

Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) child care program funding guidelines

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Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- inform agencies and service providers of the policies, procedures and funding criteria associated with the Victorian ACFE child care program
- provide additional resource information for Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) child care providers.

This document replaces:

- *Children's services in Victoria Policy and Procedures, Occasional Child Care Take a Break and Adult, Community and Further Education Program Supplement*, May 1997
- *Children's Services – Occasional Child Care Update*, February 1999.

Policy context

In 2001, the Victorian Government, in its key strategic policy *Growing Victoria together*, identified lifelong learning as one of its three main goals. Community-based adult education organisations implement *Growing Victoria together by*:

- improving participation and achievement in education and training
- providing better links between education providers, business and communities
- expanding opportunities for training and learning all through life.

These actions define and shape the contribution of providers of adult and community education to both educational outcomes and to social and community development. Community-based adult education organisations have highly developed networks and connections into their local communities. They operate across the state and deliver programs based on local needs. These community-based adult education organisations engage with people using formal and informal learning strategies, and personal and social development models. They integrate the government's objectives to increase ongoing adult learning and community strengthening.

Adult, Community and Further Education program (ACFE)

The various bodies that comprise the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector include the ACFE Board, the ACFE regional councils and ACE providers. The Department of Education and Training, through the ACFE Board and Regional Councils, provides funds to recognised providers of ACE.

The ACFE program enables people to participate in adult, community and further education courses. ACFE services are provided by community service organisations that are recognised providers of ACE (for regional councils of ACFE contacts, see Appendix 1).

The ACFE child care services program

The ACFE child care program is funded by the Victorian Government and administered by the Department of Human Services. This funding is a contribution towards the agency's operating costs such as salaries, on costs and consumable items.

The program provides child care so that parents or guardians are able to access vocational education and training through the ACE sector. These agencies include neighbourhood houses, learning centres, adult learning groups, adult literacy groups, community centres and community houses.

Funding under the ACFE child care program is provided to agencies on the basis of an effective full time (EFT) place. An EFT purchases 1,920 hours of care per annum, which is the equivalent of 40 hours per week for 48 weeks a year.

The current rates for ACFE child care services program funding can be found at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood

The Department of Human Services

The Victorian Department of Human Services, through the Office for Children, is responsible for providing a wide range of health and community services to Victorians.

The department's central office is responsible for policy development. Staff in the department's eight regions monitor all licensed and funded children's services. All agency enquiries should be directed to the relevant regional office. Refer to Appendix 2 for phone numbers and addresses for regional offices and contact details for the Office for Children, Early Years Services Branch.

This document is managed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria (as of 27 August 2007)

ACFE child care program eligibility requirements

Eligibility requirements – agencies

An eligible agency is one that meets the eligibility criteria and is currently funded for ACFE programs.

For an agency to receive the ACFE child care program funding, the following criteria must be met.

Table 1: Eligibility requirements – agencies

The ACFE child care program must be located in Victoria. The agency must sign and comply with a service agreement.
An agency must be registered with an Adult, Community and Further Education Regional Council.
An agency must be a provider of adult, community and further education, such as a neighbourhood house, learning centre, adult learning group, adult literacy group, community centre or community house.
An ACFE child care program must be provided in a licensed children’s service or purchased from a Commonwealth approved family day care service.

Eligibility requirements – parent and child

For a parent to access the ACFE child care program, the following criteria must be met.

Table 2: Eligibility requirements – parent and child

The parent must be enrolled and attending an ACFE course to access the ACFE child care program.
To be eligible for the ACFE child care program, the child/children must be 0-6 years of age and not enrolled at primary school.

Roles and responsibilities as the funded agency

Service agreements

A service agreement is the document that sets out how much funding the department agrees to make available to an agency and what services the agency agrees to provide for this funding. It also sets out the terms and conditions with which the agency must comply in using and accounting for the funding. The agreement covers a set period of time, most commonly, three years.

Service agreements are reviewed annually by the Department of Human Services, usually through the regional offices. Agencies are monitored against the performance measures and targets specified for ACFE child care services in the service agreement.

