



FAMILY handbook

It takes a village to raise a child – African Proverb

2-10 Grattan St Carlton VIC 3053

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre
Cnr Grattan and Rathdowne Streets, Carlton
Ph: 9347 4949



- **60 place full day early learning centre for children aged 6 weeks to 5 years**
- **qualified kindergarten teacher to provide preschool program for 3 to 5 year olds**
- **qualified and trained child care staff with minimum Certificate III in Children's Services**
- **children's program based on the Gowrie Victoria Early Childhood Learning Framework**
- **Lemon Tree Children's Centre staff are trained by Gowrie Training**
- **opening hours 8.00am – 6.00pm 50 weeks, 2 curriculum days**
- **food program to follow the Start Right Eat Right Program**
- **Licensee is StarBright Learning Exchange Inc.**

StarBright Learning Exchange Inc.

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre is operated by the StarBright Learning Exchange, a not-for-profit organisation established to provide early childhood education and support for orphaned children of South Africa affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. We have seen and heard of the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS and its effect on economic and cultural stability.



StarBright believes children who are nurtured and educated from the earliest age are offered a brighter future. These possibilities are not afforded to AIDS orphans and many children living in severe poverty in South Africa. StarBright aims to provide support, resources and training for preschool programs for young orphaned and disadvantaged African children, so that they will not be the forgotten ones, stigmatized and marginalized.

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre will be helping to fund the StarBright Learning Exchange program in South Africa.

Visit **www.starbright.org.au** for more information

Gowrie Victoria

Children's Program Philosophy

- Gowrie believes in the recognition of the uniqueness of each child and family and the need for children to develop an understanding and respect for self and others.
- Gowrie acknowledges the critical importance of children, parents and staff as partners in a learning community that promotes the wellbeing, education and development of all children.
- Gowrie believes that interaction, sensitivity and attachment are fundamental elements in providing opportunities for children to realise their potential.



Excellence in Early
Childhood Education

Contact:

Centre Director

Carol Ong

Tel: 9347 4949

Fax: 9347 4162

Email: lemontreecc01@gmail.com

Website: www.starbright.org.au/lemontree.html

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Policies in this handbook have been adapted under agreement from Gowrie Victoria in 2008 to support the Lemon Tree Children's Centre during the initial stages of operation. The policies will be reviewed through a consultation process with staff, families and children to best reflect the Lemon Tree Children's Centre community.

“One of the primary and significant responsibilities of leaders in early childhood centres is to make decisions and act in ways that promote and protect the rights of young children”.

Jillian Rodd

1. LEMON TREE CHILDREN'S CENTRE PHILOSOPHY

- We recognise the uniqueness of each child and family and the need for children to develop an understanding and respect for self and others.
- We acknowledge the critical importance of children, parents and staff as partners in a learning community that promotes the well being, education and development of all children.
- We believe that interaction, sensitivity and attachment are fundamental elements in providing opportunities for children to realise their potential.

This potential is achieved through opportunities to:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ▪ imagine and create | ▪ play |
| ▪ reflect on experiences | ▪ imitate and model |
| ▪ propose theories and reasons | ▪ discover and explore |
| ▪ master skills | ▪ experiment |
| ▪ have meaningful experiences | ▪ express thoughts and ideas |
| ▪ solve problems | |
- We believe that the role of adults is to provide a stimulating and responsive environment where positive reinforcement and encouragement make learning possible.
 - We acknowledge, rejoice and incorporate the culture and diversity of people within our community.
 - We recognise and value the knowledge and commitment of the staff and fully support their continuing professional development.
 - We believe that a statement of the centre's philosophy changes as new insights are gained and practice is evaluated.

Broad goals that support the philosophy

The Program

The education and care program will reflect current research and practice in the early childhood field. The education and care program will provide a stimulating and responsive learning environment that reflects the interests and needs of the children. The program will incorporate and reflect the cultural diversity within our community. The program will provide equal opportunities for both genders and reflect an anti-bias approach.

Staff

All staff will have input into the development, implementation and evaluation of the educational and care program. Staff will respect and value children, parents and other staff of the centre. All staff will participate in ongoing early childhood professional training and development. Staff develop and foster positive relationships with individual children.

