Holland Park Child Care Centre

Diversity and Equity Policy

Reviewed by Management/Staff and Families Jan 2011
Qorshaha shareja bulshoda

Holland Park Child Care Centre believes that listening to children and staff encouraging them to share information about their families and ways of life, will assist them in learning to respect and value the diversity that exists within our world. The centre believes that once children, families and staff can view differences in a positive way they will naturally begin to show empathy for others and their environment.

Links to CCQA Principles:
Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QAIS)

Policy Statement

"Holland Park Child Care Centre is a workplace committed to ensuring that the work environment is free from discrimination and harassment."

The centre will not tolerate under any circumstances discrimination, workplace bullying or harassment and is a strong advocate in promoting a workforce where staff are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who breaches this policy.

The centre in making a commitment for eliminating discrimination and harassment aims to:

- Implement training and awareness raising strategies to ensure all employees know their rights and responsibilities.
- Provide effective procedures for complaints based on the principles of natural justice.
- Guarantee protection from victimisation or reprisals.
- Encourage reporting of behaviour which breaches the discrimination and harassment policy.

Discrimination or Harassment is defined as: a person who is discriminated against or harassed because of:

- Their race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, as defined under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- Their sex, marital status, pregnancy as defined under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984.
- Their disability as defined under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- Their age as defined under the Age Discrimination Act 2004.

Responsibility for ensuring workplace harassment and discrimination does not occur within the centre is EVERYONE’S responsibility.
The purpose of the Diversity and Equity policy is to:

- Ensure that all persons are treated equitably and with a level of mutual respect;
- Reduce bias and prejudice;
- Develop a range of practices and guidelines that actively counteract bias or prejudice;
- Promote inclusive practices;
- Encourage all children, families, staff, management, volunteers and visitors to communicate respectfully and fairly; and
- Avoid stakeholders making comparisons between children, families, staff, their backgrounds abilities or additional needs.

The centre’s environment treats and respects people equally regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, race, language, beliefs, additional needs and family structure or lifestyle.

The centre does not tolerate behaviour, language or practices that label, stereotype or demean others. The centre recognises and values the differences and similarities that exist in children, families, staff, management, volunteers and the wider community.

Strategies and Practices

Children and Families

Holland Park encourages all children to participate in the social structures of the centre and will not segregated anyone from activities for linguistic, intellectual, physical or religious reasons unless requested by a parent/guardian.

We will communicate and interact positively with all children, regardless of background and incorporate experiences that show that such differences are valued. We will attempt to include individual experiences for non-English speaking backgrounds and will endeavour to consult with all families about the care of each child. We will encourage parents to participate in the centre and share some aspects of their lifestyle with the children and staff.

Identifying and Supporting Individual Needs

Additional needs is a broad term of reference and can include children and families with:

- Intellectual or cognitive delay;
- Language requirements, which can include diagnosed medical conditions that delay speech development, such as oral or verbal dyspraxia;
- Specific medical conditions, such as Asthma, Diabetes, Anaphylaxis or Cystic Fibrosis;
- Child rearing practices that differ to the centre’s practices. These include belief systems regarding gender roles in play, independence, self-help skills, behaviour guidance and nutritional needs;
- Diverse family lifestyles and structures; and
- Emotional needs resulting from trauma, abuse or grief. For example the death of a family member or friend, family displacement due to war or refugee status, domestic violence, family members suffering from depression; or separation or divorce.

Enrolling families and children into the service
Families and children will complete an enrolment package with the Director. At this stage the centre will determine if additional support will be required for the family. Links can be made with external support agencies for: children with additional needs, families who have English as a second language or low literacy levels.

* The centre’s staff may assist with translating information. They will assist the centre in making signs and posters in language other than English.

* During the enrolment process the centre and families will work through a checklist of information to assist with the evaluation of this process. This form includes the following points:
  - Centre tour
  - Parent Handbook
  - Fee structure
  - Bond payment
  - Staff qualification and introduction.
  - Management structure
  - What to bring
  - FACSIA Information
  - Immunisation
  - Programming
  - Medication policy
  - Drop off and pick up policy
  - Priority of access policy
  - Contacts
  - Absence from the centre
  - Bus permission if necessary

During orientation the centre staff will note the child’s temperament, note if the child has been in care before. If there were any difficulties in communicating with the child and their family, how can this been improved before the next orientation visit?

