Occasional Care Policy

Policy ID No. PO8/4676
**The Program**

Occasional care is a program funded and managed by the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD). The program is:

- A ‘now and then’ child care service for children prior to preschool age (generally up to 3 hours of care once per week)
- Operated from preschools and children’s centres in rural and metropolitan areas throughout South Australia
- Administered and funded by DECD and co-funded by parent fee contributions

Occasional care enables parents/caregivers to participate in activities, fulfill work commitments, keep appointments, or have a break from their children on an occasional basis.

**Priority of Access**

Priority of Access to occasional care sessions is based on:

- Children under the Guardianship of the Minister.
- Children at risk of serious abuse and neglect.
- Aboriginal and Torrens Strait Islander families
- Children in families which include a person with disability.
- Children with a disability and/or addition needs
- Children in socially isolated families

Where there are competing demands for Occasional Care places, the site leader will need to balance the priority guidelines with any difficulties the family may have in accessing other children’s services.

At least one place in each session must be retained for emergency or unplanned care needs.

Children may attend one occasional care session per week, unless the director deems there are special circumstances requiring additional sessions, or where the care places are not being utilised.

"Please note:"

Children at risk of serious abuse or neglect or children under the guardianship of the Minister are automatically eligible for two sessions of care per week.

Where a site leader determines that the needs of an individual child warrants an additional allocation, two sessions of care a week may be booked.

When offering unused care places staff should refer to the priority of access guidelines to ensure equity of access.

Families are not able to access full day occasional care except at the discretion of the director/site leader for an emergency situation only.
Occasional Care Booking Practice

Children may access one Occasional Care session per week, where demand permits. Emergency places must be preserved for emergency or unplanned care needs. This service can be accessed by children 2 years and over. Children turning 2 during a term may access the service on a casual basis or request a weekly/fortnightly booking if sessions are available after their second birthday.

Sessions may be booked for up to a term at a time provided:

- There is equitable access for all families in the community.
- The needs of current and new enrolments are reconsidered every term.
- A current enrolment form is completed for every child before attendance and any medical/health care concerns must be identified.
- All medical forms are completed and signed by the relevant medical practitioner for every child before attendance.

Children who have not been immunised may attend Occasional Care. However, all staff need to be aware of the appropriate actions in the case of an infectious illness (for example whooping cough or measles). Staff must be aware of maintaining a safe environment including any relevant exclusion periods.

Services are required to:

- use the Occasional Care Enrolment form created for the Early Years System (EYS).
- input all Occasional Care enrolments and attendances into the EYS.

All enrolled families are to be provided with an opportunity to indicate preference/s for care sessions prior to the commencement of each term. A booking process that will enable families to indicate session preferences for the following term will be implemented during the current term. A closing date for all forms to be received by the centre will be clearly identified.

To enable preferences to be considered:

- Staff will use the priority of access and equitability criteria to support the allocation of permanent bookings on a term by term basis.
- Families will be notified of session at the centre’s earliest opportunity.

Where supply exceeds demand (ie vacant places) children may attend more than one session a week. It should be noted that site session utilisation will be assessed on children accessing one session per
week. Accessibility to more than one session of care per week is to be through casual bookings only to allow for new enrolments to be accommodated during the term.

- Casual bookings may be made on the day from 8.30am (advanced casual bookings will not be taken).
- The availability of casual bookings may be influenced by fluctuating term bookings and cancellations.
- 1 place must be reserved for emergency care which may be accessed anytime during an Occasional Care session.
- If the centre is unable to provide a casual booking at the time of enquiry staff will take contact details & notify the family if a cancellation arises.
- New families enquiring about the Occasional Care Service will be provided with an Enrolment Package including copies of the relevant centre policies, The Information Booklet, enrolment/medical forms and session preference forms to be completed and returned to the centre prior to the child attending.

Occasional Care Fees

The Fees Schedules is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Group</th>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Fees to be charged for a session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In receipt of a health care card concession</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standard Fee</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Income evidence will be sighted at least once in a 12 month period and will be managed in a confidential manner at all times.
- Fees are to be charged on a sessional basis.
- Payment is to be made upon arrival.
- Non-payment on the day must be reconciled before the child attends the next session.

Sibling Fees

- Families with more than one child enrolled receive a 50% reduction of the fee for the second and any subsequent children attending in the same term.

Cancellation Practice

- Cancellation Notification must be made prior to or no later than 8-15am on the day.
- Cancellations may be made by leaving a message on the centre answering machine – 83897103.
- Calls after 8-15am may be considered a non cancellation.
- Prior notice of cancellations supports higher utilisation rates and wider community access.
- If the centre is not notified of non-attendance by 8-15am on the day full session fees may be charged and invoiced.
- Payment will be required and must be reconciled before the child attends the next session.

Programming in Occasional Care

Early Years Learning Framework
The Early Learning Framework (EYLF) is the nationally developed curriculum framework that guides Occasional Care Staff to plan for each child’s learning and development. The EYLF describes the principles, practices and outcomes to support and enhance young children’s learning.

Occasional Care planning and programming is
- Coordinated with the existing preschool program with a process for joint planning.
- Developed using a cycle of planning based on observations and reflections on children’s interests, needs and development.
- Development is monitored and reviewed as a play based program that is in keeping with EYLF.
- The use of indoor and outdoor learning environments, equipment and resources are managed in an integrated manner.

The Occasional Care Program is run by a qualified Early Childhood Worker Level 2 with a Diploma in Children’s Services or equivalent.