

Nurturing confident and creative learners.

Early learning

Uniting

Parent handbook

Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples*. We acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of the lands and waters on which we all live and work, and recogise their sacred connection to these lands and waters of Australia, which has existed for more than 60 millennia.

We recognise the continuing sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over their lands and waters and the inalienable right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination. We offer our respect to all Elders past and present and to all descendants who have and will continue to care for the land through their lore, customs, and spirituality.

** The term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is used in this publication refer to Australia's First Peoples. The term recognises the great number of Aboriginal nations, and the great diversity of cultures, histories, languages and values of these many nations. It also acknowledges that Torres Strait Islander peoples are a separate people and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in urban, regional or remote areas of Australia may have distinct cultural identities.*

Our commitment to reconciliation

First and Second Peoples walking together towards truth, justice, cultural vitality and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and cultures.

This vision for reconciliation is a response to Uniting's foundational belief that people matter, and change is possible. It is aligned with our purpose to inspire people, enliven communities, and confront injustice.

No matter where we are on our reconciliation journey, this vision points us to the horizon and reminds us to persist in hope and unity.

Uniting's Reconciliation Action Plan commits to substantiative action to promote the cultural changes necessary for reconciliation within Uniting and the communities we work in.



Contents

Welcome to Uniting early learning 4

The importance of early childhood learning 6
- Learning begins at birth 6
- Early learning lasts a lifetime 6
- Those first years matter 6

About Uniting early learning 7
- Our guiding principles 7

Welcoming all communities 8
- Our commitment to diversity 8

Our commitment to child safety 8

Uniting early learning services 9
- Kindergarten 9
- Long Day Care 9
- Occasional care for children 0-12 years old 9
- Family Day Care 9
- Before and After School Care and Vacation Care 9
- Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) 10
- Preschool Field Officer Program 10

Curriculum 12
- Early learning frameworks 12
- School Readiness Program 12
- Our community 12
- Our environment 12

Enrolments 13
- Priority of access 13
- Xap Early Learning Management System 13

Our early childhood educators 13
- Qualifications 13
- Professional development 13
- Culture and language 13

Family and community 14
- Parental participation and support 14
- Open door policy 14
- Family and visitors code of conduct 14
- Family feedback 14

Health and wellbeing 16
- Immunisation 16
- Supervision 16
- Emergency care 16
- Illness and infectious diseases 17
- Medication 17
- Safety and emergency procedures 18
- Child safety standards 18
- Working with children and vulnerable people checks 18

Nutrition 20

Sun protection 20
- Parent responsibilities 20

Clothing 21

Administration 22
- Service closures 22
- Arrival and departure of children 22
- Changes to enrolled care days 23
- Increasing enrolled days 23
- Celebrations 23
- Excursions and service events 23
- Toys and personal belongings 23
- Photos and video 23

Fees 24

Emergency contacts 24

Early learning policies 25

Feedback 25

Welcome

Welcome to Uniting Early Learning. We're really pleased to have you.

For children embarking on their early education and care, we work in partnership with their families, support workers and the community to provide inclusive, transformational, and contemporary early learning programs that build confidence and resilience to inspire a lifelong love of learning, ensuring that no child is left behind.

Early childhood is an important time for children to engage in critical thinking, build relationships with peers and explore the world around them.

Through play, children practice making decisions and following their own ideas to discover a love of learning.

Children at our early learning services experience:

- the benefits of belonging to a community
- contributing to group learning
- establishing meaningful relationships with peers and educators.

Our early learning programs across Victoria and Tasmania support children with the foundational skills they need for school and life.

Our, family day care, occasional care, kindergarten, out-of-school- hours care, and vacation care services help prepare children to be lifelong learners while helping out working families, with Kindergarten Inclusion Support and Preschool Field Officers providing further support for children with additional needs.

Thank you for choosing Uniting Early Learning. It's our primary purpose to ensure your child gets the best start to their early education.

F. Balsillie

Fiona Balsillie
General Manager
Early Learning
Uniting Vic.Tas






Enjoying
playful
spaces.

The importance of early childhood learning

Early childhood education services are essential to the wellbeing of families and their local communities. They provide opportunities for children's learning, development and social engagement, which build stronger families.