Children

For each child to feel safe and secure in their environment.
For each child to form positive and trusting relationships with the staff and children at the centre.
For each child to actively be involved in a range of meaningful learning experiences.
For each child to respect and value all children and staff of the centre.

Community

The staff and parents will work in partnership with each other to support their child's learning and development. For staff and families of the centre to show respect and acceptance for the uniqueness of each family, their culture and their lifestyle. Parents of the centre will be provided with a range of opportunities to have input into the program e.g. committees, working bees, involvement in the program, in daily activities and parent staff meetings. For parents to understand the value and importance of play in children's everyday learning.

<p>This philosophy has been adapted from Gowrie Victoria, under agreement in 2008. A working party including families, staff and children will be developed to review the philosophy. A philosophy statement is a dynamic document and all parents/guardians are invited to contribute ideas. Ideas and suggestions can be contributed at any time and through attending meetings, providing written comments and being part of a working party.</p>

2. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE CENTRE

Hours

The centre is open from 8.00am until 6.00pm for 50 weeks of the year. It is closed during the Christmas/New Year period, and on Public Holidays.

Staff

Early childhood staff work an eight hour shift each day and the centre is staffed from 7.45am -6.15pm. Shifts are rotated throughout the year. Staff have one rostered day off each month.

All staff have undergone Working with Children Checks and police checks which is a requirement of the current Children's Services Regulations.

Qualifications and Training

All Early Childhood Teachers who have completed a minimum three or four-year degree in early childhood education. All Early Childhood Educators / Team Leaders have completed a two year diploma in Children's or Community Services. All Early Childhood Assistants to have completed a one year certificate in Children's or Community Services (Cert 111) or be in training for Certificate 111 in Children's Services.

The current regulatory requirements in Victoria for staff/child ratios are: 1 adult: 5 children (under 3) and 1 adult: 15 children (over 3).

Support/Relief Staff

Permanent room staff will be absent from time to time. Absences are due to monthly rostered days off, study leave, personal leave, annual leave or time for program planning, professional development and meetings. Support/relief staff will care for the children and, as continuity of care is important for young children, every endeavour will be made to use the same support/relief staff so that they are familiar to the children. Early childhood staff with a mixture of qualifications, training and experience are employed in this role and they are directly involved in the education and care programs. It may also be necessary to employ casual and agency relief staff to maintain staff child ratios.

Planning Time

This time is for staff to plan, develop and resource the program being offered to the children and to meet with parents to discuss their child's progress. During this time permanent support/relief staff will be with the children.

Staff Development

Lemon Tree Children's Centre encourages staff to continue their professional development; staff will attend a range of training programs throughout the year. Regular support/relief staff will be used on these occasions.

Staff have one professional development day which results in the centre being closed for the day. In 2009 the day is **Friday 26 June. Fees are charged for this day.**

Children's Services Regulations 1998 (Victoria)

The centre is regulated by the Children's Services Act 1996 and the Children's Services Regulations 1998. The aim of the regulations is to regulate the licensing and operation of children's services in Victoria. The Office for Children; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development monitors compliance through annual inspections. A copy of the Act and Regulations can be viewed in the Centre Director's office.

Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)

The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) defines quality care in long day care centres and provides a way to measure this quality and identify areas for on-going improvement. The QIAS is a collaborative process involving centre staff and management working together with families.

The QIAS is based on 7 Quality Areas and 33 Principles that summarise and define quality in long day care centres. These Quality Areas and Principles guide the centre in maintaining and improving quality practices for the children in our care. They also provide the framework by which quality is measured as the centre passes through the five steps of the QIAS; registration, self study and continuous improvement, validation, moderation and the accreditation decision.

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre is a registered centre with the National Childcare Accreditation Council, allowing eligible families to access Child Care Benefit. After the first 18 months of operation, the centre will participate in the final steps of the accreditation process (self study to accreditation decision). It is a continual process of quality improvement and the formal accreditation steps are completed on a regular basis.

An annual survey/questionnaire, which is part of the accreditation process, is circulated to all families for comments and suggestions. Regular information about the QIAS process is also distributed to families. A copy of the Handbook and Quality Practices Guide can be viewed in the Centre Director's office.

FEES

Fees for 2009 (from 12 January 2009)

Daily	\$90	Weekly	\$425
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Minimum enrolment is two (2) days per week. A refundable bond, equivalent to two (2) weeks fees is required to secure your child's place at the Centre. This will be held by the Lemon Tree Children's Centre and can be rolled over for the final two (2) weeks of fees, or refunded to you (provided there are no outstanding fees).

