning fun and enjoyable
- Encouraging children to explore and discover together and on their own
- Allowing children to extend what they are learning
- Encouraging children to experiment and take risks
- Providing opportunities for collaborative learning with adults and peers and
- Allowing for the practice of acquired and new skills.

Code of Ethics

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics provides a framework for reflection about ethical responsibilities of early childhood professionals. They are 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 at the service or on the Early Childhood Australia website.

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) for early childhood education and care ensures children receive a high standard of education and care. The framework is a national system for the regulation and quality assessment of childcare and early learning services.

The NQF for early childhood education and care applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool, kindergarten, and outside school hours care services.

The framework includes:

- a national legislative framework that creates a uniform national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and child care services in Australia, *The Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations*
- a National Quality Standard (NQS) that sets a national benchmark for the quality of education and care services
- a national quality rating and assessment process that rates services against the National Quality Standard.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority is the national body that oversees and implements the NQF, with Regulatory Authorities in each state and territory. Please visit the following website for further information. <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/families>

Our Commitment to Privacy

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 personal and sometimes sensitive information in accordance with the 13 Australian Privacy Principles identified in Schedule 1 of the *Privacy Act 1988 (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 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.

Enrolments

Kindergarten

Eligibility for four year old funded kindergarten

In the year prior to attending school, children can access a year of funded kindergarten. To be eligible, children must be four years of age by 30th April in their kindergarten year.

Children are usually eligible for only one year of a funded kindergarten program.

To declare that a child is eligible to receive a second year of funded kindergarten, the early childhood teacher must have observed a delay in at least two of the following five outcome areas as identified in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:

- Identity (emotional development)
- Community (social development)
- Wellbeing (self-care)
- Learning (cognitive development)
- Communication (receptive/expressive language)

This delay can be identified when comparing the average rate of learning and development for children of the same age and may include, but is not restricted to, children with a diagnosed developmental delay or disability. Other factors such as the child's family situation, illness or social demographics may also impact on a child's learning and development.

Visit <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/secondyear.aspx> for updated information regarding a second year of funded four year old kindergarten.

Eligibility for three year old kindergarten

Children are eligible to apply for the three-year-old program provided they turn three years of age before 30th April in the year she/he will attend kindergarten.

Children who are not 3 years old prior to commencement of term 1 can only attend the program with a parent or guardian until the day of their 3rd birthday. Full terms fees will be charged to hold any places.

Families are able to enrol their child for one year in the three-year-old program. Families are informed at the time of enrolment that eligibility for a second year in the three-year-old program is determined based on the developmental needs of individual children as assessed by the teacher. Eligibility for a second year in the three-year-old program is finalised by the end of Term 3, in line with children eligible for a second year of funded 4 year old kindergarten

Central enrolment

Central enrolment processes are managed by local councils. Each local council has enrolment policies relating to priority of access for children. The payment of an Enrolment Service Fee is required in some Central Enrolment Systems.

Lentara managed enrolments

Lentara manages the central enrolment process for a number of three and four year old programs. The expressions of interest (EOI) in registering for these 3 and 4 year old groups are accepted one year prior to the child's commencement within the program. EOI forms will be accepted from the first week of March in the year prior to the child's attendance.

Lentara also has a priority of access policy which is available on our website.

Child Care

Enrolments for child care can be made by directly contacting the individual child care centre.

Some services may work with a central enrolment process managed by local councils. Each local council has enrolment policies relating to priority of access for children. The payment of an Enrolment Service Fee maybe required in some Central Enrolment Systems.

For more information about central enrolment for child care places please speak to the nominated supervisor of the service.

Child care centres accept enrolments for children 0-6 years of age. There are limited child care places available. If the demand for child care exceeds the availability then the centre will comply with Department of Education's Priority of Access Guidelines.

Transition for Children in Kindergarten and Child Care Centres

Lentara will work in consultation with families to ensure that orientation supports their children's needs and wellbeing. Lentara acknowledges that the transition from home into the program can be unsettling for some children and families, and invite you to discuss this process with the educators.

