6-P4 Equity and Inclusion Procedure

Responsible	Nominated Supervisor, Centre Team
Accountable 1	Chief Operating Officer

Responsible	Nominated Supervisor, Centre Team		
Accountable 1	Chief Operating Officer	**A**ccountable 2	Nominated Supervisor
Consulted	Compliance Team, Policy Committee		
Informed	All staff, students, volunteers, families		

Links to ECSNR 2011 and WA 2012:
R73   R74   R76   R155
R157

Links to NQS:
QA 4   QA 5   QA 6

Related Forms:

Related Processes:
3.6.07 Manage Equity and Inclusion
6.2.20 Manage Workplace Equal
Employment and Anti-Discrimination
3.6.30 Develop and Implement RAP
2.4.11 Complete a SIP

Policy Statement

The objective of this procedure is to articulate Affinity Education Group's compliance with National Law and Regulations, including amendments, from the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 and the Education and Care Services National Regulations WA 2012.

A centre's culture and community are made up of the wonderful attributes and characteristics of all of its users. Each centre consists of educators, families and children with unique heritage, history, culture, lifestyle, beliefs, abilities, interests and family practices. Affinity Education embraces diversity and advocates for the support and inclusion of all people, including those considered vulnerable and at risk, those with culturally and linguistically diverse background and those with disabilities.

Educators, Centre Managers and other management are committed to the acceptance, promotion and celebration of individuality and will not tolerate discrimination of any kind. The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are endorsed by all educators, Centre Managers and other management.

Equity and inclusion are not about treating all people equally. It is about meeting their needs in ways that they need and deserve and is genuine and meaningful. The steps outlined in this procedure assist educators, families and children to support equity and inclusion and feel accepted and supported in the environment and relationships in the centre.

Please note: Throughout this procedure, strategies are mainly child-focused; however all strategies are relevant to the inclusion of children, families, educators, volunteers and students and approved visitors.

Definitions

Equity: Accommodating for people's needs according to their individual circumstance. E.g. Equity is giving a child a second serve of lunch due to their large appetite, and not insisting all children need a second serve to be 'fair'.
Inclusion: That all children, families and educators can participate and benefit from the early childhood program, environments and relationships. E.g. Educators learning Auslan to support a hearing-impaired child.
Diversity: Valuing and respecting individual differences including, but not limited to, age, gender, ability, culture, race, socio-economic status, interests, lifestyle, family structure including single parent or same sex families and the LGBTI community. E.g. Celebrating different customs and traditions at the centres.

Procedure Strategies

Identifying

- In order to be equitable and inclusive, centres must understand the individual characteristics, preferences, needs and expectations of the centre users. These can be identified through the following methods:
  - By establishing open communication and trusting relationships where information is freely shared verbally
  - The enrolment form and the orientation process
  - Input or feedback forms
  - Written documentation on the child's learning and development
  - Referrals from external support agencies or Regulatory Authorities
- It is important that educators, Centre Managers, volunteers and students reflect on their own cultures, beliefs, practices and potential biases and acknowledge the fact that others may hold different beliefs, values or practices. While educators have their own philosophy and pedagogy, it must align closely with the principles within the centre philosophy for a harmonious and supportive environment. Mutual respect, communication, empathy and understanding will be required to maintain respectful relationships and acceptance of diversity.
- Orientation is an important process in which expectations and needs can be communicated between educators and families. Individual care and inclusion strategies can be negotiated, agreed upon and documented to ensure a smooth transition and

that needs are met effectively. This communication must remain ongoing for the time the child is enrolled at the centre. Please refer to the *Orientation and Relationships* procedure.

- A child's starting date may need to be delayed in order for the centre to cater to the child's needs. E.g. for ramps or railings to be installed.
- Families or educators may not be forthcoming in communicating their diverse needs. Respect families' or educators' privacy by not probing where they are not comfortable in sharing information.
- Encourage ongoing consultation and communication with families so they can share any emerging needs that present after enrolment.

