

CHILDREN'S SERVICES FAMILY HANDBOOK



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OFFICE HOURS
Monday -Friday 9:00am to 4:00pm

Children's Services

Mission Statement

The Emerald Community House Children's Services are a community based not for profit, licensed service. The programs are run by passionate, qualified early learning educators (staff) and managed by a volunteer committee.

The Aim Of The Service

The committee of management and childcare staff aim for a high quality, children's educational and care program. The service also aims to support parents and guardians as the primary care givers of children and to create and strengthen community connections for families.

Education and Care Program

Children attending the services are encouraged to reach their fullest potential by learning through a combination of play, exploration and directional teaching.

The Child Care and Kinder-Play programs are governed by the Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2009. The Out of School Hours care (OOSH) program is governed by the National Educational and Care Services Regulations. These Regulations and other relevant Legislation are available at our services for your perusal at any time.

Each session at the service is structured enough to maintain routine, but flexible enough to ensure many aspects of the day are initiated by the children themselves. Educators work to actively assist each child in developing a positive sense of belonging and the ability to make and maintain good friendships with their peers.

Educators

The committee of management is proud to employ qualified, friendly, creative and involved educators for the children's services programs. The educators have on-going access to support and relevant training, along with funding and resources, in order for the programs to run at the highest quality.

Policies and Procedures

The service has a number of policies designed to ensure that children are cared for in a safe and quality environment, and that the program remains viable. These policies are developed by the committee of management in consultation with educators, children and families. They are subject to regular review, and involvement from parents and community members is highly encouraged.

Many of the policies and procedures are outlined in this handbook. Other policies and procedures relating to the operation of the service and program, are available for perusal at the Community House.

Anytime you have a question, suggestion or concern regarding the policies, procedures or any matter concerning the children's services programs, you are invited to speak to an educator, the Childcare Coordinator, Emerald Community House Coordinator or alternatively, address correspondence to the Emerald Community House Committee of Management.

If you would like to play a more active role in the development of policies and procedures, you might consider joining our Committee of Management. Nominations for new committee members are held at our General Meeting each year (April - May).



Access to Children's Services

According to availability, childcare places, are provided for parents/guardians who require care during their working hours or in the case of Child Care and Kidsplay programs, may wish for further education and social play for their child.

Due to the demand of the services, families are asked to communicate with an educator as soon as possible if they wish to change, increase, decrease or cease the care arrangements for their child.

Anaphylaxis and Allergy Policy

Anaphylaxis is a severe, life threatening allergic reaction and up to 2% of the entire population is at risk. The most common causes in children are eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, cows milk, stinging insects, and some drugs.

Emerald Community House Childcare regard the risk of allergic reaction or anaphylactic shock as extremely important. Educators all undertake ongoing training in First Aid and Anaphylaxis Management and are confident in administering medications when necessary. Children at risk must have an 'Anaphylaxis or Allergy Management Plan' signed by a Doctor with a current photograph and all medications must be at the service each time the child attends. OOSH children also need a Risk Management plan formulated between parents and educators.

Asthma Policy

Australia has a very high record of childhood asthma, with 1 in 4 children being diagnosed by a doctor and requiring some form of an asthma management plan.

Although many children may only have mild asthma, it is also possible that an Asthma attack can be severe and even deadly.

If your child has asthma, it is essential that an 'Asthma Management Plan' is provided to the service. This plan must be written by your child's doctor and medication must be provided every time the child attends the service. Educators all undertake ongoing training in First Aid and Asthma management and are confident in administering Asthma medications when necessary. OOSH children also need a Risk Management plan formulated between parents and educators.



Behavior Guidance

At Emerald Community House we promote a positive and safe environment where children can play and learn, have a sense of belonging and can develop a true sense of identity.

Educators understand that parents/guardians are the immediate and most important carers for their children and will work with families to help the child develop positive behaviours, language and the skills needed to interact with peers.

