

	Policy Title: Access, Equity and Inclusion Policy		
	Originated: August 23, 2010	Review Date: November 2016	Approval Date: November 14, 2016
	Approved by: Board of Directors	Last Revision: March 2013	Application: All Employees, students, volunteers and visitors

Purpose

Dandy Lion Daycare Centre (“the Centre”) is committed to promoting accessible, equitable and inclusive practices to meet the childcare needs of children and their families.

Policy Statement

Accessibility, equity and inclusion serve as a foundation towards childcares services at the Centre for all children and their families without discrimination based on ability, age, ancestry, country of origin, creed, disability, gender, ethnic origin, family composition, marital status, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

Definitions

Accessibility – for the purposes of this policy, accessibility refers to the opportunity for families and their children to fully participate in Centre-based programs

Equity – refers to fair and impartial practice

Inclusion – “...children of all abilities have equal access to and participate meaningfully in child care programs”¹

Special Needs – “children who, due to emotional, familial, physical, behavioural, developmental, cognitive, communicative or emotional factors, are at risk of not maximizing their potential”²

Special Needs Resource Staff – “staff that are funded by the City of Toronto to support licenced child care programs for the provision of providing consultation, training, referral, case coordination transitional support and advocacy”³

Guiding Principles

The foundation of this policy is based on core principles of accessibility, equity and inclusion that are embedded in all aspects of the Centre’s programs. The Centre believes:

- Every child is unique whose individuality will be respected and encouraged
- Every child and their family has the right to privacy and dignity

¹ http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/pubs/writing_inclusion_policy_aug_2009_en.pdf

² Inclusion: Policy Development Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Programs, 2007

³ Inclusion: Policy Development Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Programs, 2007

- All children bring value to the Centre's programs
- Children are supported best through collaboration
- Children learn best when they are able to participate with others who have different goals and abilities
- Parents/guardians are integral to a successful inclusion process
- Strong working relationships between the Centre and families will assist in the growth of children's developmental needs
- Children and their families will be supported by the Centre through working with community partners offering specialized services, if needed
- Program delivery is reflective of changing and varying needs of children and their families
- Programs are delivered by Centre employees that demonstrate flexibility in their approach
- The Centre is supportive of ongoing professional development for all employees

Procedures

Human Resources

The Centre's hiring process of employees supports the Centre's *Access, Equity and Inclusion Policy*. All employees of the Centre understand and agree to support the Centre's inclusive practices as outlined in the policy. It is also a requirement to review this and all other Centre policies on an annual basis.

The Centre's Board of Directors conducts a review of this policy annually. Revisions as per legislative requirements are included and approved by the Board of Directors.

Training and Development

Every permanent employee of the Centre is required to complete a minimum of ten hours of professional development annually. Trained professionals in the industry are available to conduct workshops designed to educate employees in the field of early childhood education on special needs-focused training.

Collaboration with community partners is encouraged and embraced so that every employee benefits from training in the latest programming trends, strategies, theories, family-friendly practices, etc.

Programming and the Environment

The Centre is committed to providing flexible programming that is adaptable as required for all children. Emergent curriculum practices allows for process-oriented programming versus product-oriented programming that is derived from the children's interests. In collaboration with families and if necessary, support agencies, programming is adapted to meet the needs of the children.

Support agencies, along with specialized training and development, provide the Centre employees with tools and strategies to modify or adapt the program as needed. Examples of modifications include:

- Pictorial schedules designed for the child to assist him/her with daily routines
- Pictorial symbols to demonstrate an action, feelings, etc.
- Pre-written instructions for activities and routines

- Self-regulation strategies (can be in the form of pictures, portable toolkit, list of exercises, etc.)
- A wide variety of tools for all skill levels and abilities (large and small balls, broad and thin paintbrushes, printed materials in large font and small font, etc.)
- Materials and equipment are placed at children's level to allow for independent access
- Adjusted table and chair heights
- Adjustments to daily schedules, routines and transitions to encourage optimal learning opportunities for all
- Wider pathways between furniture to allow for use of assistive devices if necessary

Confidentiality

Except when required by law, all Centre employees understand that access to confidential information regarding a child is kept in the strictest confidence. Consent to share information is unethical and will only be done with parental/guardian consent.

The Centre strongly believes confidentiality is an important building block in establishing trusting and lasting relationships between its employees and families. Respecting every child and his/her, family's confidential information is critical in the success of the child's development while attending one of the Centre's programs. Copies of consent forms that allow for sharing information with named parties will be kept on-site within the child's file at all times.