Learning begins at birth

From the moment they're born, children begin acquiring knowledge, learning new skills, and developing attitudes and behaviours they will carry into adulthood. We're committed to laying a solid foundation for children and their families to ensure they have the best possible opportunities in life.

Early learning lasts a lifetime

A child's brain develops at a rapid rate. Early learning experiences last a lifetime and can enhance your child's innate long-term potential, building a strong foundation for all future learning and development.

Nurturing children in positive and inquiry-based environments encourages them to actively explore their world, discover themselves, and build healthy relationships with other children and adults.

We support children to develop and learn important social and emotional skills through play. We encourage interactions with peers that help develop language and apply concepts through real world learning.

We provide children with opportunities for extended play. In play, children are supported in their thinking by a teaching team that believes every interaction with your child counts.

We help lay the foundations for knowledge and skill-building through environments rich in letters, numbers and creative activity.

Those first years matter

Early learning is an opportunity for children to grow socially, emotionally and intellectually.

We provide opportunities for children to explore their creativity, communication, fine motor and analytical-thinking skills to foster healthy self-confidence and acceptance of others.

Our educators nurture these qualities in all children.

We recognise children as individuals and provide opportunities for them to be included in their educational program. We work closely with families to assess each child's needs and can provide additional resources and links to community support services.

About Uniting early learning

Uniting is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania. We have worked alongside local communities across both states for over 100 years.

Empowering children and families to learn and thrive is a key area of our work.

Our services include early learning, family daycare, occasional care, kindergarten, out-of-school-hours care and vacation care. We also provide Kindergarten Inclusion Support and Preschool Field Officers to support children with additional needs across hundreds of kindergartens in Victoria.

Our qualified and experienced early learning team provide child-focused programs to enable growth and success.

We use modern, theory-based approaches to support your child in individual and group settings, creating environments to nurture independence, resilience and curiosity.

Our guiding principles

Inclusion

Each child, their family, and caregivers deserve to be active participants in learning, influence the learning environment, and feel a sense of belonging in their community.

Child as a citizen

We recognise each child as a citizen and value their rights in our services and in the wider community.

Equity

We actively support all children, families, and caregivers to access opportunities to thrive and participate in society.

Learning

Learning is more than teaching. We create experiences and environments for all children to learn about themselves, other people, and their world.

Quality

We strive for continuous improvement and take action to deliver consistently high-quality education and care.



Our commitment to child safety

A child safe organisation takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.

We ensure our staff and volunteers are responsible for child safety across all areas of our work.

All children and young people have the right to feel and be safe and connected to their lands, sea, and culture.

Accordingly, Uniting commits to:

- Doing all in our power to safeguard children and young people from all forms of abuse, harm, neglect, discrimination, or exclusion
- Providing culturally safe environments where children and young people are respected, nurtured, and cared for
- Ensuring we report abuse or allegations of abuse, harm, and neglect to the appropriate authorities
- Ensuring policy, practice and decision making which affects the safety of children and young people focuses on the importance of child safety.

Our early learning website provides links to our current policies that relate to our services and programs. To view our Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, please visit: **earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/policies**

If you have any questions, please contact the educators at your early learning service.

Welcoming all communities

Our commitment to diversity

We work in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and as the traditional owners and custodians of this land. We celebrate diversity and value the lived experience of people of every faith, ethnicity, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity, sex and sexual orientation. We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

The work we do is all about giving people the support they need to live happy and meaningful lives. We are committed to being people-focused and rights-based.



Uniting early learning services

Kindergarten

All children in Victoria are eligible to access 2 years of a funded kindergarten program before they commence school.

Uniting offers free sessional kindergarten for 3- and 4-year-old children and offsets the funded fee component for those enrolled at a long day care service.

Families can only access a funded kindergarten program at one service at a time in line with kindergarten funding guidelines. We require a parent or carer for all enrolled children to sign a form to confirm that this is their funded kindergarten program.

For session hours, please visit:
earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/kindergarten

Long Day Care

Long day care provides consistent, convenient, and quality childcare for children 0-6 years of age. Long day care can support your family in any situation.

Our holistic long day care centres offer all-day or part-time care for busy working families. Whether it's before, during or after business hours, we are here for you when you need us – ready with nutritious meals, inspirational activities and engaging developmental experiences.