Relationships with Families
- It is vitally important that all educators develop a trusting partnership with families to meet the needs of all children, but it is even more critical where children have diverse needs. Educators, Centre Managers and other management will actively support the inclusion of children with diverse needs and their families. Examples of diverse needs may include, but are not limited to:
  o Developmental - cognitive delay, language delay, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome
  o Medical conditions - asthma, anaphylaxis, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, heart disease
  o Physical impairment - hearing or sight impaired, cerebral palsy, club foot
  o Culturally and/or linguistically diverse - English as a second language, new to Australia, cultural traditions
  o Family influence - separation, death, substance abuse, violence, new marriage/step family
  o Beliefs - religion, lifestyle choices, care practices
  o Gender related - gender identity, same sex parents
- All educators who care for a child with diverse needs must understand all care practices and expectations involved. This may be done in the following ways:
  o The family may demonstrate and train expected care practices to educators
  o A professional may attend the centre for staff training e.g. doctor who can train in tube feeding or blood glucose testing
  o Educators may undertake recognised training e.g. anaphylaxis management training
  o Informal, online training or attendance at seminars e.g. Auslan
  o Families to provide feedback and updates regarding strategies
  o Educators to follow medical management, risk minimisation and communication plan
  o Review and discussion in team or staff meetings

Inclusive Practices
There are many and varied practices that can be implemented to demonstrate inclusion, equity and respect for diversity and each will be unique to the individual centre, family, child and/or educator. The following are some examples of inclusive practices:

Reconciliation Action Plan – RAP
- Affinity centres recognise the contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made to our societies. Our centres will pay their respects to the traditional custodians of the land. Centres will develop a RAP that is meaningful and relevant to the context on the centre. This can be developed in conjunction with Narragunnawali and input can be sought from local indigenous members of community. Educators must be familiar with the strategies outlined in the RAP and committed to the statement of reconciliation.

Strategic Inclusion Plan – SIP
- For centre to receive funds for Inclusion Support, they must develop a SIP. The SIP is a planning tool that outlines strategies for improving and embedding inclusive practice in line with the NQS. The SIP recognises current inclusive capacity of a service and outlines the strategies and actions the service will implement to increase their capacity to include all children.

Provisions
- Encouraging the participation of families into the program demonstrates acceptance and a willingness to promote and embrace the families' needs and expectations. Families can be encouraged to:
  o Share information about their customs and traditions
  o Sing songs or read stories in languages other than English, including sign language
  o Implement cooking, music, dancing or art experiences native to their culture
  o Talk to the educators and children about their child's need
  o Simply spend time participating in the program

- Integrate diversity into the program regularly and genuinely by way of books, music, cooking experiences, crafts, clothing, singing, play equipment and images of diverse characteristics in people and families.
- Purchase and utilise resources that represent children and families at the centre. For example; puzzles depicting non-gender stereotypical roles, dolls with a variety of skin colours, books showing different family types.
- Use inclusive language when interacting with children and families. Children or families or educators will not be labelled or identified by their need. The person always comes first. Consult with families and educators regarding respectful terms to use when describing their diverse needs.
- Communication, discussions and interactions with all children will actively challenge stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour in supportive and informative ways.
- Provisions will assist children, families and educators to understand that indigenous culture is a mixture of contemporary and traditional thoughts, ways and practices. The environment will support children learning about Australian culture, history and Aboriginal Reconciliation. Providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in their environment is important for growing a strong identity.
- Provide opportunity for children to engage in play in all areas of the indoor and outdoor environment. E.g. Make dramatic play area wider for a child with sight impairment, install a ramp for access to the outdoor area.
- Provide open-ended materials that have a variety of uses.
- Depict routine and transition times using photos.

Family Communication
- To ensure equity and inclusion of all families and to prevent misunderstandings, interpreters may be required for children and families. Written material can also be translated into families' home languages.
- Seek families' input into how they would like their culture, language, traditions, customs, family relationships etc. included or portrayed in the centre. Stereotypical portrayal can be tokenistic, not genuine and not be a true representation of the culture.
- Liaise with external agencies that are engaged in the support and care of the child and family. E.g. physiotherapists
- Provide the family with a private space to use for discussing needs or sharing sensitive information.
- Where an application has been approved, a funded support worker may be employed to work with the child with additional needs for some or all of the hours they attend care. This person is not included in the ratio.
- Advise families of relevant support agencies in the local area.