All agencies receiving ACFE child care program funding are required to sign and comply with the service agreement. For detailed information about service agreements, please refer to the *Service agreement information kit for agencies*, which is available from the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel (FAC) at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac.

To obtain a copy of the service agreement pro forma, contact the nearest Department of Human Services regional office or download one from the FAC at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac (see Appendix 2 for further details).

Data collection

The annual *Adult, Community and Further Education child care data collection and monitoring form* provides information that assists with statewide planning, and provides national census data on children's services. It also forms part of the agency accountability for government funds received, as detailed in the service agreement.

Record keeping

The funded agency is required to complete and submit *The Adult Community and Further Education child care data collection and monitoring form* that provides information on service operation, utilisation, user characteristics and fees. Use of ACFE child care places is recorded at the service location level.

If an agency is funded under both the ACFE child care program and the Take A Break child care program, the agency must keep accurate and separate records that identify the source of funding for the care provided. Separate bookings are required for care provided to families using the ACFE child care program and to those using Take A Break services.

Agencies must provide the department with complete and accurate data (see Appendix 3 Data collection and monitoring timetable).

Funding adjustments

The Department of Human Services conducts an annual adjustment process for the reallocation of occasional care funding from services that are underutilised. The data provided from the funded agency is used to determine whether individual agency funding should be adjusted. With agencies funded under the ACFE child care program, the department regional office will first consult with the relevant ACFE regional councils on issues such as the number and type of courses and course participants, and the child care demand.

Any funding adjustments are made in accordance with the *Service agreement information kit for agencies*. This document may be downloaded from the FAC at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Financial management

The Department of Human Services requirements in relation to financial management are outlined in Schedule 1 of the service agreement (financial accountability requirements). For more detailed information regarding these requirements, see the *Service agreement information kit for agencies*.

Financial accountability reporting

The financial accountability reporting (FAR) requirements for agencies are set out in Schedule 5 of the service agreement. For more detailed information regarding these requirements, see the *Service agreement information kit for agencies*. Blank financial accountability forms can also be downloaded from the FAC at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Purchasing child care places

Sometimes an agency purchases occasional care from another location in order to meet the child care needs of ACFE clients. In this case, the agency must obtain the consent of the department and a separate sub contracting arrangement must be developed with the agency and the organisation providing the child care at that location (contracted organisation). The contract between the agency and the contracted organisation should ensure that all relevant conditions of funding outlined in the service agreement between the department and the agency are adhered to by the contracted organisation, and that the responsibilities of both the agency and the contracted organisation in meeting these conditions are clearly defined. (See the subcontracting section under the pro forma Service Agreement).

If an agency purchases child care from another location, this data must be included on the *Adult Community and Further Education child care program data collection and monitoring form*.

Incident reporting requirements

The Children's Services Regulations 1998 describe a number of serious incidents that the proprietor must bring to the attention of the Secretary of the Department of Human Services as soon as practicable.

The department places additional requirements on funded children's services in relation to incident reporting (*Service agreement information kit for agencies*). Should a serious incident occur (which falls into either of the above categories) agencies must contact and notify their regional office. A children's services adviser will then advise what action and/or further reporting will be required.

Pre-employment/pre-placement safety screening

Licensed children's services must carry out criminal history checks for persons who may be responsible for the care or education of children in this service. This includes:

- all members of staff (anyone employed to work at the children's service)
- all staff members (including persons who are responsible for the care or education of children, those employed under traineeship programs, or as inclusion support workers)
- relief staff members
- unsupervised volunteers who care for or educate the children
- anyone who exercises control over or manages the children's service.

Students and volunteers who are not police checked and members of staff under 17 years of age must be under the immediate supervision of the proprietor or a qualified staff member at all times. This is a requirement under regulation 27 of the Children's Services Regulations.

In addition, agencies providing funded children's services programs are required to comply with the departmental instruction *Human services policy standard: pre-employment/pre-placement safety screening*, as described in section 5.3 of the *Service agreement information kit for agencies*. An Annual Statement of Compliance is included in the data collection.