Occasional care for children 0-12 years old

Life can be a juggling act, especially for families with busy schedules and commitments. Childcare needs may not always fit neatly into traditional schedules.

Occasional care is the flexible fit for households with busy lifestyles. With a variety of days or hours to suit your situation, occasional care is here for your family – whenever you need it.

Occasional child care, also known as casual or short term care, offers the same high quality education as both our long day care and family day care options.

However, occasional childcare fits around your unique lifestyle. Whether you require childcare for just a few hours or a full day, our programs are designed to support your child's learning while catering to your family's needs.

Family Day Care

Our Family Day Care services provide children with education and care in a nurturing home–learning environment, helping them to develop close and sustainable bonds with their educators. Extended care hours, small group sizes and emphasis on individual attention are just some of the many reasons why parents choose Uniting's Family Day Care service.

Before and After School Care and Vacation Care

Before and after school care provides children with extended learning, fun, and leisure experiences. Led by our passionate educators, your child will have the opportunity to enjoy time with their peers and participate in a wide range of educational and recreational activities.

Our Before and After School Care program is the ideal choice for families with a full schedule. While you get to business, your child gets the best opportunity for fun, leisure and recreational experiences.

Vacation Care is a comprehensive childcare service offering flexible care options for children aged 5-12 during school holidays. Our vacation care offers a blend of fun and educational childcare activities. With a focus on fostering social connections, learning, and community, our educators ensure a memorable and enriching experience for every child.

Vacation care gives you the flexibility and peace of mind to plan ahead, knowing that your child is cared for in a safe and stimulating environment.

Our educators provide indoor and outdoor activities for primary school-aged children, with some services offering excursions and events.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS)

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program supports children of all abilities and enables kindergartens to be responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children living with a disability, developmental delay or complex medical needs.

The program provides resources for educators to deliver an inclusive program for children with additional needs to support their learning and development.

We are the largest provider of the Victorian Government's KIS program.

For more information, visit:
earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/kindergarten-inclusion-support

Preschool Field Officer Program

The Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) program is a free service funded by the Victorian Government to help early learning teams support the inclusion of all children.

The program is for children with additional needs and/or experiencing vulnerabilities in funded three and four-year-old kindergarten and Early Start Kindergarten programs.

A PSFO can help children who need support with:

- Behaviour
- Communication
- Social interactions
- Play skills
- Physical development
- Learning.

We are the largest provider of the Victorian Government's PSFO program.

For more information visit:
earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/preschool-field-officer




Fostering
spirit. Being
adventurous.

Curriculum

Our services follow the national curriculum guidelines to ensure your child:

- Develops a strong sense of identity and wellbeing
- Connects and contributes to their community
- Learns to be a confident and involved learner
- Is an effective communicator.

We help lay the foundations for future learning through environments rich in letters, numbers and creative experiences.

Early learning frameworks

We have approved frameworks to guide our programs.

These frameworks include:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming (The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia)
- My Time, Our Place (The Framework for School Age Care in Australia)
- The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Victorian services only).

Each of these frameworks describes the principles, practices and outcomes used to support and enhance children's learning. Our services may use one or a combination of these frameworks to guide the development of their programs.

Some of our services also follow a specific educational philosophy such as the Steiner and Montessori approaches.

To understand more about the approaches used, please speak to educators at your service.

School Readiness Program

All funded kindergarten programs receive School Readiness Funding. The funding helps children get more out of their time at kindergarten. It can be used to purchase programs and supports. This includes programs to support children's language development, resources for educators to help children manage their emotions or to fund professionals such as speech therapists to work with children, teachers and families.

Our community

We know parents are the most important people in a child's development. We welcome you to actively participate in your child's learning by contributing to program development or interacting with our early learning communities.

Our environment

With a strong focus on indoor and outdoor programs, we celebrate the natural environment and use sustainable materials in our spaces, providing fun, stimulating and sensory experiences.



Enrolments

There are 2 ways to enrol into our programs. For some sessional kindergartens in Victoria, we partner with local government who manage part or all of the enrolment process. All other enrolments are managed and processed by Uniting. For information on how to enrol in a Uniting program, contact your local service or visit: **earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au**

Priority of access

In accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guide, and the Department of Education and Training's Priority of Access Guidelines, Uniting has developed a priority of access that takes into account both state and Commonwealth criteria.