Settling children and families into the service

* Families are encouraged to visit several times before their child attends for their first booked day.
* Staff will feedback to parents on their first day, the centre strongly recommends that the child’s first days be shorter to reassure the child that their parents/caregiver will return.

Staff/Carers, students and volunteers

Selection and recruitment

The centre will not discriminate against a staff member on the following grounds:

* **Ability**: physical, mental or emotional capabilities.
* **Age**: the state of being old or young.
* **Appearance**: one’s height or size, scars or distinctive markings.
* **Beliefs**: strong convictions which can include religious, spiritual and political convictions.
Holland Park
Child Care Centre

Class: distinctions based on social and economic values. This can include elements that determine a person's class such as occupation, education, type of housing, clothing and transportation.

Culture: the way of life shared by members of the same group. Culture includes language, religious beliefs, celebrations, customs and ways of thinking that reflect how one acts towards others.

Family Composition: family structure, including how many and their assigned roles.

Gender: the state of being male or female and the roles associated with being either.

Race: distinctions made of people who share common origin, skin colour, hair, facial features or body structure.

Sexuality: One’s sexual preference and orientation.

Please refer to the service’s Employment of Child Care Professionals Policy.

The centre is committed to developing diverse and equitable partnerships with stakeholders. This may be achieved through:

- professional development and training opportunities;
- informal discussions with staff/carers about their values and beliefs when reviewing the service’s philosophy statement;
- inviting support agencies to work with staff/carers and the service to discuss equity and inclusion concepts and issues; and
- inviting members of the community from diverse backgrounds to discuss their personal experiences of prejudices and biased behaviour.

Please note: There is often an assumption that culture is identifiable by difference in race or language. This restricts the definition of ‘culture’, which is widely regarded to encompass religion, family lifestyle and structure. It is important for staff/carers to develop an understanding that extends beyond preconceived or traditional stereotypes, which can be addressed through professional development opportunities.

For example, consider the words ‘tradition’, ‘custom’, ‘worship’ and ‘way of life’ - these are words often used to define culture; apply those same key words to a family who are devoted fans of a football team. The family has a way of life where it is their custom to support and worship their football team; it is their custom to attend the football matches every weekend; and they practice certain traditions, such as wearing the team’s colours. The family unit has created a system based on a common belief (support for the football team) and a significant event (the football match). Race or language has not played a part in defining the family’s culture; however a cultural belief still exists.

When culture is considered in these broader contexts, services can actively demonstrate how they can support the diversity and equity of children, families, staff and the local community.

Management
Non-compliance of the Diversity and Equity Policy:

Making a complaint about Sex, Race, Disability and Age Discrimination can be investigated by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) when an employee has followed
Holland Park
Child Care Centre

the internal complaints procedures and feels that the matter has not been successfully resolved.

Step 1. HREOC hotline is 1300 656 419 and a complaint form will be sent to you.

Step 2. Making a complaint is free and does not require legal advice. A complaint must be put in writing to the commission and lodged via fax, email or posted.

Step 3. A HREOC officer will contact the organisation provide them with details of the complaint and ask any relevant questions. HREOC will then decide to conciliate or terminate the complaint.

Step 4. If the matter is to be terminated then HREOC will talk to you and explain why.

Step 5. The matter may involve conciliation which means the matter will try to be resolved. The outcome of conciliation may include: an apology, policy changes, compensation and / or staff training.

Step 6. If the complaint is not resolved you have the option of then taking the matter to court. However for this you will need legal advice and to engage a lawyer.
Please refer to the service's Grievances and Complaints Management Policy.

Anti-bullying practices and guidelines

Workplace Bullying is defined as 'the repeated less favourable treatment of a person by another in the workplace.' It includes:

- Physical or verbal abuse
- Yelling, screaming or offensive language
- Excluding or isolating employees
- Intimidation
- Assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to the job
- Giving employees impossible jobs
- Deliberately changing work rosters to inconvenience employees
- Undermining work performance by deliberately withholding information vital to effective work performance.