Partnerships

Providing any child the opportunity for success begins with strong partnerships between the family and the Centre. The Centre promotes open and honest dialogue amongst its employees and its enrolled families. Sharing of information, tips and strategies provides a solid foundation of understanding of a child's needs. As a collaborative team, Centre employees and parents/guardians can advocate and support children to set and achieve goals.

If required, the Centre will, with parental/guardian consent, enlist the services of external professionals. As per the *Purchase of Service Agreement* with the City of Toronto, the Centre has access to Special Needs Resource Consultants that will meet with the families and Centre employees to develop a support system best suited for the child at the Centre. If necessary, this support system can be cultivated to assist with the child in school and/or at home. Special Needs Resource Consultants are also able to connect a child and his/her family to specialized services that include but are not limited to: occupational therapy, counselling, individual and/or family therapy, mental health services, anxiety programs, social skill-building, shelter services, intensive resource support at the Centre, etc.

Registration

The registration process begins upon confirmation of a spot at the Centre. Eligible families will be offered a spot into one of the Centre's programs by the Supervisor. Parents/guardians are required to complete a *Registration Package* as well as additional forms prior to enrolment. Parents/guardians are encouraged to complete as much detail and information as possible regarding their child within the *Registration Package*. Details can include medical information, allergies, food restrictions, information regarding routines,

limitations and other pertinent information. The more information the Centre has about a child, the better the understanding will be regarding each child needs and abilities.

Another important component of the registration process includes reading and signing off on the *Family Handbook*. Families that are offered a spot at the Centre are expected to carefully review the Family Handbook prior to signing the Parent/Guardian Agreement Form. The Handbook is available in hard copy (if requested) and online on the Centre's website. All of the Centre's policies and procedures are included in the Handbook as well as the rights and responsibilities of parents/guardians.

Transition

Adapting to a new environment can be an exciting, stressful, or simple process for children. Parents/guardians may also feel some anxiety as their child transitions to a new childcare program. In an effort to initiate a seamless and stress-free integration, the Centre will engage in practices that will ease the upcoming changes for the family as a whole, such as:

- Prepare support systems in advance for the child and the family. This will aid children in maximizing learning opportunities within the program as soon as they begin.
- Encourage new families to visit the Centre as often as their schedule permits with their children prior to enrolment. Joining the program at different times of the day will display different routines and practices that the family can observe and/or participate in with their child.
- Meet with the family in advance to review routines, daily schedules, transitions to and from school, menus, etc. so that the family knows what to expect upon commencement of the program at the Centre. These meetings can include the Supervisor, program staff, resource consultants, etc.
- Offer additional support whenever possible to the child and his/her family when transitioning within the Centre's programs
- Ensure the family is the primary source of important information
- Include the family in all decision-making processes
- Seek external resources (with parental/guardian consent) in an effort to support program staff and the family with the new transition
- Support all Centre employees with training opportunities to learn more about the various levels of abilities within all children

Withdrawal

As noted in the *Family Handbook* and applicable Centre policies, withdrawal from the Centre will be explored as a last resort if the needs of the enrolled child are not being met. In the event all resources have been exhausted in assisting the child with his/her developmental needs, an evaluation may determine a different environment would benefit the child in his/her developmental growth.

If this unfortunate occurrence arises, the Supervisor, in consultation with the Board of Directors, will be expected to follow the procedures as outlined in applicable Centre policies. The Centre recognizes the importance and significance of uninterrupted childcare services to both the child and his/her family. However, if the Centre is not able to continue to offer services that meet the needs of the child and his/her family, withdrawal from the Centre will be required.

The Supervisor will make every effort to provide special needs resources within the community that the family can explore in assisting with alternate care options upon withdrawal from the Centre.

Supporting Documentation

The *Access, Equity and Inclusion Policy* is integrated in all aspects of the Centre's programs: children, parents/guardians, Centre employees, and the Centre's Board of Directors. The principles of this policy dictate best practices for all the Centre's employees and Board of Directors. Other applicable policies that support these principles include:

- Accessibility Policy for the Customer Service Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act (AODA)
- AIDS, HIV and Hepatitis B Policy
- Anti-Racism Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures
- Health and Wellness Policy
- Medication Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Playground Safety and Outdoor Programming Policy
- Serious Occurrence Policy and Procedures