Our priority of access policy:

- Promotes fair and equitable access to our early learning programs
- Supports all eligible children to access our programs, including those who face barriers to participation
- Does not inadvertently present barriers to participation.

Xap Early Learning Management System

XAP is an all-in-one management system used by early learning services across Australia. Its guardian portal is a popular self-service tool and the most commonly used application in the sector.

You can view real-time updates about your child using Xap Smile mobile app or through the Xap guardian web portal.

Uniting Family Day Care uses Harmony to manage its enrolments. Our team will guide families enrolling in family day care through this process.

Some of our early learning services also use additional software to communicate your child's learning journey with you.

Our early childhood educators

The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education sets out the minimum qualification and educator-to-child ratio requirements for children's education and care services. All our educator qualifications and educator-to-child ratios comply with relevant state and territory legislation.

Qualifications

To ensure the best outcomes for your child, our early learning staff have a minimum Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care or equivalent, approved by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. We also have educators who hold a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, and/or a Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education).

Professional development

Uniting invests in the professional development of our people to equip educators with the skills they need to provide safe and nurturing environments to all children.

Culture and language

We celebrate the vibrant cultures of our communities. Educators in many of our metropolitan services speak a range of languages reflective of families in their local community.

Family and community

Our early learning services work with families and local communities.

Parents are the most important people in a child's development. We encourage you to be active in your child's learning by contributing to program development or interacting with our early learning communities.

Parental participation and support

Establishing and maintaining good partnerships between families and our educators is essential.

It is important all parents, family members and friends feel welcome and at ease while their child attends a Uniting early learning service.

Effective communication and partnerships with families about the education and care their child receives is supported by ongoing, 2-way communication. Families can provide invaluable information about their child's interests, strengths and abilities. They can also give feedback to help our educators develop practical program plans focused on meeting the individual needs and interests of children and their families.

You can expect:

- Warm, welcoming and friendly educators
- Open, honest and respectful communication
- Confidentiality in discussing matters with our educators.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Speak with educators at the beginning and end of the day/session, to exchange information about your child
- Advise our educators of any changes in your family situation that may affect your child
- Provide feedback relating to the program
- Participate and assist on the parent group/ committee and with service activities
- Support the program by sharing your interests and ideas, for example, music, cooking, craft work, gardening, dancing and storytelling
- Share cultural information
- Provide feedback on policies, National Quality Standards, surveys, and other requests
- Discuss thoughts or concerns about the service with our early childhood educators.

Open door policy

Parent participation is highly valued in our early learning services. Whether it's helping out in the program, the office, or on a committee, you are always welcome to be part of the program. If you are interested in spending some extra time, please let your child's educators know.

Family and visitors code of conduct

Any person entering a Uniting early learning service is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not pose a risk to the safety of children and educators of the service. If educators believe a person poses a risk to children or others, the person will be required to leave the premises and the police will be called if necessary.

This could include anyone using inappropriate language, displaying inappropriate physical behaviour or anyone believed to be under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.

Family feedback

We welcome all feedback, including complaints, compliments and suggestions from children, families and the general public. This feedback provides information to inform improvements to service delivery and organisational practice.

If you want to provide feedback about an early learning service, please speak directly with your child's educator or the service coordinator.

Call us
1800 183 103

Email us
earlylearning@vt.uniting.org

Visit
earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/contact-us



Health and wellbeing

Good health and wellbeing in a child's early years lays the foundation for improved outcomes in later life. Providing support for each child's growing competence, confidence and independence is important.

Responsive relationships, engaging experiences and a safe and healthy environment all play a role in supporting healthy mental and physical wellbeing.

Uniting's early childhood educators work closely with families and where relevant, health care professionals, to ensure each child's specific health and wellbeing requirements are met.

Immunisation

Before enrolling a child (under the No Jab, No Play, and No Jab, No Pay legislation), early childhood education and care services must first receive evidence the child is up-to-date with all vaccinations due for their age, or are on an approved catch up schedule.

At Uniting, we require every family to provide an Immunisation History Statement (IHS) for each child from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

This is the only document our services will accept to demonstrate a child's immunisation status.

Parents can print a copy of their child's IHS from their myGov account or:

- Call the AIR on **1800 653 809**
- Visit a Medicare or Centrelink office. Families who do not hold a Medicare card must call the AIR to request an IHS.