Compliance with legislation and equal opportunity requirements

- The centre acknowledges the following pieces of legislation in supporting this policy:
  - Age Discrimination Act 2004
  - Disability Discrimination Act 1992
  - Occupational Health and Safety Act
  - Privacy Act 1988
  - Racial Discrimination Act 1975
  - Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Communication with different stakeholders

Children

- Children will be naturally inquisitive regardless of gender, skin colour or physically disabilities. During this learning children may need a lot of help sorting out their experiences and variables of identity as they journey on their path to self awareness.
- The centre will provide an environment that is rich in possibilities for exploring the social constructions of gender, culture, race, language, lifestyles and additional needs. There should be images in abundance of all children and their families, images reflecting people's current daily lives and social and recreational activities; books and puzzles that
depict images of men and women doing “jobs in the home” and “jobs outside”; show men and women doing blue collar work, pink collar work and white collar work; images of elderly people doing activities, as well as differently abled people of various backgrounds. These materials should be found in all curriculum areas of the room:

- Book Corner
- Home Corner
- Language areas
- Self help trolleys
- Art materials
- Manipulative area
- Music

* Interactions between teachers and children may teach gender, racial and physical biases even without deliberate attempt. As staff we need to be aware of the opportunities that children have to analyse resource and media representations of bias, prejudice, similarities and differences.
* What questions are asked of children that challenge biases and facilitate an understanding about diversity and equity?
* How are children's questions about bias answered by staff, students and volunteers?

Families

* Teaching from an anti-bias perspective means seeking to respect and support each child's and parent's background and abilities.
* The centre encourages staff members to communicate genuinely with parents and establish safe settings for parents to discuss with each other the issues raised by anti-bias work and increase their ability to integrate anti bias perspectives in childrearing. For example, grandparents, cousins, aunt and uncles may live in the one home and this can influence the way families communicate with the service.

Female role models in Aboriginal communities are often called ‘aunty’ even if there is no genetic relationship. Children from Indigenous families may have several aunties who are highly respected and may have the same cultural rights as parents, in relation to child-rearing and behaviour guidance. This could affect the service's policies on medication authorisation or the disclosure of confidential information.

* Staff and parents may at times find themselves faced with differences of opinions on anti-bias perspectives "If I knew you enrolled disabled children I would never have enrolled my child" or "My dad say women are stupid" In this situation the centre and staff may take the following steps:
  - Talk with the parents who disagree and explore their concerns further. These discussions may be enough to resolve the issue.
  - Inform parents in writing about the issue and call a parent meeting to discuss the issue.
  - Structure the meeting so the parent's point is clearly stated and the difference of viewpoint is fully expressed.
  - Inform parents of the solutions reached at the meeting or the lack of solution for the time being. If necessary schedule a further meeting.
  - Follow through with the anti-bias activities or procedures and feedback to parents as to how it went.
The centre will to the best of its ability implement parent home practices or family beliefs unless they contravene the Child Care Act or Regulations, centre practices or values.

Staff

* It is important that services acknowledge and respect differences and similarities by ensuring that play and learning experiences are child-focused, relevant and meaningful. Placing token values on differences and assuming that one interpretation of a culture, race or lifestyle represents everyone from that background, is not a sign of diversity and equity. It makes an assumption about the lives of individuals or groups of people, which may not be a true reflection of who they are. This type of assumption emphasises difference and diverts attention away from the similarities between people.

* For example, people in other countries may assume that all Australians have held a koala. This places a token value on what people perceive as being the normal Australian lifestyle or experience. Likewise, assuming that a child from an Asian ethnicity knows how to use chopsticks places a token value and assumption on the child's lifestyle and history, before seeking information from the family.

* Similarly, organising one-off 'cultural celebration days' where children are exposed to cultural signs and symbols that they are not exposed to on any other day, limits children's experiences. Services should aim to create environments where people of different backgrounds are considered equal to others, and therefore their culture is celebrated every day.

* Staff will ensure they respect the opinions of each family regardless of whether they agree or disagree. Staff will
  o interact with children, families and peers equitably and respectfully;
  o discuss with children evidence of biased and prejudiced behaviours and practices;
  o actively monitor their responses and behaviours towards biases;
  o use language that promotes equity;
  o encourage empathy and fairness towards others;
  o challenge stereotypes that promote prejudicial and biased behaviours and practices;
  o counteract biased or prejudicial behaviour and practices;
  o avoid making comparisons between children, families, staff/carers;
  o identify scenarios or situations that may create acts of prejudice or bias;
  o use their diverse life experiences to contribute to and enhance the program and environment; and
  o support and encourage children to be fair and respectful of others.