Fees can be paid at reception by cash, cheque, credit card or EFTPOS or, by prior arrangement through Bank Periodical Payments.

For additional information please refer to the Lemon Tree Children's Centre Fees policy on page 17 and Child Care Benefit information on page 19.

Enrolment and Orientation

The centre is committed to ensuring that the waiting list and enrolment process is fair and equitable and fully understood by families who apply for a place.

The orientation process is designed to ensure that the needs of children entering the program are understood and met. Information sessions are held for parents of children who are new to the program and for those who are continuing. During the orientation sessions you can explore and familiarise yourselves with the new environment.

Early childhood staff use a range of strategies to assist children when they begin care in a new environment. This support is also extended to families. Primary caregivers are allocated to children to support the orientation process at the start of the year. Parents are encouraged to spend time with their children during the initial settling in process.

Students and Volunteers

Students from TAFE and tertiary courses can undertake practical placement at the centre. The placements vary in length and purpose. Names of students are advised through notices in the rooms. Volunteers will also work at the centre from time to time. They are required to have an interview and undertake a Working with Children Check prior to commencement. Students and volunteers are always supervised by qualified staff.

Transitions

New situations are often overwhelming for young children. When your child is about to begin group care or is moving to a new room, it can be hard for both of you to say goodbye each day.

Children are involved in an orientation process if they move between rooms at the beginning of each year. This ensures that there is continuity of care for the child and security in relation to forming friendships with other children and staff in the room. In November and December, staff plan for small groups of children to visit their new rooms for the following year. During these visits current staff stay with the children to help them become familiar with the new environment and staff.

Clothing

Young children learn through play and they will be encouraged to explore a wide range of materials and participate in some messy activities. Children will get dirty during the course of the day, so old clothes are preferable. Parents/guardians should provide clothes that allow children to feel comfortable and move freely.

Each child should bring 2 complete changes of clothing in a bag. All clothing should be labelled with the child's name.

Shoes

As the children will be running and climbing during the course of the day it is essential that they wear comfortable shoes that cover their toes and heels. The safety of the children is paramount and good shoes

help to prevent trips and accidents. Children are required to wear shoes both indoors and outdoors; however there will be some flexibility during the warmer months.

Lost Property

Please label all clothes and toys that come to the centre with your child's name. Unclaimed items will be donated to a charity.

Smoke Free Zone

Smoking is not permitted within the buildings and grounds of the centre.

Pest Control

The centre will undertake safe, professional pest control treatment of the environment each year. This treatment will use non-toxic methods and exclude the use of pesticides which leave residues.

Fund Raising

Throughout the year a number of fundraising activities and events are organised by the Parent Committee to create social and networking opportunities for families. Money raised from these events is used to purchase additional equipment for the centre and support ongoing development projects.

Complaints Procedure

The centre's mission is to provide a quality service to all families. However if a situation arises where parents are concerned about the education and care program their child participates in or with the day- to- day running of the centre the following procedure has been put in place:

- Make an appointment to speak with your child's Team Leader to discuss the issue.
- Alternatively, or subsequently, make an appointment to speak with the Centre Director to discuss the issue.
- The Centre Director will document the meeting and an investigation will then take place. A timeframe and process will be agreed upon to resolve the issue/concern.
- The Centre Director will investigate the issue with the parties concerned. On completing the investigation the appropriate action will be taken. Parents will be notified of all outcomes.
- The Centre Director will inform the StarBright Learning Exchange Project Manager of all issues raised by parents. Unresolved issues or concerns can be discussed with the Licensee Representatives Karen Williams or Carol Allen.
- The Office for Children, DEECD can also be contacted if parents are concerned about the care and safety of their child. A Children's Services Advisor for this Region can be contacted on 03-9275 7048.

Parent Parking

When dropping off and picking up your children we ask you to utilise the allocated "No Parking – child care drop off and pick up only" parking spots, situated on Grattan Street directly out the front of the Lemon Tree Children's Centre entrance. These are restricted to 10 minutes only and strict observance to this time restriction must be adhered to. The street parking in Grattan Street and Rathdowne Street is short term only and largely reserved for residential permits. Parents must respect the designated parking restrictions allocated for residents cars.

3. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Arrival and Departure

On arrival at the centre the children must be supervised by their parent/guardian until they enter their room and are signed in. Parents/guardians must sign and enter the time of arrival and departure in the attendance book. Variation to a child's normal attendance time, or if a person other than a parent/guardian is taking a child from the centre must be noted in the attendance book and prior written notice must be given. Change of parent/guardian's daily contact numbers or availability should also be noted. The child must be collected by an adult who is known to them, and is at least 18 years of age. In the case of an emergency a telephone call advising who will collect the child is acceptable. The PIN for the keypad at the front door to access the centre will be provided on commencement. Please treat this PIN as confidential to prevent unauthorised access to the centre. Parents/guardians are encouraged to memorise the PIN to minimise disruption to the program from staff opening the door. When a parent/guardian is running late please phone the centre on **03 9347 4949** to advise staff and to allay the anxiety of the child.

Late Collection of Children

The centre closes at 6.00pm. Children collected after 6.00pm will be charged a Late Fee. Please refer to Late Collection of Children procedure on page 17.

Custody and Access

A parent/guardian experiencing problems associated with custody and access should discuss this with the Centre Director. A copy of a current custody/access order is required for our file. If there is any likelihood of problems associated with the collection of a child, or any changes to court orders, the parent/guardian should immediately notify the Centre Director.

4. PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

Communication Plan

The staff value the relationships they have with parents/guardians and maintain these partnerships through a range of positive and open communication strategies. As part of the communication plan we acknowledge the contributions of families and seek ways of developing responsive methods of sharing information.

- We acknowledge the very real and different expertise and skills parents and professionals bring to the care and education of young children.
- Staff ensure that the transition for children from home to the centre is as smooth as possible. Parents/guardians are encouraged to share as much information as possible about their child and participate in the orientation and transition process. Staff will also discuss ways to help your child settle into the centre.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to become involved in the centre, and familiar with the staff and the program. Families are welcome to share ideas or contribute to the program. This involvement helps children develop a sense of continuity between home and the centre.
- Each room has a group program called 'Reflections'. This enables children's learning to be shared with families. Parents/guardians also have the opportunity to provide feedback and contributions to 'Reflections'.
- Each child has an individual portfolio which provides an ongoing summary of your child's learning and participation in the program. The portfolios are accessible to children and families and can be viewed at any time. Families are encouraged to contribute to the portfolios and take them home to share with family and friends.
- Daily contact between staff and parents/guardians develops the co-operative relationship that enhances your child's wellbeing at the centre. Although the end of the day is often a busy time for all, staff will try to ensure that all parents/guardians are given feedback about their child's day.
- Each room displays a weekly menu and daily timetable of the routines and transitions. Specific information concerning each child's individual sleep/rest times and eating patterns is also displayed for your information.
- During the year staff may arrange individual interviews with you to discuss your child's progress. Parents/guardians can also initiate interviews with staff by arranging a meeting during planning time.
- Any matter concerning your child's development, behaviour or wellbeing may be discussed with the Team Leader of your child's room or by appointment with the Centre Director.
- Links with other services to support you with more detailed questions about your child's development and health can be provided.
- Noticeboards are located throughout the centre. Photographs, programs, information on topics of interest to parents/families and coming events are displayed for parent/guardian information.
- A Lemon Tree Children's Centre newsletter will be issued regularly. Parents may provide material or suggest topics to the Centre Director or a Parent Committee representative.
- Information sessions on topics of interest to families will be arranged regularly.
- Families have the opportunity to become involved in the Lemon Tree Children's Centre and StarBright Learning Exchange and they are invited to participate on the Parent Committee and less formally through the children's programs.
- Please notify the centre of any changes to either home or work addresses or phone numbers. Please include mobile numbers if available. Staff must be able to contact you quickly should the need arise.

5. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND PROGRAM

Educational Program

The children's program reflects the overall philosophy of the centre and encourages children to learn through many varied experiences. The children are offered an indoor/outdoor program for some periods of the day that is based on individual and group interests, dispositions, concepts, skills and values.

Our aim is to provide an environment where play is an important avenue for learning and enjoyment, and where children will learn by using their senses, exploring concepts, taking on roles, testing theories, discovering, classifying, organising, assimilating and expressing their thoughts.