More information about the No Jab, No Play, and No Jab, No Pay legislation is available on the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance website.

Supervision

We take the safety of children very seriously. Our educators work in ways that enable ongoing and consistent supervision of children at all times, ensuring every child is within sight and/or hearing of an educator. Our teams arrange spaces to ensure children can be effectively supervised and consistently communicate with each other about their supervision of children.

Emergency care

Our educators are required to maintain current first aid, CPR, asthma and anaphylaxis training.

In the rare event of a serious medical emergency, our educators will contact you as soon as possible. In some circumstances, they may choose to call an ambulance to provide them with support and advice.

If for some reason your child needs to be transported to hospital, where possible one of our early childhood educators will accompany them. If this is not possible, they will travel in the care of the ambulance officer.

It is a requirement of the Education and Care Services National Legislation that parents or guardians sign an authorisation, enabling our early childhood educators to seek emergency medical or ambulance assistance if necessary. This authorisation is located on the child's enrolment record.

Our educators maintain records of any accident, injury, illness or trauma that occurs at the service. Parents will be notified as soon as possible and will be asked to sign the record. A copy of the record can be provided on request.

Illness and infectious diseases

In the interests of the health, safety and wellbeing of all children and our staff, children who display signs of illness must be kept at home. If your child becomes ill while at the service, you will be contacted and asked to collect them or arrange to have them picked up as soon as possible.

Please let the service know if your child is going to be away, particularly if they have been diagnosed with an infectious illness.

Our educators are required to notify all parents when a child attending the service has been diagnosed with an infectious disease. This will be communicated via a notice displayed prominently in the entrance to the service. Fact sheets relating to the illness or infectious disease are available on request.

Our educators will follow the advice of the relevant government body should specific measures be required following a notification of an infectious disease.

For a full version of our Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy, or if you have any questions, please contact the staff at your early learning service.

Medication

To ensure the health and wellbeing of the child, medication (including prescriptions, over-the-counter, and homeopathic medications) will not be administered to a child at a service without the authorisation of a parent or authorised person. This includes during offsite excursions and activities.

In the case of an emergency, we will get verbal consent from a parent or authorised person, or follow instructions given by emergency services.

Families must provide a medical management plan signed by the specialist or medical practitioner, either on enrolment, prior to commencement or immediately upon diagnosis of an ongoing medical condition that a child has.

This medical management plan must include a current photo of the child and must clearly outline procedures to be followed by educators in the event of an incident relating to the child's specific health care needs. This should be updated annually or as the medical treatment changes.

A risk minimisation plan and communication plan must be developed in collaboration with parents and encourage ongoing communication between parents and educators regarding the current status of a child's specific health care need, allergy or other relevant medical condition. In the case of an anaphylaxis or asthma emergency, medication will be administered following the instructions on your child's medical management plan. In this circumstance, a parent and/or emergency services will be contacted as soon as possible.

When educators are required to administer medication, they follow regulatory requirements, such as written consent, and follow the guidelines of the relevant policy and procedures.

Our educators will only administer medication if:

- All details are completed and recorded in the medication authorisation record for each day medication is required, or as outlined in the medical management plan from the child's physician or emergency services
- Medication is currently in date, in its original container with the original label, and has been prescribed for that child
- The first dose has been administered by the parent/guardian at least 24-hours prior to attendance at the service in case of an adverse reaction
- Two of our educators are present to administer and supervise the correct dosage of medication, except in our family day care programs, where the educator will administer medication on their own.

Please ensure all medication is handed to an educator once the medication record has been completed.

Children who require an EpiPen or Ventolin must have these medications at the service for the child to attend the service each day.

For more details on our Administration of Medication Policy, go to our early learning website or contact your early learning service.

Safety and emergency procedures

Each early childhood service has an Emergency Management Plan, which follows emergency evacuation procedures. These evacuation procedures are displayed and practised every 3 months. A variety of scenarios will be practised throughout the year. Educators will try to inform you when a drill is to occur.

All Uniting services have Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plans for environmental disasters.

Child safe standards

Uniting believes that all children and young people have the right to be and feel safe.

Uniting complies with Victorian child safe standards and Tasmanian child and youth safe standards and ensures the safety of children is promoted, child abuse is prevented and allegations of child abuse are responded to properly.