Prevention

The programs offer a well designed and well equipped environment tailored to the interests and developmental levels of the children. It aims to prevent frustration, interruption and hazards. It offers a good blend of adult and child initiated play, busy areas for active play plus smaller, private areas for quieter play. The routine gives children a chance for independence but also ensures they are being included in all aspects of the program with as little waiting time as possible.

Positive Redirection

Wherever possible, positive behaviour is praised and negative or undesirable behaviour is ignored. Depending on the age and understanding of the child, an educator will let them know that the behaviour is not appropriate and assist them to find an alternative play area or activity.

Modelling

Behaviour guidance is a continual part of every day at the service, regardless of whether good or negative behaviour is occurring. Educators always model excellent behaviour, language and interactions with adults and children attending the service. It is hoped that families help with this process by doing the same at the service and at home.

Limit Setting

We have a few clear and simple rules that we expect children to follow. Educators guide children to learn and follow these rule so that they understand the reasons behind their importance:

We care for each other, our equipment/toys and our environment

We use language that is kind towards others; offensive and negative language will not be tolerated.

Bullying of any type will not be tolerated.

We respect ourselves, our peers, educators and members of the community who are visiting the service.

Your Responsibilities

If your child is showing behaviour at home that is negative or otherwise concerning to you, please take the time to discuss it with one of the educators. It is important that you inform us of the steps you are taking to overcome issues so that a consistent approach can be managed whilst at care.

If Negative Behaviour is Ongoing

Children face many challenges as they are growing, developing and learning to be a part of their world. Sometimes it is important for educators and families to develop an 'action plan' that will help the child redirect their behaviour or learn skills that will help them be included in their environment.

If at any time educators have a concern, the Children's Services Coordinator will arrange a meeting with the parents/guardians to discuss, construct and implement an 'action plan'. This is a positive step to helping the child develop and learn, not something to be ashamed or scared of. If needed or requested, families may be referred to specialists for additional assistance.

Childcare Benefits

Childcare Benefits

Emerald Community House Childcare is a registered care provider with the DEECD, (Registered Carer Number 321 994 259V).

Parents/guardians using the service to assist with care for their children so they can attend work or study may be able to claim the minimum amount of the Childcare benefit through the Family Assistance Office.

Parents/guardians wishing to apply for benefits must ring 136 150 or visit a Family Assistance Office to check eligibility and gain information about the process for making and receiving claims.

Please note: The full Childcare benefit cannot be claimed as the program is not an *Approved Long Day Care Service*. We are classified as an *Occasional Care Service* as we do not operate full time (8 hours a day, 5 days a week, 48 weeks a year).

OOSH Benefits

Child Care Benefit Rebates may be arranged by contacting the family assistance office by telephoning 131272. It is the parent/guardians responsibility to provide the correct details on the enrolment form in order for the Rebates to be processed. The services reference numbers needed for communication with the Family Assistance Office are:

BEFORE SCHOOL CARE - 555 008 340 J
AFTER SCHOOL CARE - 555 008 058 T

Clothing Requirements for Young Children

Parents/guardians are kindly asked to dress their children in appropriate clothing.

- Children often participate in “messy” play and craft so need to wear their play outfits!
- Children need to run, roll and climb. Please have children wear clothing that are comfortable and flexible.
- Children who are toilet training need to learn to undo and take off clothing quickly and easily. Please dress children in clothing without lots of zips, buttons and hooks, they are too tricky.
- Children need to be protected from the sun, please dress children in Sun Smart clothing in warmer months (see Sun Smart policy in this handbook).
- Children need to play outside, even when it is cold in winter! Please provide children with a warm jumper, socks and pants and bring along a warm jacket and beanie.

Course Care - Childcare

Parents/guardians enrolled and attending a course at Emerald Community House may take a position for their child in the childcare program. Limited places are available; please enquire when enrolling in a course. Enrolment and payment of fees are the same as occasional and permanent bookings.

Duty Of Care

The Emerald Community House Childcare Program is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children, staff, families and visitors. Families expect that their children will be reasonably protected from foreseeable risks of danger, major illness and injury whilst they are in care.