We aim to foster an environment where children are successful and motivated learners, and continuously develop a sense of community and culture through everyday experiences and routines.

The children are free to select and revisit a range of experiences that enhance their interpersonal, intrapersonal, intellectual, physical, creative skills and independence. Staff support children's learning through responsive interactions and the provision of engaging materials and environments. Within the program, staff ensure that children are consistently offered a range of experiences, including language and literature, maths and science, sensory, dramatic and imaginative, visual arts, music and movement, physical, self help and environmental.

The program offers opportunities for children to enhance their skills in the following areas:

- **Physical** – the mastery of the large and small muscles of the body.
- **Interpersonal** – relationships, the ability to enjoy and get along with other people and to work towards shared goals as well as individual goals.
- **Intrapersonal** – confidence in and understanding of oneself as a person, and growth in ability to express thoughts and feelings and manage impulses.
- **Intellectual** – cognitive development which includes: language competency, problem solving, concept development and theory making.
- **Creativity** – thinking about new and different ways of constructing and creating using a diverse range of materials.
- **Independence** – self help skills including the mastery of tools, practical life skills and a belief in your own abilities.

Staff will support children in making choices where appropriate. Children are encouraged to develop their independence throughout the daily routine, i.e. toileting, feeding, dressing and helping to pack away.

All children are encouraged to participate in active physical play throughout the day. Active play includes dance, moving to music, climbing, running, jumping, obstacle courses, ball games, digging and active games. The staff will be positive role models by engaging in active play with children, and will educate children and families about the importance of active play. Opportunities for active play will be both planned and spontaneous, and will meet the individual abilities and interests of the children. Active play will be extended indoors when weather conditions prevent outdoor play.

Our program is shared with children and families through individual portfolios, 'Reflections' and other forms of documentation displayed around the room. Families and children are encouraged to contribute to the program and share the experiences they value with staff. Staff regularly evaluate the program and consider ways to extend children's learning. Staff also receive regular planning time and participate in a range of professional development to extend their knowledge and skills. This enables them to consistently provide quality care and education for your child.

Individual Portfolios

Portfolios provide an ongoing record of your child's progress and aim to make the learning of children visible. They may include written observations/stories, photographs, children's words and dialogue, group projects and investigations, and samples of work. Children and families are encouraged to contribute to the portfolios by sharing everyday experiences and special events. The portfolios are accessible to children and families and can be taken home and shared with family and friends.

Reflections

'Reflections' represents our group program and is written on a regular basis by staff in each room. This form of emergent curriculum enables staff to respond to, support and extend the current interests and ideas of the children in their daily work. This documentation makes the children's learning and participation visible to children and families, and enables children to revisit and reflect on their work. Children's voices are represented through written stories, dialogue, photographs, projects and samples of work. Documentation in Reflections is often linked to individual planning and copies may be included in the children's portfolios.

Excursions

Excursions may be arranged for the children during the year. Parental/guardian assistance on these occasions is essential. Excursions may include attending concerts, visits to art galleries and museums. Children may also be taken for short walks to the library, the local park or shopping area.

Parent's/guardian's permission must be given before a child can be taken outside the centre. Consent forms will be distributed before any excursion or outing is arranged.

Photographs/Videos

From time to time photos or videos may be made of the program. Parents/guardians will be informed of the times when this will occur and may be asked to complete additional permission forms. Photos may be taken of the children at play for displays at the centre. General permission is given on enrolment forms.

Toys from Home

If children need the security of a special soft toy during rest time it should be clearly labelled. Other toys are best left at home where they will not be damaged or cause conflict. Parents will be asked to take toys home if they are not appropriate.

Toileting

Staff will follow the child's and parents/guardians lead regarding toileting. No pressure is put on a child to use the toilet, but children who seem ready are encouraged to do so. Since it is important that there is consistency in expectations for successful toilet training, staff and parents/guardians should discuss the child's toilet training routine.

Nutrition

The goal of the centre's nutrition policy is to ensure that staff adhere to the nutritional requirements for children in a long day care setting and provide meals that are nutritious and culturally appropriate and served to the children in an environment which promotes good eating habits and positive social interactions.

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre is working towards achieving a **Start Right Eat Right Award**. This program is an initiative of the Victorian Government's '*Kids – go for you life*' program funded by the Department of Human Services.