Working with children and vulnerable people checks

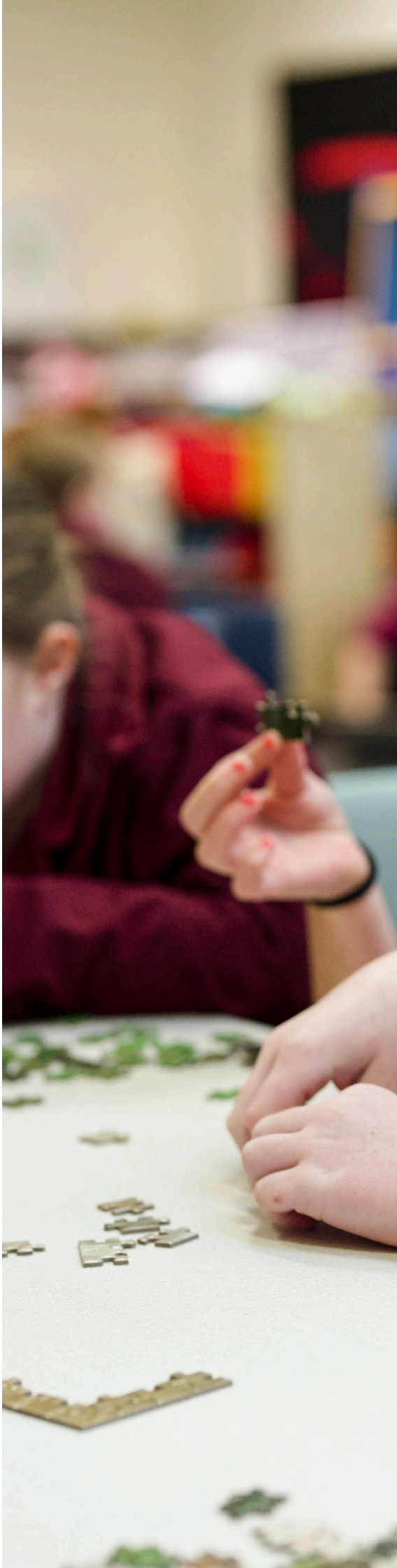
To support our organisation's commitment to children's safety, certain roles and activities in our services require all adults to hold a Working with Children or Vulnerable People Check.

If a parent or family member wishes to volunteer regularly as a parent helper, volunteer in a program, or help out on an excursion you will need a volunteer Working with Children Check (Victoria) or Working with Vulnerable People Check (Tasmania).

Victorian volunteer checks are free, Tasmanian volunteer checks have a small fee.

For more information on Victorian Working with Children Checks, visit: **workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au**

For more information on Tasmanian Working with Vulnerable People Checks, visit: **cbos.tas. gov.au/topics/licensing-and-registration/registrations/work-with-vulnerable-people/applications/apply**




Skills for
school.
Learnings
for life.

Nutrition

Some of our early learning services and kindergartens prepare meals on site. Food safety and accommodating dietary requirements are important to us.

Where families are required to supply food, we encourage you to be mindful of healthy eating, allergies and include enough food so your child won't get hungry throughout the day.

Please remember all our early learning services are allergy aware. Please check with your local service if a particular food is excluded.

Sun protection

In collaboration with Cancer Council Victoria, we have developed a SunSmart Policy for all our services. We believe all children should be protected from skin damage caused by harmful UV rays.

All our educators follow appropriate sun protection measures. They promote sun safe play by:

- Appropriately scheduling outdoor time
- Using outdoor shade areas
- Implementing routines to wear sun safe clothing and sunscreen
- Working with families to increase knowledge and understanding of sun safe practices.

Parent responsibilities

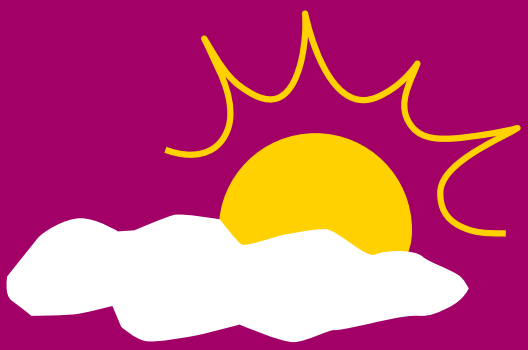
Sun protection measures are essential during sun protection times (issued whenever UV levels are 3 and above). Please provide a hat (legionnaire's or wide-brimmed) and apply sunscreen to your child prior to attendance at the service. SPF 50+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen will be available at the service. If your child is sensitive to sunscreen, please discuss this with the educators as you may need to provide your own sunscreen.

Clothing

We recommend the following clothing be worn or provided for your child:

- Clothing that will allow the child to feel comfortable, relaxed and uninhibited
- For younger children, easy access clothing that allows them to increase their independence and competence in personal hygiene, care and safety
- Layers of clothing so they can adjust to changes in temperature and their activity levels
- Footwear that allows participation in physical activity
- A sun hat (legionnaire's or wide-brimmed with protection for neck and ears)
- A warm hat, coat or jacket for cold weather as outdoor play is a regular part of the program
- A complete change of clothes for children under the age of 5.

Please ensure all items of clothing are clearly labelled with your child's full name.





Administration

Service closures

Occasionally, it may be necessary for our services to close outside of their standard closure periods. Where the closure has been planned in advance, you will be provided with plenty of notice to support you in making other arrangements.

Occasionally a service, or a program within a service will need to close without prior notice. This could be due to environmental concerns or educators being unwell and the inability to find suitable relief educators.

Our educators will try to advise you of the closure as soon as possible.

For more information on our Service Closure Policy, please visit our early learning website or speak to the educators at your service.

Arrival and departure of children

Arrival

Arrival at the service is an important transition time for all children. You can support them by talking about the day ahead while you are on your way. Use the transition time to help our educators meet your child's needs by telling them anything useful or interesting about the previous night or day and by including educators and your children in these conversations.

Departure

Children must be collected by someone who has lawful authority to do so and is nominated on the child's enrolment form. If a different person is collecting your child, authorisation must be provided to an early childhood educator or service coordinator before the child is released into their care. This authorisation must be provided in writing or confirmed by 2 staff members over the phone (except in the case of family day care or single staff programs) and the person collecting must produce current photo identification.

Signing in and out

Each child is required to be signed in and out of the service. Please ensure your child is signed in when you arrive and signed out when you leave. If you're not sure how to do this, please speak to your child's educator. You may be contacted by the service if you don't sign your child out.

Late collection

Late collection can be stressful for your child and our educators. We ask for your cooperation in ensuring children are collected on time.

We understand things sometimes happen outside your control. If you are unable to collect your child by the end of the session/closing time, please arrange for someone else to do so and notify the service as soon as possible. Two educators will always be with your child until collected (except in the case of family day care or single staff programs).

If you are unable to collect your child by the end of the session/closing time, we reserve the right to charge a late fee. For further information, please see the Fee Policy.

Failure to collect a child/children

If your child has not been collected and we have not been advised you are running late, our staff will try making contact with both parents. If we can't get hold of either parent, we will call your emergency contacts.

In the rare event both parents and emergency contacts have not responded to our attempts to arrange pick up of your child, we will advise local police and seek further instruction.

Court and parenting orders

We understand sometimes families can have complex arrangements in place through court and parenting orders.

The order may prescribe who is responsible for your child and who may or may not collect the child from the service. If your child has a specific custody and access arrangement in place, please inform your educators.

A copy of any current court or parenting order is required to be given to the service. This will be attached to the enrolment form and will remain on file and all our staff at the service will be informed of the arrangements in place.

If the court or parenting order does not specify any formal contact arrangements, our educators cannot legally deny a parent access to their child.

It is your responsibility to provide information and documentation regarding changes to court and parenting orders.

Changes to enrolled education and care days

Each of our approved childcare services are licensed for a set number of children in each group. Because of these licensing restrictions we cannot swap days, substitute children or waive fees for absences, outside our normal operating guidelines.

Increasing enrolled days (childcare services only)

Families using our services are given priority for additional places when vacancies occur. If you require extra days or need to change your enrolled days, please advise the service as soon as possible. If the day is not available, you will be placed on a waiting list for the next available vacancy.

We require a minimum 2 weeks written notice if you want to withdraw from any enrolled days.

Celebrations

Celebrations are a wonderful way of supporting connections between children, families and communities. Sharing celebrations provide a sense of belonging and develop respect and understanding of different values and beliefs.