Community
- Community members will be invited to the centre to extend upon the educational program offered to the children. This may be in the form of formally planned incursions such as a local Indigenous dance troupe or a more informally planned visit such as elderly residents from a nearby retirement village coming in to read stories. Permission will be sought from families prior to their child's attendance at these functions.
- Educators will be advocates for inclusion and respect for diversity in all connections and communications within the centre and within the community.
- From time to time, excursions may be arranged in the community. All procedures as outlined in the *Excursion and Transport* procedure will be followed.
- It is expected that all centre users, educators and families conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner at all times. Any behaviour to the contrary including threatening, abusive or violent behaviour will not be tolerated and may result in exclusion from the centre.

Management
- Management have the responsibility of ensuring the workplace and care environment is free from bias and discrimination.
- At all times the safety and wellbeing of all centre users is of the highest priority.
- In rare cases, where the centre is unable to adequately and safely meet the needs of children, the centre, in consultation with management and the family, reserve the right to review the enrolment.
- Affinity Education Group is an equal opportunity employer and employs staff members from diverse backgrounds, all genders including LGBTI+, all ages and with differing abilities. They are employed due to their skills and knowledge and their ability to fulfil the job role.
- Educators who do not follow this procedure by displaying discrimination or bullying will face disciplinary action.

References

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Education and Care Services National Regulations WA 2012

The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority: http://www.acecqa.gov.au/
Fair Work Act 2009 http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2013C00070
Narragunnawali. What is a RAP? https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/raps/what-is-a-rap
Dept of Health and Aged Care https://www.health.gov.au/topics/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/how-we-support-health
Be You; Beyond Blue https://beyou.edu.au/?gclid=CjwKCAjwtqmwBhBVEiwAL-WAYYnZ3_dbkGv81fkwqi3VeRNrsocMxk9Qj1jBeIAd3kTP3V6ZxkfDPxoC1mMQAvD_BwE

Inclusion Support QLD - https://inclusionsupportqld.org.au/
Inclusion Support NSW/ACT - https://inclusionagencynswact.org.au/
Inclusion Support VIC - https://viac.com.au/
Inclusion Support WA - https://www.communicare.org.au/get-support/children-families-and-parenting/wa-inclusion-agency/
Inclusion Support NT - https://ecant.org.au/ntia-1

Relevant Legislation

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Education and Care Services National Regulations WA 2012
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics (2006)
- UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1989)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

- Australian Capital Territory – Discrimination Act 1991
- New South Wales – Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Northern Territory – Anti-Discrimination Act 1996
- Queensland – Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Victoria – Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Western Australia – Equal Opportunity Act 1984.
- Victoria - Child Safe Standards
- NSW - Child Safe Standards
- National Principles of Child Safe Organisation

Version Control	Date	Author	Description of Change
1	May 2015	AEG	New Policy
V4.16	April 2016	AEG	Revision
V7.17	July 2017	AEG	Revision
V9.18	Sept 2018	AEG	Reviewed
V11.19	Nov 2019	AEG	Scheduled review
V2.21	Feb 2021	AEG	Added RAP and SIP
V2.22	Feb 2022	AEG	Scheduled review
V3.23	Mar 2023	AEG	Scheduled review
V12.23	Dec 2023	AEG	Added RACI table and reference
V3.24	Mar 2024	AEG	Added links

Responsible = those who are responsible for carrying out the task
Accountable level 1 = the owner and person accountable for the sign off or approval of a task
Accountable level 2 = the person who is accountable for the task being carried out
Consulted = the person to be consulted with and whose input, opinions and feedback are crucial to the task
Informed = the person who should be informed and made aware of the task and any updates

Policy Written by:	Position:	Date:
Fiona Young	Policy, Training and Development Manager	Mar 2024

Approved by:	Approved Date:	Next review date:
Chief Operating Officer	Mar 2024	Mar 2025

Educators to sign: