

## 5. **RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOURS POLICY**

### **Background to the establishment of the policy**

This policy was initially developed through a collaborative approach, which sought input from parents, children and staff. Ideas, feelings and thoughts were shared through the following sessions:

- A lunch time workshop for parents;
- Staff workshops; and
- Audio and video taping of children's ideas around hurtful behaviours through storytelling with puppets.

### **LEGISLATION**

This policy also acknowledges the legal legislative requirements of the service and the early childhood professionals, which includes:

#### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES ACT 1996:**

##### **PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HAZARDS**

*Section 26 (1)*– The Proprietor of a children's service must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children being cared for or educated by the service from any hazard likely to cause injury (the University of Melbourne is the proprietor of the University's Children's Centres, and staff who work directly with the children have to ensure that the legislation is adhered to).

*Section 26 (2)* – A staff member of a children's service must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect a child in the care of that staff member from any hazard likely to cause injury.

##### **DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN**

*Section 28 (1)* - The proprietor of a children's services must ensure that no child being cared for or educated by the service is subjected to

- (a) Any form of corporal punishment: or
- (b) Any discipline which is unreasonable in the circumstances

*Section 28 (2)* - A staff member of a children's service must not subject any child being cared for or educated by the service to -

- (a) Any form of corporal punishment: or
- (b) Any discipline which is unreasonable in the circumstances

##### **DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT:**

*22 (1)* – It is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability by refusing to accept the application of a student, by denying the student access, or limiting the student's access to any benefit (provided by the educational authority), by expelling a student or by subjecting a student to any other detriment.

*Information Privacy Act (VIC) 2000 and the Health Records Act (VIC) 2001 and the University privacy policy:*

<http://www.unimelb.edu.au/unisec/privacy.htm>

In the privacy policy a reference to 'information' is a reference to both health information and personal information.

##### **DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES FUNDING AGREEMENT:**

'No eligible child is to be discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, disability, religious or ethnic background in gaining access to a Preschool Program.'

Children's Services implement a program that responds to the Code of Ethics and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **DEFINITION**

Hurtful behaviours may include, but are not limited to hitting, pushing, kicking, biting, pinching, spitting, verbal abuse, intimidation, exclusion, teasing, gestures, bullying and yelling. This applies to all members of the centre community, i.e. children, staff and parents.

## **AIM**

To ensure that Children's Services maintains a respectful culture for children, families and staff that recognises the diversity of the University's community.

***To support a culture that is safe for children, families and staff.***

To create a community culture that questions actions and behaviours, and encourages dialogue rather than attributing blame.

To educate children's services staff, children and parents through reflecting upon their actions and beliefs, and the result of those actions and beliefs.

To ensure children, families or staff are not marginalised because of their behaviours.

To ensure that behaviours are managed in a preventative manner, but where intervention in hurtful behaviours is needed, this is planned and acted upon in a collaborative way between children, families and staff to foster a sense of community by working according to the following process:

1. Staff working with the children to observe and document the behaviour and report this to the Director
2. Staff to discuss the behaviour with the parent/s
3. Staff, on the basis of the observations and discussion with the parent/s, to write up strategies and the time frame for those strategies
4. Staff and parent/s to evaluate the strategies and develop further strategies as needed.
5. Staff to keep the Director informed of progress and strategies.
6. Where progress has not been made the Children's Services Resource Developmental Officer (CSRDO) will be contacted for advice.

## **WHAT MEMBERS OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMUNITY CAN DO**

**What you can do if you are a person subjected to hurtful behaviours:**

- Ask for assistance and support from staff or director
- With staff support talk about what is happening to you and how that makes you feel;
- With staff support reflect on the subjected person's own behaviours;

**Responsibilities of the instigator of hurtful behaviours:**

- With staff support reflect on the persons own behaviours: talk about how they feel when they perform these behaviours and how they would feel if they were the recipients of these acts.
- To respect the rights of others to be in a safe environment.
- To engage in conversations about responsibility for hurtful behaviours
- To be redirected where verbal language does not yet exist.

## **Steps/Action to be taken by:**

### **CHILDREN**

- To respect the rights of others to be in a safe environment;
- To respect that each person will be different in how they act and react to situations that are threatening, beyond their control, or where they find it difficult to communicate and have people understand their feelings;
- To be alert to the centre's culture of care and its stand against hurting;
- To speak on behalf of themselves and not others, unless the hurt person is not able to speak for themselves.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS**

- To be alert and pro active in the development and maintenance of a culture that takes a stand against hurtful practices and builds a community of care;
- To intervene when hurtful practices of any kind occur, in a private not public manner, i.e. approach the area rather than yelling across the room or yard;
- To respect the rights of others to be in a safe environment;
- To respect that each person will be different in how they act and react to situations that are threatening, beyond their control, or where they find it difficult to communicate and have people understand their feelings;
- To reflect on their own practices to look at how their language, actions and biases, support and encourage hurtful practices, and to ensure that they model the appropriate behaviour at all times;
- To listen and support others to reflect on their behaviours: talk about how they feel when they are performing these behaviours and how they feel when these practices occur to them; talk about how that makes you feel as a child care professional;
- To engage in conversations about responsibility for hurtful behaviours with other staff, parents and the children themselves;
- To document hurtful practices to be used in case conferences;
- To incorporate as part of the room's curriculum the value of respectful behaviours through activities such as story telling, puppetry, dramatic play etc.;
- To make time to meet with parents outside of drop off or pick up time to discuss concerns relating to their child in a respectful and confidential manner;
- To speak on behalf of themselves and not others;
- To be pro active in implementing developed strategies in consultation with the others involved in the case at all times and for staff to report to the Director within an agreed time frame.

### **THE DIRECTOR**

- To respect the rights of others to be in a safe environment;
- To respect that each person will be different in how they act and react to situations that are threatening, beyond their control, or where they find it difficult to communicate and have people understand their feelings;
- To reflect on their own practices to look at how their language, actions and biases, support and encourage hurtful practices;
- To listen, support and encourage others to reflect on the behaviours: talk about how they feel when they are performing these behaviours and how they feel when these practices occur to them; talk about how that makes you feel;
- To ensure that staff have incorporated as part of the room's curriculum the value of respectful behaviours through activities such as story telling, puppetry, dramatic play etc.;
- To ensure that staff document strategies and observations and report back on these within the agreed time frame and to discuss further strategies as needed;
- To support staff in further dealing with recurrent behaviours which are not resolving;
- To contact the Manager Children's Services for support and advice;
- To contact the Department of Human Services for support and advice.

### **PARENTS**

- To respect the rights of others to be in a safe environment;
- To collaborate with the Early Childhood Professional on issues of hurting on behalf of their own child;
- To collaborate with the Early Childhood Professional on respectful responses to their children, whether they be victims or the ones displaying a non respectful behaviour;
- To respect that each person will be different in how they act and react to situations that are threatening, beyond their control, or where they find it difficult to communicate and have people understand their feelings;
- To think about their own practices to look at how their language, actions and biases, may support and encourage hurtful practices;

- To listen and support others to reflect on their behaviours: talk about how they feel when they are performing these behaviours and how they feel when these practices occur to them; talk about how that makes you feel as a parent;
- To make time to meet with staff outside of drop off or pick up time to discuss concerns with room staff, and, if necessary, the Director about your child in a respectful and confidential manner;
- To seek additional support from services that have expertise in hurtful behaviour eg Centred Strategies, The City of Melbourne resource officer (who can ask the parent for permission to observe the child and refer the parent to specialist help when needed);
- To speak on behalf of themselves and not others.

### **Strategies for resolving non-respectful behaviours**

**It is important to recognise that the Early Childhood Professional is responsible for the safety of families using the service and will intervene to ensure this is maintained.**

- When hurtful behaviours occur the Early Childhood Professional and the child's parents should document these behaviours.
- The Early Childhood professionals within the room should observe the culture of the room and look at the interactions of the group (staff and children) noting issues of:
  - Who is included in play?
  - Who is excluded from play?
  - How do children gain entry into play?
  - What resources are used, in which space and how many?
  - Who do the Early Childhood Professionals in the room interact with? How and why?
  - Who has little interaction with the Early Childhood Professionals in the room and why?
- The Early Childhood Professional, the child's parents and the child should have an opportunity to reflect on these actions, individually and in a meeting together.
- As a group set techniques/strategies to support the child within the service's environment. Look at responsibilities for hurtful practices. These should include reflective practice (i.e. Trying to reconstruct the event and everyone's actions and behaviour)
- Other strategies may include:
  - Use of multiple equipment, as more copies of the same toy will prevent conflict
  - Re-direction to another activity or area
  - Distraction
  - Providing equipment for children to chew or bite on eg. dummy, teething ring attached to clothes
  - Look at routine schedules and make changes where needed.
  - Set a review date to reflect, evaluate and re-plan that includes all parties. This initially should be within a two-week time frame.
- During the review process where hurtful behaviours have continued discuss resources that are available to assist (Specialist Children's Services). Consent forms from parents must be completed before intervention/assessment by persons from outside the University of Melbourne's Children's Services can be accessed.

Where behaviours place children or adults within the service at risk, a meeting, which can include the Manager, Director, Early Childhood Professionals, parents and any other relevant support persons, must be arranged to discuss possible outcomes.

These outcomes may include:

- Conversations with the child about hurting, other options and taking responsibility
- Conversations with adults about hurting, other options and taking responsibility
- The parent remaining with the child;

- Behavioural assessment of the child and utilising behaviour intervention programs or specialists
- Assessment of the Early Childhood Professionals' skills in the area of guidance;
- Additional training for Early Childhood Professionals in the area of guidance and reflective practice;
- Reducing the amount of time the child attends the centre;
- Parenting assistance or other support services for the family;
- Additional staffing for the room (where funding is available);
- **Only as a last resort should Exclusion be considered. (Decided through a case conference with the Manager of Children's Services, the Director, an equity officer from the University, a representative from all the specialist services involved and the parents of the child that is to be excluded).**

This is an evolving document and will be updated:

- When changes are made to regulations and/or legislation
- At the request of the Child Care Management Advisory Committee
- As part of the normal policy evaluation cycle, which is every three years.

All parties (parents, children and staff) will be invited to reflect, review and comment so that it continues to reflect the culture of the service.