Please discuss with educators, celebrations that your early learning service community can participate in.

Any food supplied to the children as part of any celebrations must meet the dietary requirements of the children and our relevant policies and procedures.

Excursions and service events

Many of our programs offer additional learning opportunities, service events or excursions. Prior to any event or excursion, you will receive a permission form with information about the excursion or event, including learning outcomes. A risk assessment is developed and approved before any event and excursion. You can request to view this document at any time.

Toys and personal belongings

We know that sometimes it is fun for your child to bring a favourite toy or special item of interest from home. We will encourage all children to respect your child's item and do our best to monitor how they are being used. However, we cannot guarantee this item will not go missing or be broken during play. We suggest if the item is valuable or sentimental, it is best to keep it at home. In these cases, your child may want to bring a photo of the item to share with their friends and educators.

Photos and video

When enrolling in our services, you are asked to provide consent to photograph and video of your child for educational purposes. If you do not provide consent, we will respect your decision. If you want to discuss the use of digital media in our programs, talk with your educators as the way technology is used varies from service to service.

You can also give us permission to take photos for marketing purposes. We will always seek additional permission and advise you if any digital content will be used in media or advertising releases.

You can update your photo and video preferences at any time, just advise your educators and they can help you update this information.

To ensure child safety and privacy, parents, visitors and students are not allowed to take photos or videos of children at Uniting early learning services. Educators can take images of children with a service-issued device and can provide to parents via the secure platform that the service uses.

Fees

All childcare services have fees for the programs they provide. Fees can vary depending on the amount of time your child attends and the type of service you choose.

As a not-for-profit charitable organisation, we aim to keep our fees as low as possible. While we do receive some funding from state and federal governments, it is necessary to meet the gap between the funding provided and the actual costs of operating a service.

All our fees are determined by calculating the total cost of operating the service and are reviewed annually.

Find your local Uniting early learning service for session details and fees:
earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/find-a-service

Or get in touch at:
earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/contact-us

Emergency contacts

In the case of an emergency involving your child, when we are unable to contact you, educators will contact your nominated emergency contacts.

When your child starts care with Uniting, you are required to provide emergency contact details.

Please advise your contacts they have been nominated and ensure they are available to respond in case of an emergency. This person must produce current photo identification.

It is your responsibility to notify the service of any change to this information. Please ensure this is done promptly.




Nurturing
confident
and creative
learners.

Early learning policies

Our early learning website has links to current policies for our services.

Approved Providers of early childhood education services must have up-to-date policies and procedures covering a range of areas that support educators' roles in promoting children's health, safety and wellbeing. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the staff at your early learning service.

Visit our policy library: **earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/policies**

Feedback

We welcome your feedback about our services. To share your views, please visit: **earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/contact-us**

Need more information?

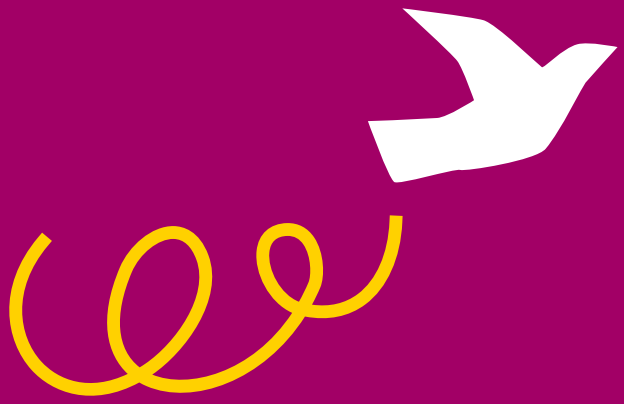
Find a service near you: **earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au/find-a-service**

All images in this handbook have been taken at Uniting early learning services. Thank you to the children, parents and educators who have given consent for their images to be used.




Setting up
a lifelong love
of learning.
FIX-IT
DUCK

The future is bright.



When we respect our history, unite toward achieving a common purpose and share common values, a collective spirit is born.

This gives us the foundation to dare to reach further than ever before and be informed by the voice of our consumers and communities to drive real, positive social change.



Learn more
earlylearning.unitingvictas.org.au

Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited
ABN 81 098 317 125

Cover photo: Our Early Learning services across Victoria and Tasmania help children to thrive.