Quality assurance

The promotion of service quality is an important issue for the Department of Human Services as well as for community service organisations. It is important that all funded organisations can demonstrate that they have engaged in activities designed to bring about improvement in the way they deliver services during the year. Agencies should refer to the *Service agreement kit for agencies*.

Confidentiality

Licensed children's services are required to comply with the *Children's Services Act 1996* and Children's Services Regulations 1998. Services should be aware:

- of requirements in relation to children's enrolment records, staff records and police checks, and dealing with complaints
- that information provided to the agency by families or noted by staff must be accessed and stored in a way that is appropriate to the confidentiality of the record
- that personal information and records must be stored at the children's service.

Funded agencies are also required to comply with the *Information Privacy Act 2000* and the *Health Records Act 2001* when requesting confidential information from families using the service. Some of these obligations include:

- Collating only information that is needed for one or more functions or activities of the agency.
- At the time personal information is collected, ensuring the person knows:
 - why the information is being collected and how it will be handled (including who the agency usually discloses the information to)
 - that he/she is able to gain access to the information
 - the consequences (if any) for not providing the information requested.
- Using and disclosing the information only for the collection purpose, or for another purpose that is directly related (and the individual would expect the agency to use or disclose the information for the other purpose), otherwise, seek the person's consent.
- Storing the information securely and protecting it from unauthorised access.
- Retaining the information for the required period (generally, an agency must destroy or permanently de-identify personal information if it is no longer needed for any purpose. If the information relates to health matters, the information must not be deleted unless permitted by law or under principle 4.5 of the *Health Records Act 2001*).
- Providing the person with access to their own information (unless one of the exceptions in the legislation applies), and the right to seek its correction.
- Not collecting sensitive information (for example, information about an individual's racial or ethnic origin that is personal information) unless the individual has consented or collection of the information is required at law.

More information on the department's privacy policy and the legislation is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/privacy and on the Funded Agency Channel at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Agencies should obtain independent advice to ensure they comply with all of their confidentiality obligations.

Service provision requirements

Standards and guidelines

Funded ACFE child care programs must operate in accordance with the standards and guidelines detailed in the Office for Children policy and funding plan.

Other relevant documents are:

- *Children's Services Act 1996* and Children's Services Regulations 1998. Children's services must comply with the Children's Services Act and the Children's Services Regulations in order to be licensed by the Victorian Government. They are also required by law to provide developmentally appropriate programs for children who attend the service. Hard copies of the Act and regulations may be purchased from Information Victoria, telephone 1300 366 356.
- Department of Human Services has documents that provide guidance and information about the Act and regulations. These are designed to assist those who own, operate, manage or work in a licensed children's service. As these documents are updated from time to time, the current edition is available on the Department of Human Services early childhood services website: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood (See Appendix 4 for further information).

Inclusive practice and valuing diversity

Children enrolling in occasional care services come from a variety of backgrounds and home situations. These circumstances need to be considered when engaging with parents and supporting children in the occasional care program. Where families are accessing additional support from other services, for example, early childhood intervention services, it is important to ensure that a coordinated and sensitive approach is taken in providing support and strengthening the capacity of the family unit (see Appendix 5 for further information).

Access and equity policies

Funded agencies are required to ensure that they have in place access and equity policies that:

- are clear, fair and non-discriminatory
- comply with the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- are developed on the basis of surveys of the local community, particularly with regard to the hours of operation and the models of service delivery
- outline how waiting lists will be prioritised.

Parent participation

The funded agency is required to ensure that its service reflects the needs of users by:

- encouraging parent input into the children's services policy and decision making and participation in quality assessment processes and user satisfaction surveys
- providing a children's service that is sensitive to the cultural and social backgrounds of the families, their lifestyles and their child-rearing practices and that parents are involved in addressing issues relating to their children's care and development.

Hours

The ACFE child care program should be provided at times ACFE courses are provided. Session times may vary throughout the year as ACFE course times may change.

Fees

Funded agencies are required to have in place, and communicate to families, a comprehensive written fee policy. Fees need to be set at a level that balances the capacity of parents to pay with the need to provide a high quality service and maintain the financial viability of the service.