Staff, students and volunteers as role models

* Children learn through example and modelling is an important way to teach children about the values that support diversity and equity. Staff are important role models in guiding and educating all stakeholders in relation to diverse and equitable behaviours and
practices. Children also learn from modelling and staff/carers, students and volunteers need to be aware that their actions, language, gestures and behaviours may communicate biased or prejudiced opinions or feelings.

Management

- Management will provide training on anti-bias policies and procedures, they will source information that challenges staff and their thinking in order to promote growth and learning.
- Management will develop and maintain policies and procedures that encourage equity and adversity.

External support agencies

- The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)\(^1\) funded by the DEEWR may be a useful starting place for services when developing a network of external support agencies.

Experiences

Diverse and equitable experiences encourage stakeholders to question their own belief systems and the values that they place on people of different backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles. The centre has adopted key Anti-bias goals which include:

**Positive Self-Concept-**

- Fosters positive self concept and sense of self.
- Labels feelings and emotions
- Helps others
- Demonstrates pride in accomplishment
- Understands relation to one’s family
- Tries new experiences
- Works co-operatively
- Able to be a group member
- Copes with change
- Demonstrates empathy

**Mutual Respect-**

- Respects other cultures, races, and beliefs
- Values self and the uniqueness of others
- Respects gender and ability equity

\(^1\) IPSP can provide telephone advice, online support and resources, training opportunities, resources such as factsheets, training information, and referral to appropriate agencies for further advice and information. Please refer to the ‘Sources and further reading’ list.
Holland Park
Child Care Centre

* Sees things from others perspectives
* Examines alternatives
* Is open minded

**Understanding Similarities and Differences- Active Observing and Listening.**

* Identifies similarities and differences
* Listens to others
* Constructs relationships and draw conclusions
* Notices fair and unfair Behaviour
* Solves problems
* Gathers information
* Demonstrates an inquiring attitude
* Makes inferences

(Hall 1999 updated April 2007)

**Effective planned experiences:**

* provide an opportunity for the service to detail how diversity and equity are reflected in children's individual and group experiences;
* discuss the common values, concerns and triumphs that are shared among people;
* reflect the diversity of children's families and lifestyles, and encourage children to explore, experiment and question the culture they live in;
* encourage services to identify how differences and similarities can be embraced and respected through play and learning experiences;
* identify different resources, materials and external agencies accessed by the service to support, guide and strengthen the provision of equitable and inclusive experiences; and
* encourage children to broaden their understanding of different groups of people in their local community and society.

**Areas of focus for experiences can include:**

* cultural diversity;
* language and bilingualism, including non-verbal and written language. Services may also decide to include elements of sign language;
* gender role differences and similarities;
* family lifestyles;
* festivities and celebrations;
* identification and discussion of prejudice and bias experiences; and
* the development of critical and analytical thinking.

**Routines**

Routines can include: rest and sleep, clothing and comfort, nappy changing, toileting and mealtimes.

* Staff are encouraged to reflect on how some cultures and families place minimal value on children developing self-help skills at a young age, such as dressing, toileting and packing away toys. While a service may determine that is it developmentally appropriate, this
may be in conflict with cultural beliefs which place unfair expectations on the child’s ability to succeed.

* Staff should encourage families to engage in open, honest conversations during the enrolment and orientation process to determine if there may be potential differences in expectations and develop strategies to communicate needs that can be resolved positively and effectively.

Policy review

* The service will review the Diversity and Equity Policy and guidelines every 12 months.
* Families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review the policy and procedures.

Procedures

The following are examples of procedures that the service may employ as part of its daily practices.

* Examples:
  * Employee induction procedure.
  * Enrolling new children and families into care.
  * Orientating external support agency staff.
  * Planning and evaluating play and learning experiences for individuals or groups of children.
  * Policy development and review procedure.
  * Procedure for non-compliance of the Diversity and Equity Policy and procedures by a:
    o child;
    o staff/carer;
    o family member;
    o student/volunteer; or
    o visitor.
  * Student and volunteer induction procedure.

Links to other policies

* Behaviour guidance
* Child protection
* Clothing and comfort
* Employment of child care professionals
* Enrolment of new children and families to the service
* Grievances and complaints management
* Healthy eating
* Occupational health and safety
* Rest and sleep
* Staff/carers as role models
* Supporting children’s individual health needs

Sources and further reading


Legislative Acts

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Privacy Act 1988
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

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