

**Family Orientation Policy**

**Policy Statement**

Meruka Child Care Co-operative prides itself on its personal approach to all aspects of early childhood education. We therefore believe that the family orientation should be tailored to the needs of each child and their family unit. This policy’s target audience is families new to the Service or returning after an extended absence.

**Orientation Appointment**

* On enrolment to Meruka all families are asked to arrange an appointment so that they can participate in an orientation process to enable their child/ren and themselves the chance to get to know Meruka and the Educators.
* Parents/guardians are encouraged to arrange their orientation appointment within one to two weeks of enrolment and preferably prior to their child/ren’s first day. The preferred time of day is for any time after 9.30am, as this is when all children are settled in their own room and would show a typical example of a stimulating environment active with morning programs.
* Booking the appointment for the orientation process enables educators to plan for extra time to talk to a parent and to help settle the children.

**Pre-commencement familiarisation**

* Families are encouraged to come to the centre as often as they like leading up to their child/ren commencing. If it is a day they are not booked in for, parents/guardians will need to stay in the room with the child. Depending on the number of children attending on any given day the parent may be able to leave the room to have a tea or coffee but they are unable to leave the premises. As soon as a parent/guardian leaves the service they would be charged the daily fee.
* As soon as a child’s booking begins families will be charged the daily rate, this is a flat rate that does not depend on how long the child is at the service.
* Parents are encouraged to talk to educators about their child’s routine and interests and the educators are more than happy to discuss all aspects of Meruka. Parents are also encouraged to make their way out of the room, make themselves a hot drink in the staff room and relax. For some parents this can take time, but we enjoy the company. Children are offered to join in on all Meruka’s routines, meals and transitions.

**Commencement**

* As some children may find it difficult when first attending the centre, it is important that you gradually introduce him/her to day care. Settling in could take an hour, a couple of days or even a couple of weeks. Remember all children are different.
* Try to stay with your child at the centre for half a day initially, or if this is not practicable, consider taking them with you when you go. Easing your child in gradually will cause less distress, and eventually they will be happy to stay at the centre all day. For many reasons some children may take a long time to adjust to a new environment, and you should not blame yourself or your child if they take a while to settle in.
* A gradual adjustment period is ideal. However, if this is not possible, educators are happy to discuss with you some other ways which might assist your child to settle in. Your child will feel happier towards you and the staff at the centre if they are not under any pressure.
* When ready to leave, always say good-bye and reassure your child that you will return. Say good-bye quickly so that your child can settle in to enjoying the day. Many children stop crying within minutes of parents leaving.
* Ring as often as you like to enquire after your child, educators are happy to talk with parents throughout the day and provide updates on how your child is settling in.

**Checklist of items to familiarise with as part of Orientation**

* Policies and procedures
* The parent handbook
* Fees and payment methodology
* How the meals and food are prepared and served, you are encouraged to discuss any dietary requirements and may need to complete paperwork for any special needs
* The sign-in and sign-out requirements, including lockers
* Drop off and pick up
* Security, including front door access code
* Contact details for ease of communication to and from Meruka, including phone numbers and email addresses
* How you receive updates about child/ren’s progress:

Pockets

Visual Weekly Journal

Verbally

Children’s individual journals

The daily whiteboard

* What to and what not to bring in the day bag

**Parents can help their child adjust by:**

* Ease your child into child care with short stays to begin with.
* Provide a favourite toy, blanket or comforter to support your child when they are separating from you or settling to sleep. This can help your child feel more secure.
* If your child is unsettled, short visits with you helps your child to gain trust with an unfamiliar environment. These visits can be made on a day when your child is not booked to attend.
* Interactions between child care staff and parents or staff and other children can produce positive role models and be reassuring. This experience can help to establish trust in an unfamiliar setting.
* Try to talk at home about child care. Mention the names of the early learning centre staff and other children. Talk about the things the child will be able to do at child care that are fun and enjoyable.
* Talk to the educators about your child, for example, what they like to do, and successful ways of settling them to sleep, foods they like and dislike and so on. This helps staff to get to know your child.
* When leaving your child it is best to make sure you say goodbye and then leave. Hesitating and not going after you have said your goodbyes, if a child is upset, only confuses them. Reassure your child that everything is alright and you will return later, this can help them to settle.
* At first some children protest strongly while others may take a day or two to realise that you are leaving them and begin to protest after several days. Children soon learn that you do return in the early education centre and in the mean time they are well cared for.

**Referenced National Quality Standards**

* **Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice**
  + **1.2** Educators and Co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.
* **Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health and Safety**
  + **2.1** Each child’s health is promoted.
  + **2.3** Each child is protected.
* **Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**
  + **6.1** Respectful supportive relations with families are developed and

maintained.

* + **6.2** Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs

about child rearing are respected.

* **Quality Area 7 – Leadership & Service Management**
  + **7.1** Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community.
  + **7.2** There is a commitment to continual improvement.
  + **7.3** Management & administrative systems enable the effective provision of a quality service.
  + **7.3** Information is exchanged with families on a regular basis.