Appendix 1: Regional Councils of Adult Community and Further Education

Barwon South Western Region

PO BOX 1046
GEELONG 3220

Ph: (03) 5221 8248
Fax: (03) 5221 8483

Central Highlands Wimmera Region

Level 1 / 1220 Sturt St
BALLARAT 3350

Ph: (03) 5332 3989
Fax: (03) 5333 2135

Central Western Metropolitan Region

29 Cobden St
NORTH MELBOURNE 3051

Ph: (03) 9326 7647
Fax: (03) 9326 9202

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Rear 1st Floor 25 Ringwood Street
RINGWOOD 3134

Ph: (03) 9879 4000
Fax: (03) 9879 4066

Gippsland Region

PO Box 923
MOE 3825

Ph: (03) 5127 6000
Fax: (03) 5127 8715

Goulburn Ovens Region

13 Lowry Place
BENALLA 3672

Ph: (03) 5762 4655
Fax: (03) 5762 5397

Loddon Campaspe Mallee Region

PO Box 2409
BENDIGO MAIL CENTRE 3554

Ph: (03) 5442 4300
Fax (03) 5442 4913

Northern Metropolitan Region

PO BOX 298
BRUNSWICK 3056

Ph: (03) 9940 1405
Fax: (03) 9940 1457

Southern Western Port Region

PO Box 62
SEAFORD 3198

Ph: (03) 9786 9466
Fax: (03) 9786 9711

Appendix 2: Contacting the Department of Human Services

Regional offices – for agency enquiries

Metropolitan regions

Eastern Metropolitan Region

883 Whitehorse Rd
(Locked Bag 2015)
BOX HILL 3128

Ph: (03) 9843 6000

North and West Metropolitan Region

145 Smith Street
(PO Box 1332)
(Collingwood 3066)
FITZROY 3065

Ph: (03) 9412 5333

71 Moreland Street
(PO Box 224)
FOOTSCRAY 3011

Ph: (03) 9275 7036

Southern Metropolitan Region

122 Thomas Street
(PO Box 692)
DANDENONG 3175

Ph: (03) 9213 2111

Rural regions

Barwon South Western Region

2nd Floor, State Government Offices
Lt. Malop & Fenwick Sts
(PO Box 760)
GEELONG 3220

Ph: 5226 4540

Gippsland Region

64 Church Street
(PO Box 1661)
TRARALGON 3844

Ph: 5177 2500

Loddon Mallee Region

165 Hargreaves Street
(PO Box 513)
(Bendigo 3552)
BENDIGO 3550

Ph: 5430 2333

Grampians Region

State Govt. Offices
Corner of Mair & Doveton Sts
(PO Box 712)
BALLARAT 3353

Ph: 5333 6530

Hume Region

163 Welsford Street
(PO Box 460)
(Wangaratta 3676)
SHEPPARTON 3632

Ph: 5832 1500

Office for Children – for statewide policy

Office for Children
Early Years Services
Level One, 555 Collins Street,
MELBOURNE 3000

Ph: 1300 731 947

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/beststart

Funded Agency Channel

The FAC is the Department of Human Services primary information, communication and business tool for use with funded agencies.

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Appendix 3: Adult, Community and Further Education data collection and monitoring timetable

January	The department provides advice to agencies about service plan targets for the year.
February	Services receive: Adult, Community and Further Education information sheet for data collection during March – August.
March – August	Services collect information for data requirements.
July	Services receive Adult, Community and Further Education data collection and monitoring forms.
September	Services return completed Adult, Community and Further Education data collection and monitoring forms to the regional office.
October	Services receive: <i>Adult, Community and Further Education –Cease operation form</i> for agencies to advise if they will not be operating funded services in the following year.
November	<i>Services return Adult, Community and Further Education – Cease operation form</i> (if applicable) The department reviews the service allocation.

Appendix 4: Licensing procedures and privacy

Information on licensing procedures

All licensing application and other forms related to the licensing process produced by the department can be downloaded free of charge from the department's website: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood

- Contact a Children's Services Adviser at the Department of Human Services regional office (see Appendix 2).