Families are asked to understand that due to the nature of children’s play, some small incidents and illnesses are bound to occur. Educators will remain empathetic, supportive and understanding at times of illness or accidental injury and immediate notice will be given to parents/guardians.

It is the service’s commitment to:

- Maintain staff ratios according to the appropriate Regulations
- Maintain equipment and premises in compliance with safety standards
- Store all equipment and materials securely and safely
- Use recommended cleaning materials and techniques
- Ensure excellent supervision of children at all times
- Respond to concerns from parents or visitors in regards to safety of children and educators
- Seek feedback from children, families and educators and participate in regular reviews to assist in the development and continuous improvement of the

Enrolment

Enrolment forms are available at the Emerald Community House or please download and print from www.emeraldcommunityhouse.org.au

It is vital that the entire enrolment form is correctly filled out before your child can attend a session at the service. A copy of current vaccination records and a \$15 membership fee for the House are also required.

Payment of Fees

To assist the Emerald Community House office in the efficient and accurate processing of fees, payments are to be made at the office by cash, EFTPOS, or by direct deposit. Invoices and receipts will be issued by the office.

To make a direct debit, please ensure you enter your child's surname and "OCC" for Childcare or "OOSH" for Out of School Care as the description of your payment. This will assist office staff to allocate your payment correctly. We remind you that an administration fee will be charged to research any payments not specifically identified as described above.

BSB: 063 842 Account no: 1009 3095

Child Care Fees

The cost of the Emerald Community House Childcare Program is as follows:

Whole day program	9.30am - 2.30pm	\$40
Tuesday Kidz Play	9.30am - 2.30pm	\$45

Payment for permanent sessions is due either in advance or week by week. All booked days must be paid for even if they are not attended. If payment is not made, the family will receive one week's notice and a payment plan may be arranged. If the fees remain owing then the child's enrolment may be cancelled and filled by the next family on the waiting list.

Occasional care arrangements may be made up to one week in advance and payment is required at the start of the session.

Our Childcare is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday 9.30am - 2.30pm.

OOSH Fees

The cost of the OOSH Program is as follows and includes breakfast until 8:15am and afternoon tea.

Morning	6.30am - 9.00am	\$18.00 per child
Afternoon	3.30pm - 6.30pm	\$20.00 per child

Payment for permanent sessions are due either in advance or week by week. All permanently booked sessions must be paid for even if they are not attended. If payment is not made, the family will receive one week's notice and a payment plan may be arranged. If the fees remain owing then the child's enrolment may be cancelled and filled by the next family on the waiting list.

Health and Illness

Health and Illness Policy

At all times, educators work to minimise the risk to adults and children from exposure to infectious diseases whilst attending the service. Common colds and runny noses are a part of being a child and are actually very important in providing a good immune system for the child. Due to the nature of how children play it is common for illnesses to spread quickly, educators kindly ask families to assist with managing the spread:

- Any child who is unwell and cannot attend the service at their normal ability must remain home to recover. If a child is sent to care ill or becomes ill whilst in care, educators will contact the family and it is expected that the child will be picked up as soon as possible. Educators will ensure the child comforted and able to rest quietly in a designated area until they are picked up.
- If a child is diagnosed with an infectious illness by a doctor, parents/guardians must notify staff as soon as possible. Many communicable illnesses/diseases require a minimum exclusion time set by the Health Department. The list of these exclusion times is available at the service.



Medication

The Emerald Community House regards the responsibility of administering medication very seriously. Educators are conscientious to follow medical instructions to avoid negative side effects of improper use of medication and in ensuring that children receive ongoing care for medical conditions.

- Parents/guardians must provide details of the child's Doctor so that they may be contacted in the event of a medical emergency.
- All medication must be handed to an educator and will be stored appropriately. Educators will assist parents/guardians to fill out a form that gives authorisation to an educator to administer the medication.
- All medication must be provided within its original, labelled container.
- Any child who is deemed by the educator to be too unwell may be asked not to attend the session until better (regardless if medication is supplied).

