



## PURPOSE

Montessori Stepping Stones' approach to equal opportunity is based on the principles of equity, inclusion and diversity. Children's rights and interests are paramount.

The enrolment process is open and equitable. Enrolments will be subject to Australian Government priority of access guidelines. In the interests of children's welfare and protection, access to children referred to MSS by appropriate agencies will be accommodated wherever possible, whilst still ensuring the safety and care of every child at Montessori Stepping Stones.

Families will be carefully oriented to MSS' services before their children attend. The orientation process is a time for educators to share information with families about how the service operates and the child is settling within the service. It is also a time for families to share information about their expectations of MSS.

## SCOPE

All families and staff involved in enrolling and orienting children into the education and care of Montessori Stepping Stones –including children, families, staff and 3<sup>rd</sup> parties who assist in the continuous improvement and implementation of quality practices.

## DESCRIPTION/GENERAL

Montessori Stepping Stones (MSS) supports equal opportunity principles and considers that where possible it has an obligation to promote equal access to the services it provides within Australian Government guidelines. The enrolment process takes into account all requirements of the Education and Care Services National (WA) Regulations 2012, and the guidelines contained within the Australian Government Child Care Service Handbook (DEEWR; 2012-2013). All records held at the service will be maintained in accordance with Confidentiality and Privacy Policy. MSS understands the importance of an orientation process that provides clear guidelines to families to help families and children to settle into the centre successfully, and requires that educators sensitively implement the policy to ensure the well being of the child.

## LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Laws relating to protection of privacy and confidentiality; duty of confidentiality arising from contract with parent; to whom and when information must be disclosed;

- The Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984.
- Priority of Access Guidelines (Child Care Service Handbook 2012- 2013);
- Privacy Act 1988;
- Federal Discriminations Acts;
- Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act (2012);
- Education and Care Services National (WA) Regulations (2012)

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## **CHILDREN'S NEEDS**

Support and comfort to settle into the services and establish new friendships and relationships with advocacy for every child's well-being and protection.

## **FAMILIES' NEEDS**

Enrolment for their child and their siblings with assistance in separating from their child; confidentiality and confirmation that their child has settled; service support in the event of needing additional or emergency care for their child; priority of access Australian Government Guidelines;

## **EDUCATOR/STAFF NEEDS**

Clearly explained enrolment process and opportunities to get to know families before children start full time care and parents supporting in introducing children to educators, staff, other children and the environment ; time to develop close professional relationships with families; support from referral agencies and information about custodial issues.

## **MANAGEMENT NEEDS**

To provide a transparent enrolment process for all families to ensure an equal balance between sound management practices and individual rights.

Equal Opportunity principles will be observed in relation to access to the service for children, families and educators/staff. Refer also to Equal Opportunity Policy.

## **ENROLMENTS**

Enrolments will be accepted according to the Australian Government 'Priority of Access'.

Parents/guardians will be advised that families of children enrolled with third priority access may be required to alter their days or leave the service in order to provide a place for a higher priority child.

An enrolment form must be completed and submitted for each child being enrolled. Where enrolling families are not fluent in English, MSS will provide assistance where possible in their primary language. Prior to enrolment, families will be provided with a Parent & Family Handbook.

The following information will need to be provided on the enrolment form for each child:

- Full name , date of birth, address of the child;
- Name, address details of each parent of the child; any emergency contacts; any person nominated by the parent to collect the child from the service; any person authorised to consent to medical treatment or to authorise administration of medication to the child; any person authorised to give approval for an educator to take the child out of the centre;
- Details of court orders, parenting orders or plans;
- Details of court orders relating to the child's residence or contact with a parent or other person;  
Gender of the child;

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- Language used in the child's home;
- Cultural background of the child and child's parents;
- Any special considerations for the child e.g. cultural, religious or dietary requirements or additional needs;
- Authorisations for the service to seek medical treatment for the child from a registered medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service; and transportation of the child by an ambulance service;
- Authorisation for the service to take the child on regular outings;
- Name, address and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner or medical service; Child's Medicare number (if available);
- Details of any specific healthcare needs of the child including any medical condition;
- Details of any allergies or anaphylaxis diagnosis;
- Any medical management plan or anaphylaxis management or risk minimisation plan;
- Details of dietary restrictions for the child;
- Immunisation status of the child;

At enrolment parents are encouraged to provide any further information about their child as it will support continuity of care between home and MSS.

The MSS.P01 Confidentiality & Privacy policy which details the name and contact details of the service; the fact that enrolling parents/guardians are able to gain access to their information; why the information is collected; the organisations to which the information may be disclosed; any law that requires the particular information to be collected; and the main consequences for not providing the required information, is provided at the time of enrolment.

Parents are encouraged to update their children's enrolment information regularly, and as needed. This can be done via email to management, or notification via the Xplor system.

If a place is not immediately available at the service the family may be put onto a waiting list. At this stage they will be asked to complete and submit an enrolment form. Once entered onto the waiting list it is necessary for the family to contact MSS at the end of each month to confirm their continued wish to remain on the list. When a place becomes available the family will be contacted by the nominated supervisor/ coordinator and enrolment may proceed.

