

# Priority of Access

## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

**SHARE** understands that for families, enrolling their child into Outside School Hours Care can be an important priority. However, the demand for Outside School Hours Care sometimes exceeds the number of places **SHARE** is approved for and there may be a waiting list to manage family demands. When this happens, **SHARE** will comply with the Australian Government 'Priority of Access Guidelines' to ensure places are allocated to families with the greatest need for child care support. These Guidelines will be strictly adhered to and failure to meet these Guidelines is a breach of the conditions of continued approval for receiving Child Care Subsidy.

The guidelines will be used during enrolment, when there is a waiting list for our service, or when a number of parents are applying for a limited number of vacant places.

## **PROCEDURES:**

### **a) The Priority of Access Guidelines**

- Families will be advised about the Priority of Access Guidelines when they enroll their children in our service. Families will also have access to a copy of this policy.

The Priority of Access Guidelines are set out in the *Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000*.

The Guidelines apply to Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Outside School Hours Care and In-Home Care services. Failure to meet these Guidelines is a breach of the conditions of continued approval and may result in a service being sanctioned under the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*.

### **Priorities for filling vacant places**

The Priority of Access Guidelines must be used by approved services to allocate available child care places where there are more families requiring care than places available.

When filling vacant places, a service must fill them according to the following priorities:

- **Priority 1** – a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- **Priority 2** – a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work, training, study test
- **Priority 3** – any other child.

Within these main Priority categories, priority should also be given to children in:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- families which include a disabled person
- families which include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the lower income threshold of **\$43,727 for 2015-2016** or who or whose partner is on income support
- families from a non-English speaking background
- socially isolated families
- single parent families.

Note: Where a service is funded by an employer to provide child care solely or primarily for the children of the employer's employees, the service may give priority to those children.

### **Requiring a child to vacate a place**

Under the Priority of Access Guidelines, a child care service may require a Priority 3 child only to vacate a place to make room for a higher priority child. The service can only do so if:

- the person liable for the payment of the child care fees was notified when the child first entered care that the service followed this policy, and
- **the service gives the person at least 14 days' notice of the requirement for the child to vacate the place.**

**Outside School Hours Care**

Outside School Hours Care is primarily for school children. Where an Outside School Hours Care Service has no vacant places and is providing care for a child who has not yet started school, the service may require that child to leave the service in order to provide a place for a school child.

- When **SHARE** has no vacant places and is providing care for a child who is Priority 3 under the Guidelines, the service may require that child to leave the service in order to make room for a child with a higher priority. However, this can only happen if our service:
  - a) Notified the family that our service follows the Priority of Access Guidelines and this Policy when their child first entered care at our service, and
  - b) Gives the family at least 14 days' notice of the need for their child to vacate their place.
- When considering enrolments for the following school year, the service will consider the physical space and accept enrolments ensuring compliance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations and Law is maintained.
- If proposed enrolments exceed the current physical space, **SHARE** will investigate access to additional space. If suitable additional physical space cannot be secured, **SHARE** will place a cap on the number of enrolments and once that cap is reached a waiting list will be established. Families will be made aware of this process.

**CONSIDERATIONS:**

Education and care Services National Regulations	National Quality Standard	Other Service policies/ documentation	Other
108, 157	6.1.1, 6.3.3, 7.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment and Orientation Policy</li> <li>• Confidentiality policy</li> <li>• Management of complaints policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Care Subsidy (Eligibility of Child Care Services Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000.</li> <li>• Child Care Service Handbook. Section 6 Service Delivery (6.3 Priority of access).</li> <li>• Family Assistance Act 1999.</li> </ul>

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:**

**Approval date: . Date for Review:**