The diversity in family life means that Children experience '*belonging, being and becoming*' in many different ways.' (EYLF page 9).

Educational Program

Lentara provides educational and care programs that reflect the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

The educational programs have a specific emphasis on play-based learning. Play provides opportunities for children to learn, discover, create, improvise and imagine. When children play with each other they create social groups, test out ideas, challenge each other's thinking and build new understandings. Play provides a supportive environment where children can make choices, ask questions, solve problems and engage in critical thinking. Play expands children's thinking and enhances their desire to learn.

In these ways play promotes positive dispositions towards learning. Children's immersion in their play illustrates how play enables them to simply enjoy being. Early childhood educators take on many roles in play with children and use a range of strategies to support learning. They engage in sustained shared conversations with children to extend their thinking, provide a balance between child-led, child-initiated and educator-supported learning and create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct.

National Quality Standards

The aim of the National Quality Standards (NQS) is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement in all education and care services.

The seven quality areas in the National Quality Standards are:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities and
7. Leadership and service management.

The NQS are linked to national learning frameworks which recognise that children learn from birth and outline practices to support and promote children's learning.

Relationships with Children

Early childhood educators support children to become active contributors to their world. Children's thoughts and feelings are recognised and acknowledged to support a strong sense of wellbeing. Relationships with children are based on respect, integrity, collaboration and compassion.

Celebrations

Children are given the opportunity to become connected with, and to contribute to, their world by exploring the diversity of culture, heritage, community and tradition. In order for this to occur please let the early childhood service know if there are any celebrations or festivals that your family participates in. The Early Childhood Educators will endeavour to include these in the educational program.

Excursions and Special Events

To enrich and complement the Educational Program, from time to time excursions and special events may be arranged. They provide an opportunity for children to experience and explore their world and the diverse elements of the environment.

Parent participation and involvement is always encouraged and welcomed. Please speak to the Early Childhood Educators to help determine how best you can support the event.

Risk assessments are conducted to determine the appropriate safety measures required for the event; this includes child staff ratios, mode of transport, potential hazards, medications etc. These assessments are made available for consideration prior to the event.

Toys and Personal Belongings

Children's interests help provide the foundation for the educational program. We acknowledge that sometimes, children like to bring favourite toys or special things of interest from home. Children will be encouraged to respect and share these items with the other children.

Early Childhood Educators will take every reasonable precaution to ensure that these items are not lost or broken, however this cannot be guaranteed.

Photographs/DVDs

Lentara acknowledges that the use of digital cameras and photos are integral to documenting children's learning and collaborating with parents.

On enrolment, parents will be asked for their consent for photographs to be taken of their child. If consent is not given, all educators will be advised of this.

Lentara will only send digital photos of children via the internet with written permission of the parent/guardian.

From time to time families of other children in attendance may wish to take photos of special events occurring at the service. If you do not wish for your child to be photographed please ensure you inform the Early Childhood Educators.

Additional consent will be sought for any photographs or videos used in relation to media and advertising interests.

Staffing

Employment of Early Childhood Educators

Lentara will employ Early Childhood Educators in line with legislative requirements. The qualifications, skills, knowledge and personal attributes of each candidate will be considered in order to build a positive culture and professional learning community. Lentara is an equal opportunity employer and values the diverse, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of employed educators. Their professional and life experiences are varied. A range of professional resources and supports are available to staff, including opportunities for professional development.

Relief (emergency/casual) Early Childhood Educators

On occasion Early Childhood Educators may be absent. Relief staff will be employed to replace the absent educator. In order to facilitate continuity of care and a sense of trust and familiarity for the children and families, every endeavour will be made to access a familiar reliever.

When an educator is replaced by a reliever, a notice will be displayed at the Early Childhood Service to inform you of the replacement as soon as possible.

Additional Support for Children

Some children enrolled into a children's service may require additional support to maximise their participation and access to the educational program. The nominated supervisor of the service will consult with families and where a child fulfills the criteria will submit an application to the appropriate inclusion support programme for additional support.