Information on privacy

The Department of Human Services Privacy Unit

(For questions about the way the department or funded service partners collect and handle personal information)

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/privacy>

Appendix 5: Resource and advisory agencies

Various resource and advisory agencies are available to assist if you need advice or training in providing inclusive programs for children and families, providing care and administering your service.

Association for Children with a Disability

590 Orrong Road
ARMADALE 3143
Ph: (03) 9500 1232
Fax: (03) 9500 1240
Email: mail@acd.org.au
Website: www.acd.org.au

Early Childhood Intervention Association (Vic Chapter)

C/- Department of Child Development & Rehabilitation
Royal Children's Hospital
Flemington Rd
PARKVILLE VIC 3052
Ph: (03) 5221 2984
Email: ecia@cryptic.rch.unimelb.edu.au

FKA Children's Services Inc

1st Floor, 9-11 Stewart Street
RICHMOND 3121
Ph: (03) 9428 4471
Fax: (03) 9429 5252
Email: fkacs@fka.com.au
Website: www.fka.com.au

Community Child Care

1st Floor
48 High Street
Northcote 3070
Ph: (03) 9486 3455
Fax: (03) 9486 3171
Email: recept@ccinc.com.au
Website: www.ccinc.com.au

Lady Gowrie Child Centre

36 Newry Street
North Carlton 3054
Ph: (03) 9347 6388
Fax: (03) 9347 7567
Email: info@gowrie-melbourne.com.au
Website: www.Gowrie-melbourne.com.au

Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria

PO Box 2060
North Melbourne 3051
Tel: (03) 9455 4013
Fax: (03) 9455 2591
Website: prav.asn.au

Appendix 6: Publications

A number of documents are available to help service providers effectively manage and operate their services. Many of these publications are available:

- on the Department of Human Services websites: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/officeforchildren and www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood
- at regional offices across the state
- for purchase from Information Victoria, 356 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000 or Tel: 1300 366 356
- For Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary documents (for example, the *Children's Services Act 1996* and the Children's Services Regulations 1998) www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au

Department of Human Services

- *Office for Children policy and funding plan*
- *Service agreement information kit for agencies*
- *Insurance guide for non-government organisations*
- *We are proud of our elders* (Koori Early Childhood Education Resource Kit), March 1997
- *Kids talk*, 2002 (poster: 75 ways to encourage children, available in nine languages)
- *Cultural diversity guide* (Department of Human Services 2004).

Related documents

- *Guidelines and conditions to determine eligibility of adult community education organisations*, November 2002 (Adult, Community and Further Education Board)
- *Future Directions for Adult Community Education in Victoria*, June 2004 (Department of Education and Training)
- *Neighbourhood House Coordination Program*, October 2002 (Department of Human Services)
- National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)* www.ncac.gov.au

Other

- *Children's Services Act 1996* – Victorian State Government
- Children's Services Regulations 1998
- *Legal aspects of childcare*, 6th Edition, January 1999, Victoria Legal Aid
- *Information Privacy Act 2000* – Victorian State Government
- *Health Records Act 2001* – Victorian State Government

Appendix 7: Child Care Benefit (CCB)

Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment made to families to assist with the costs of child care. Families can claim CCB for approved child care, or registered child care, or a combination of both.

Approved Child Care

Approved child care includes long day care, family day care, in-home care, outside school hours care, vacation care and some occasional care services. Services are approved by the Australian Government to receive CCB directly from the Family Assistance Office on behalf of eligible families, so parents pay less out of their own pocket.

The amount of CCB a family using approved care receives depends on their family income and the number and age of the children in approved care.

Registered Child Care

Registered child care is care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends who are registered with the Family Assistance Office. It can also include care provided by registered private pre-schools, kindergartens, occasional care centres and outside school hours care services. To get CCB for registered care both parents in a family need to be working, studying or training. Families using registered care are only eligible for the minimum rate of CCB.

For More Information

- Child care services seeking approval to participate in the CCB program can contact the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) on 1300 653 227, or visit the FaCS website on www.facs.gov.au
- Child care services can contact the FAO Child Care Payment Team on 1800 050 021 for information about the administration of CCB
- Families can phone the Family Assistance Office on 13 6150 to make a claim for CCB or to find out more about the eligibility requirements for CCB