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Exclusion of children from the service due to behaviour issues will only occur after all other avenues of communication and support have been exhausted and when:

- professional advice confirms a child is in psychological danger as a result of an unusually prolonged inability to settle into care away from the parent/guardian, or
- a child puts the majority of children at risk through inappropriate behaviour. (Also refer to Behaviour Management Policy.)

For exclusion policy due to non-immunisation and infectious diseases refer to Health, Hygiene and Infection Control Policy.

Subject to any state/territory or federal equal opportunity legislation, MSS reserves the right to exclude a child from the education and care service for any reason connected to the welfare of the child and the welfare of educators/staff and other children or families who use MSS services.

Children who are not enrolled must only be present at the service on a temporary basis, and under the direct supervision of their parent/guardian or other responsible adult.

## REFERRALS

Referral agency officers will be required to provide verifiable identification before being admitted to MSS

Montessori Stepping Stones (MSS) will determine a threshold to the number of children with special needs that the service is able to appropriately care for.

Where it is determined the service cannot accept a referred child the referring agency will be advised to contact DEEWR or the Child Care Access Hotline 1800 670 305 for alternative venues.

Acceptance of a referral will be dependent upon:

- MSS having the required resources to appropriately care for the child(ren);
- completion of a Referral Form;
- a visit from the referring agency (case manager) to provide information about the referral;
- clarify any special conditions of enrolment;
- provide necessary details about the child(ren)'s care arrangements including foster care details;
- determine a suitable orientation process (child to MSS / staff to children's needs);
- reach agreement in regard to the cost for providing care and any special requirements e.g. transport, clothing, food etc.;
- subsequent enrolment according to MSS's usual enrolment procedure;
- ensure that children are enrolled with the Child Care Management System (CCMS) before care commences;

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- agreement to a debriefing from the case manager at the conclusion of the referral period.

MSS will determine a fee schedule for referrals which includes contingencies for extra ordinary arrangements such as payment for special transport, clothing and food, and additional educator/staff support.

The referral agency will be invoiced for the agreed cost of providing care determined during the case manager's visit to MSS.

Montessori Stepping Stones (MSS) will ensure the strictest confidentiality in relation to information about referred children at all times. Access to confidential information will only be given on a need to know basis. However, educators involved in the care of referred children will be provided with information that is considered to be essential to ensure the safety and protection of both the referred child(ren) and other children in care.

## ORIENTATION

Montessori Stepping Stones will provide options for orientation to the centre and its services for families which may include:

- Inviting new families to visit the service with their child at times that suit them, to familiarise families with the services prior to the child's attendance.
- Providing all new families with a conducted tour of the premises which will include introductions to other educators/staff and children at the service, and highlights specific policies and procedures that families need to know about MSS' services.
- Ensuring each family has a copy of the Parent & Family Handbook and an opportunity to have any questions answered.
- Giving family members the opportunity to stay with their child during the settling in process.
- Ensuring all new families are encouraged to share information about their child and any concerns, doubts or anxieties they may have in regard to enrolling their child at MSS.
- When children first attend MSS the needs of both families and children will be respected. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to remain with their child when delivering or collecting them for as long a period as the parent/guardian and/or educators feel may be necessary to ensure the child's wellbeing. The parent/guardian will be encouraged to telephone MSS during the day for reassurance that their child has settled in. Educators will make a special point of discussing the child's day with the family when they come to collect the child.
- Families will be assisted to develop a routine for saying goodbye to their child.
- Children who are distressed at separating from their family will be comforted by the educator, and closely observed and offered reassurance until they are settled.
- MSS will always consider the feelings and time constraints that families may have in regard to participating in orientation processes and aim to make the experience a positive and welcoming introduction to the service.

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- MSS will use an orientation checklist to ensure that every important aspect of the centre's operations and procedures is discussed with the new family.
- At Waabiny OSHC, currently enrolled children will be encouraged to assist new children by introducing them to their friends and the routines of group, and acting as a 'buddy' for the new comer's first few weeks.

## TRANSITION

- Transitions between rooms will generally be completed by the time the child has reached the minimum age for the new environment, except where there are developmental or social issues which would be exaggerated by the process.
- Any issues which would prevent a child from transitioning to the new environment must be discussed with the parents and/or guardians, and management. Clear strategies for helping the child overcome any problems should be implemented following these discussions.
- Educators are encouraged to support the transitioning child, or children, for a short period of time in the new environment, to ensure that they settle in.
- Transitions will be discussed between the leaders of each environment, and occur at times, and for durations, as set out in the tables below:

<b>Nido to Nica – transition to be complete by age 2 years</b>	
<b>1 year, 10 months</b>	Visits to Nica once or twice weekly, for the morning Montessori routine 9:30 – 10:30 am  As the child begins to become familiar with the new environment, begin to increase the number of days for visits, and increase the duration of the visit to include outdoor play time
<b>1 year, 11 months</b>	Half day transitions initially, which includes the morning Montessori routine, outdoor play time and lunch  Building up to whole day transitions based on the child's progress with settling in the new environment



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## Nica to Casa – transition to be complete by age 3 years

**2 years, 11 months**

Half day transitions initially, which includes the morning Montessori routine starting at 9:00 am, outdoor play time and lunch

Building up to whole day transitions based on the child's progress with settling in to the new environment