Further information can be found at the following websites:

State funded 4 year old Kindergarten programs - Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS)
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/Pages/default.aspx>

Commonwealth funded Long Day Care Centres - Inclusion Support Program (ISP)
<http://idfm.org.au/for-families>

Health and Wellbeing

Emergency Care

All Early Childhood Educators are required to maintain current first aid, CPR, asthma and anaphylaxis training.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, an ambulance will be called immediately. Early Childhood Educators will endeavour to contact the parent/guardian as soon as practicable.

If a child needs to be transported to hospital, where possible an Early Childhood Educator will accompany them. If this is not possible, the child will travel in the care of the Ambulance Officer.

It is a requirement of the Education and Care Services National Regulations that parents/guardians sign an authorisation, enabling Early Childhood Educators to seek emergency medical or ambulance assistance if necessary. This authorisation is located on the child's enrolment record.

Early Childhood Educators maintain records of any accident, injury, illness or trauma which occurs at the early childhood service. Parents/guardians will be notified of the accident, injury, illness or trauma as soon as practicable and will be asked to sign the record. A copy of the record can be provided on request.

If a child requires emergency medical treatment from a medical practitioner or hospital, an incident report will be sent to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as required under The Education and Care Services National Law and The Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Medical Conditions

If a child with a chronic illness or medical condition, for example but not limited to asthma, diabetes, epilepsy or anaphylaxis is enrolled at the service, details of the medical condition must be recorded on the child's enrolment record. An individual risk minimisation plan will be developed in consultation with the family and a medical management plan prepared by your child's physician must be formalised prior to the child commencing at the service.

Should educators require any specialised training to assist them in the daily care of the child, this must be arranged prior to the child commencing at the service.

Any medication or equipment identified on the medical management plan must be provided to the early childhood service. If this is not provided or has expired then the child will not be able to attend the service until this is made available, so as to ensure the health and wellbeing of the child.

It is imperative that medical management plans are kept up to date. Medical management plans should be reviewed by the parent/guardian in collaboration with the child's physician annually and if changes are made to the plan then this must be confirmed in consultation with the child's physician and communicated to the service as soon as practicable.

Medication

To ensure the health and wellbeing of the child, Early Childhood Educators will only administer medication if:

- all details are completed and recorded in the medication authorisation record for each day medication is required, or as outlined in the medical management plan from the child's physician or emergency services
- medication is currently in date, in its original container with the original label, and has been prescribed for that child
- the first dose has been administered by the parent/guardian at least 24 hours prior to attendance at the service in case of an adverse reaction
- two Early Childhood Educators are present to administer and supervise the correct dosage of medication.

Please ensure that all medication is handed to an Early Childhood Educator once the medication record has been completed.

Illness and Infectious Diseases

In the interests of the health, safety and wellbeing of all children and Early Childhood Educators, children who display signs of illness must be kept at home. If your child becomes ill while attending the early childhood service you will be contacted and asked to collect your child or arrange to have your child collected as soon as practicable.

Please let the service know if your child is not coming in to the early childhood service or if your child has been diagnosed with an infectious illness.

The Department of Health has published the 'Minimum Period of Exclusion from Primary School and Children's Services Centres for Infectious Diseases Cases and Contacts'.

This table is available from the following link and is displayed on the notice board at the service and is used to determine exclusion periods (if required). <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion/school-exclusion-table>

Early Childhood Educators are required to notify all parents when a child attending the service has contracted an infectious disease. This will be communicated via a notice displayed prominently in the entrance to the service. Fact sheets relating to the illness/infectious disease will be made available on request.

Early Childhood Educators will follow the advice of the relevant government body should specific measures be required following a notification of an infectious disease.

Immunisation

As per the 'No jab no play' legislation all parents/guardians seeking to enrol their child at an early childhood service will be required to provide an Immunisation Status Certificate outlining that the child is either:

- fully immunised for their age *or*
- on a vaccination catch-up program *or*
- unable to be fully immunised for medical reasons.

'Conscientious objection' will not be an exemption.

The most common form of Immunisation Status Certificate is an Immunisation History Statement provided by the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). This can be requested from the AIR at any time. Your child's immunisation status is to be documented and a copy of their current Immunisation Status Certificate will be attached to the enrolment record. Please update this information after each vaccination. To be eligible to claim Child Care Benefit your child needs to be appropriately immunised.

In the event of an outbreak of a notifiable infectious disease, children who are not immunised will be required to be collected from the service. They will be able to return once the exclusion period has lapsed. Further information can be found by visiting:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play>

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Each early childhood service has an Emergency Management Plan which contains emergency evacuation procedures. These evacuation procedures are displayed and practiced each term (every three months). A variety of scenarios will be practiced throughout the year. Educators will endeavour to inform you when a drill is to occur.

Child Protection

Lentara follows the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Child Protection Protocol, *Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People, 2010*. Early Childhood Educators will act on the advice and direction from the DHS regarding any Child Protection issues or orders.

All Early Childhood Educators employed by Lentara are required to undertake annual Child Protection training as they have a duty of care to act immediately to protect and preserve the safety and wellbeing of the children in their care.

Lentara:

- Recognises that all children and young people have the right to develop and reach their potential in environments that are caring, nurturing and safe.
- Has a legal and moral responsibility to protect children from harm and to ensure that any incidents of suspected child/young person abuse are promptly and appropriately dealt with.

Sun Smart

Lentara adheres to a Sun Smart Policy, which ensures that all children are protected from skin damage caused by harmful UV rays. It is implemented throughout the year, with particular emphasis between September and April. During this period a combination of sun protection measures are to be used for all outdoor activities.

Please provide a sun smart hat (legionnaire's or wide-brimmed hat) and apply sunscreen to your child prior to attendance at the service. A limited number of sun smart hats will be available at the service, please advise an educator on arrival if your child does not have a hat for the day. SPF 30+ sunscreen will be available at the service for staff and children for subsequent applications. If your child is sensitive to sunscreen, please discuss this with the educator as you may be required to provide your own sunscreen.

According to the Sun Smart website, children with naturally very dark skin may not be required to wear sunscreen to help with vitamin D requirements. This should be discussed with Early Childhood Educators prior to the child commencing at the service.

Information about the daily UV Index level is available on the Bureau of Meteorology website at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/places/vic/melbourne/forecast/>.

For further information please visit www.sunsmart.com.au

Smoke-free Zone

In the interest of everyone's health and in accordance with Lentara policy, all early childhood services are smoke-free zones.

Meals and Snacks

Lentara advocates healthy eating habits that promote good nutrition and physical activity. Children need well balanced and nutritional foods in order to sustain the continued growth and development of their bodies and minds.

If you are required to provide a snack/lunch for your child, keep in mind current healthy eating choices as well as being aware and sensitive to other children's allergies or dietary requirements.

Children attending long day care will have their meals provided by the service. Special care and consideration is given to the planning of the menu. Your thoughts, feedback and input into the menu are always welcome and will be accommodated where possible.

If your child has particular dietary needs, please inform the Early Childhood Educators of their requirements. **It is important that the Early Childhood Educators are informed in writing of any allergy or food requirements for your child and that this information is updated as necessary.**

Many children attending Lentara's early childhood services have specific food restrictions due to cultural or religious beliefs or allergies. If you would like to bring in special celebratory food, please discuss this with the Early Childhood Educators.

There may be some instances where families will be asked to restrict particular food items due to the identified serious risk to a child's medical condition.

Clothing

Lentara recommends the following clothing be worn or provided:

- Appropriate play clothing that will allow the child to feel comfortable, relaxed and uninhibited while engaged in play
- Easy access clothing that allows children to increase their independence and competence in personal hygiene, care and safety
- Layers of clothing so children can adjust to changes in temperature and their activity levels;
- Footwear that enables the child to participate in physical activity
- A sun hat (i.e. legionnaire's or wide-brimmed hat with protection for neck and ears) needs to be supplied from September to April
- A warm hat, coat or jacket be provided in cold weather as outdoor play is a regular part of the program
- A complete change of clothes.

Please ensure all items of clothing are clearly labelled with your child's full name.