Childcare Snack/Lunchbox Policy

The Emerald Community House promotes healthy eating for a healthy lifestyle and to lower the risk of anaphylaxis and allergies. It is important that families assist us by providing appropriate snacks and lunches for their children.

The following foods are NOT allowed in snack/lunch boxes:

- Lollies, chocolates and sweets of any description
- Nuts and nut products which includes, peanuts, almonds, hazelnuts and any other tree nuts. Peanut butter and hazelnut spread (Nutella), oils, dips, cakes, biscuits and muesli bars containing nuts.

You may pack the following for a healthy snack/lunch:

- Cut fruit and vegetable sticks
- Sandwich with vegemite, cheese, meats or salad
- Cheese sticks or yogurt
- Sultanas, dried fruits or fruit cups.

Please store your child's snack/lunch in a small clearly labelled lunch box. Staff will stack them in the fridge to ensure they are kept fresh. Every child must also have a named drink bottle filled with fresh clean water.

OOSH Snack Policy

The Emerald Community House provide breakfast (until 8.15am) and afternoon tea with a variety of healthy eating options, so, there is not a need for children to bring snacks. Please advise us if there is any special dietary needs for your child.

Sun Smart

The Emerald Community House promotes safe practices regarding exposure to the sun. The service follows recommendations from Sun Smart Australia which includes the following:

- Children and educators are required to wear a named, appropriate hat when playing outside during the first and fourth terms. The hat (provided by the family) cannot be a cap, it must be either wide brimmed or a legionnaire style that completely covers the child's ears, face and neck. If necessary, the child may borrow a Childcare supplied hat.
- Clothing must be appropriate and cover the majority of the child's body. Small singlet straps and tank tops are not allowed. If necessary, the child may be re-dressed in Childcare supplied clothes for outdoor play.
- Children should come to the program wearing a good covering of sunscreen. Staff will apply more sunscreen to the child's exposed skin at least 20 minutes before outdoor play. OOSH children need to bring their own sunscreen and if help is needed for application educators will provided this.
- Outdoor play is limited to before 11am on days when the UV index is above 3.
- The Emerald Community House will ensure the yard has appropriate shaded areas for play, including the shade cloth covering the sand pit.
- Children are encouraged to drink a good amount of water during the day to ensure they do not become dehydrated. On very hot days play may not occur outside or staff may encourage less vigorous activities.

The Emerald Community House has developed a Policy & Procedure Manual covering all aspects of the Children's services. You can request to view this at any time by asking the Childcare Coordinator. We welcome your feedback about our service at any time.



WeatherSmarts Program

In accordance to State Government Regulations for all Licensed Childcare Centres and ECH Emergency Plan, it is our ECH Policy that parents attend a WeatherSmarts Program if their children are attending any of our childcare programs, including occasional childcare and out of school hours care.

ECH is the only local childcare facility open on Total Fire Ban days and as such we take responsibility seriously for your children in accordance with our emergency policy, bushfire plan and in accordance with State Government Regulations for all Licensed Childcare Centres.

Emerald is in one of the highest bushfire risk areas in the world. ECH greatly appreciates your co-operation in the protection of your children and family during bushfire season. ECH 's innovative policy is recognised by Department of Premier and Cabinet as a resilience building policy that inspires other communities to take responsibility for where they choose to live and work.

<http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/featured/victorian-emergency-management-reform-white-paper/emerald-house-building-community-resilience-to-disasters>

Check with staff for the next WeatherSmarts Program

During bushfire danger season, we wish to remind families that ECH will not open on extreme or code red days. The policy direction from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is closure of all childcare centres on code red days.

ECH is not required to issue any refunds on extreme or code red days as this designation is out of our control. In the event of a local emergency, the Government will cover the cost of fees as an additional absent day whether you have used the 42 initial absent days for your family or not.

Parents must keep informed of fire weather warnings in advance of an Extreme or Code Red Day and activate their own bushfire plans accordingly. Please check the CFA website www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 to check the fire danger rating and warnings for the Central Region.

Please note ECH are closed on Extreme & Code Red days