Parent Involvement

Communication

To enable the development of strong foundations for Early Childhood Education and Care, establishing and maintaining good partnerships between families and Early Childhood Educators is essential.

It is important that all parents, family members, friends and staff feel welcome and at ease while their child attends a Lentara early childhood service.

Effective communication and partnerships with families regarding the education and care their child receives is supported by ongoing two-way communication. Families can provide invaluable information about their child's interests, strengths and abilities as well as feedback that assists Early Childhood Educators to develop program plans that are practical and focused on meeting the individual needs and interests of all children and their families.

Parents/guardians can expect:

- warm, welcoming and friendly Early Childhood Educators
- open, honest and respectful communication
- confidentiality in discussing matters with Early Childhood Educators.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to:

- speak with Early Childhood Educators at the beginning and end of the day/session, to exchange information concerning your child
- advise Early Childhood Educators of any changes in your family situation that may affect your child
- provide feedback relating to the education program provided to your child
- participate and assist on the Parent Advisory Committee and with centre activities
- support the children's program by sharing your interests and ideas, for example, music, cooking, craft work, gardening, dancing, storytelling, carpentry
- share cultural information
- initiate and/or support fundraising events
- provide feedback on policies, National Quality Standards; surveys and other requests from time to time
- discuss thoughts or concerns regarding the service with Early Childhood Educator or Children's Services Manager.

Adult Code of Conduct

Any person entering a Lentara early childhood service is required to conduct themselves in a manner that does not pose a risk to the safety of children and/or educators of the service. If educators believe that the person poses a risk to children or others, the person will be required to leave the premises.

Fundraising

As there is very limited capital funding available from Government sources, one of the key roles for the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is to raise additional funds for resources and equipment outside of the services allocated budgets.

All families are encouraged to participate where possible in supporting the fundraising activities of the service. The promotion of social activities within the early childhood service can form part of the fundraising strategy. It assists in providing avenues for the development of friendships and networks between families, and improving the service's profile within the wider community.

Parent Advisory Committee

In line with Lentara's mission, the five main functions of the PAC are listed below.

1. **Links:** Provide an essential link between the Lentara Management Team and the early childhood service community.
2. **Support:** Support the early childhood services' administrative duties such as organising working bees and social activities.
3. **Fundraising:**
 - Facilitate a sense of community involvement in the early childhood service through the organisation of social and fundraising events.

- Support Early Childhood Educators in providing quality programs through working within the local community to raise funds for capital improvements and additional resources.
4. **Promotion:** Assist in promoting the early childhood service within the wider community to ensure maximum utilisation.
 5. **Participation:** Provide feedback in relation to service including the Quality Improvement Plan and organisational policies and procedures.

The Parent Advisory Committee guidelines are available at each early childhood service. Dates and times of meetings will be displayed. All parents are welcome to attend Parent Advisory Committee meetings.

Feedback

Lentara values feedback about its services. Feedback is seen as a compliment, a suggestion, or a complaint. Feedback boxes are available at each service.

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 confidentially.
- To have a response to your complaint within a reasonable time frame.

To provide any form of feedback:

- discuss your feedback/matter with the relevant Early Childhood Educator at the service
- discuss your feedback/matter with a Children's Services Manager. Contact: 03 9351 3600 *or*
- discuss the feedback/matter with the Group Manager of Children's Services.
Contact: 03 9351 3600.

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 Department of Education and Training (DET) Quality Assessment and Regulations Division in the relevant region.

Administration

Operating Hours

Kindergartens

Kindergartens operate under the DET Kindergarten Guide 2016. Programs will be offered in line with the school term and closed for all gazetted public holidays. Consultation regarding timetables for the coming year will be undertaken in the prior year.

Child care services

Child care services operate 49 weeks per year, closing for all gazetted public holidays and for approximately three weeks over the December-January period (this will be determined by community need). Fees are not charged over this break period.

Professional development

In order for educators to keep up to date with relevant and current early childhood practice it will be necessary for them to attend professional development. Where possible, interruptions to program

delivery will be minimised, however there may be occasions that require the service to close. Lentara will provide written information regarding any days on which a centre will be closed.

Arrival and Departure of Children

Arrival

Arrival at the centre is an important transition time for children. Help them adjust to the differences between home and the early childhood service by talking about the day ahead while you are on your way. Use the transition time to help Early Childhood Educators meet your child's needs by telling them anything useful or interesting about the previous night/day and by including educators and your children in these conversations.

Departure

Children must be collected by someone who has lawful authority to do so and is nominated on the child's enrolment form. If a different person is collecting your child, authorisation must be provided to the Early Childhood Educator or Centre Coordinator before the child is released into their care. This person must produce current photo identification. This authorisation must be provided in writing. Individual consideration will be given to extenuating circumstances.

Attendance record

The attendance record is a requirement under the Education and Care Services National Regulations. Each child is required to be signed in and out of the early childhood service. Please ensure that your child's full name is clearly recorded in the attendance record with the arrival time and signature of the person delivering the child. Similarly on departure the time of departure and signature of the person collecting the child must also be recorded.

Late collection

Late collection can be stressful for children and Early Childhood Educators. We ask for your cooperation in ensuring that children are collected on time.

If you are unable to collect your child by the end of the session/closing time please arrange for someone else to do so and notify the service as soon as practicable (refer to the section above 'Departure', should you nominate another person to collect your child). Two Early Childhood Educators must always be with the child until collected.

If the child is not collected by the end of the session/closing time, a late fee may be charged.

The cost of the late fee is \$1.00 per minute, payable from the end of the session/closing time until the child is collected. This fee will be added to your account at a full fee rate.

Failure to collect a child/children

If a child has not been collected at the end of session/closing time, and the parent/guardian has not made contact with the service within the first 10 minutes after session/closing time, Early Childhood Educators will attempt to contact the child's parents/guardians. If unsuccessful the emergency contacts will be contacted and asked to collect the child. All reasonable attempts will be made to advise the parent/guardian that an emergency contact person has collected the child.

In the event that a parent/guardian or emergency contact has not responded to the service's attempts to arrange for collection of the child, Victoria Police will be contacted for further instruction.

Court orders

On occasions, a child attending the early childhood service may be the subject of a Family Court or other Court Order. The order may prescribe who is responsible for the child and who may or may not collect the child from the early childhood service. If a child has a specific custody and access arrangement in place, please inform the Early Childhood Educators.

A copy of the current Court Order is required to be given to the service. The copy is attached to the enrolment form and will remain on file.

If the Court Order does not specify any formal contact arrangements, Early Childhood Educators cannot legally deny a parent access to their child.

It is the parents/guardians responsibility to provide information/documentation regarding changes to Court Orders.

Fees

Families pay fees for their child to attend an early childhood service. Kindergarten fees are paid each term, whereas child care fees are paid daily or weekly.

Lentara is a not-for-profit organisation. Fees are therefore kept to a minimum; however, it is necessary to meet the gap between the funding provided by State and Federal Government Departments and the cost of operating the early childhood service. Fees are based upon operational costs and are reviewed on an annual basis. Please refer to the Fee Policy for more information.

Three year old kindergarten sessions are not funded by State or Federal Government Departments.

Payment – kindergarten

An invoice will be issued for first term fees by the end of February. All subsequent term fees will be invoiced two weeks into term. Payment is to be made in accordance with the details listed on the invoice.

Lentara, as the service provider, can apply for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for a child for whom it receives a per capita grant in any of the following circumstances:

- the child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- the child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)
- the child individually holds, or has a parent or guardian who holds one of the following:
 - a Commonwealth Health Care Card
 - a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card
 - Refugee visa (subclass 200)
 - In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
 - Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
 - Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
 - Protection visa (subclass 866)
 - Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
 - Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
 - Bridging visas A-E.

Lentara will contact the appropriate Departmental regional office if a child or family has a humanitarian or refugee visa listed by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection which is not included in the above list, as the child may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

Lentara requires the service staff to sight the relevant concession card, visa, travel document or letter of visa status, to take a copy of this and record the expiry date.

3 year old program

A child who turns three years of age between 31 January and 30 April can enrol in a three year old program. A parent/guardian will be required to attend with the child until their third birthday. Standard fees apply from the beginning of term one.

Payment – child care centres

Payment is made via the ezidebit system. Fees are required one week in advance of the booking. No fees are charged for public holidays however full fees apply when children are absent due to holidays or illness.

Non Payment of Fees

If accounts remain in arrears for one month, you will be contacted to arrange a payment plan. Unpaid fees impact on the service's viability. Should the account remain unpaid following payment plan arrangements, your enrolment/position may be forfeited and the outstanding fee amount could result in being pursued via a debt collection agency. Any unpaid fees at the end of the year may impact any future enrolment applications.

Child Care Benefit (CCB)

The Commonwealth Department of Human Services (DHS) administer the CCB to assist families with the cost of child care. All eligible families can receive some CCB depending on their income and the number of children attending eligible services. **CCB will not be approved unless the child is immunised**, on an immunisation catch up schedule, or is exempt from the immunisation requirements. Details are available at:

www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit

Child Care Rebate (CCR)

The DHS will pay up to 50% of out of pocket child care expenses for approved child care, up to an annual limit per child, in addition to CCB. Families can elect to receive the payment directly to them or to the service. The preferred option is that the CCR is paid directly to the service to reduce weekly out of pocket expenses. All families will be eligible provided they have applied and are eligible for CCB. Further eligibility requirements and details are available at:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-rebate>

Emergency Contacts

In the case of any emergency involving your child where we are unable to contact you, educators will contact your nominated emergency contacts. When your child commences with our service you are required to provide emergency contact details. Please advise your contacts that they have been nominated and ensure that they are available to respond in case of an emergency. This person must produce current photo identification.

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the early childhood service of any change to this information in writing. Please ensure this is done promptly.

Contact Details

Lentara UnitingCare

Address:
413-419 Camp Road
Broadmeadows VIC 3047

Correspondence to:
PO Box 3217
Broadmeadows VIC 3047

Phone: 03 9351 3600

Fees

Phone: 03 9351 3600

Children's Services

Group Manager Children's Services: 03 9351 3600

Children's Services Managers: 03 9351 3600

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>

<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/contact-us>

Department of Education & Training regional office contact details

Quality Assessment and Regulation Division

Northern Region
PO Box 2141
Footscray VIC 3011

Ph. 8397 0372
E: nmr.qar@edumail.vic.gov.au

Western Region
PO Box 224
Footscray VIC 3011

Ph. 9275 7000
E: wmr.qar@edumail.vic.gov.au

Eastern Region
Level 3, 295 Springvale Rd
Glen Waverley VIC 3150

Ph.: 1300 651 940
E: emr.qar@edumail.vic.gov.au

Licensed Children's Services Enquiry Line

Ph. 1300 307 415

Lentara UnitingCare Services

Children's Services

Kindergartens and child care centres

Cooke Court Child Care Centre	Richmond
Ivanhoe Uniting Church Kindergarten	Ivanhoe
Kent Road Uniting Church Kindergarten	Pascoe Vale
Kookaburra Kindergarten	Reservoir
Melton Uniting Kindergarten	Melton
Merrilands Children's Centre and Kindergarten	Reservoir
Pascoe Vale South Uniting Church Kindergarten	Pascoe Vale
Roxburgh Park Community House and Children's Centre	Roxburgh Park
Rupert Street Child Care Centre and Kindergarten	Collingwood
St Andrews Sunbury Kindergarten	Sunbury
St Andrews Uniting Church Kindergarten (Fairfield)	Fairfield
Welwyn Kindergarten	Deer Park

Kindergarten Inclusion Support

Northern Region
Western Region

Preschool Field Officers

City of Banyule
City of Whittlesea
City of Melbourne
City of Maribyrnong
Shire of Nillumbik

Other

Asylum Seeker Project	Best Start Programs for Children
Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre	Bargain Centres
Communities for Children	Communal Justice Program
Integrated Family Services	Financial Counselling
No Interest Loans	Emergency Relief
Orana Care Leavers	Men's Shed