Parents/guardians are asked to provide one piece of fruit per day for the children's snacks. Lollies, chips and sweet biscuits are not permitted. If parents are bringing breakfast in the morning we request that it is cereal or toast. **Due to food allergies no peanut butter toast is allowed.**

Food Allergies

Please discuss any issues related to your child and food allergies with the Team Leader and the Centre Director. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to provide this information to the centre. The centre has a policy and procedures in place for anaphylaxis and staff are trained in these procedures. Please refer to Anaphylaxis policy on page 20.

Celebrations

Please discuss birthday celebration arrangements with your child's Team Leader. Parents are requested **not** to bring in balloons as they are a choking hazard. Due to allergy restrictions parents are not permitted to provide cakes or party food for children's birthdays. For more information please refer to Nutrition policy on page 22.

Rest and Relaxation

We believe that children need quiet times during the day to rest their bodies and their minds. Rest and relaxation are an important part of children's health and wellbeing, particularly in an active group setting where they share their day with a number of people. Please refer to Rest and Relaxation policy and procedures on page 25.

Behaviour Guidance

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre creates an environment that develops a sense of community, encourages mutual respect for the diversity of all children and families based on the equality, rights and dignity of all human beings. The guiding principles for the program are to protect the safety of the children and adults, and to protect the environment. For complete information please refer to Behaviour Guidance policy on page 26.

Anti-Bias and Social Justice

Our programs reflect an acceptance, appreciation of and respect for other cultures, values, intellectual and physical abilities and gender. Diversity is reflected in our programs by integrating an anti-bias, cross cultural approach and through the interactions of staff with families, children and the wider community.

We incorporate experiences that recognise each of us as unique and special and that help children to appreciate and welcome difference and similarity.

6. HYGIENE, MEDICAL, ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCY

Hygiene Standards

Staff are aware that high standards of hygiene are important in maintaining the health of the children at the centre. The risk of the spread of infection is reduced by constant attention and care, and particular emphasis is placed on hand washing. There are agreed procedures for hand washing and nappy changing, and regular cleaning of furniture and toys, food preparation areas, laundering of towels, bibs, sheets etc. Toilet and bathroom surfaces are cleaned frequently, and the rooms are cleaned daily.

Washing Hands on Arrival and Departure

To assist with preventing the spread of germs, parents are required to accompany their child to the bathroom to wash their child's hands on arrival at the centre and also before taking your child home at night. Research has shown that this greatly assists in reducing the spread of germs. It is also a routine that you and your child can share when you arrive, assisting with the daily transition to the centre.

Medications – Children's Services Regulations 1998

Any medications must be handed to the staff. Please do not store medications in your child's bag. A medication record book details:

- The parents/guardians authorisation
- The name of the medication (to be completed by parent/guardian)
- The dosage of medication to be administered (to be completed by parent/guardian)
- When it should be administered (to be completed by parent/guardian)
- The dosage of medication administered (to be completed by staff)
- The time it was administered (to be completed by staff)
- Who administered the medication (to be completed by staff)
- Who checked the dosage and administration of the medication (to be completed by staff).

Children will only be given prescribed medications at the centre if written permission has been given by the child's parent/guardian. Medications must be in their **original containers with the child's name on the label**.

At the end of the day parents/guardians are required to sign the authorisation form to verify the administration of their child's medication.

Non-prescription medications will be given if parents/guardians complete and sign the medication administration book on arrival. These medications will only be given according to the age appropriate recommended dose on the container, for a period of three (3) days consecutively, without consultation with a health care consultant.

Parents/guardians are required to administer the first dose of any medication to the child and monitor the child for any adverse effects.

Parents/guardians must sign the medication form on collection of the child to verify that the medication has been given.

Staff will administer medications strictly as prescribed. Unless otherwise indicated on the label medications stating

twice daily	:	will be given at intervals of no less than 8 hours
three times daily	:	will be given at intervals of no less than 6 hours
four times daily	:	will be given at intervals of no less than 4 hours

All medicines including non-prescription, homoeopathic and herbal medicines must be clearly labelled with the child's name, dosage instructions and use-by date otherwise they will not be administered.

**Verbal authorisation by the parent/guardian for the administration of medication may be given in an emergency with written confirmation to follow as soon as possible.
(Children's Services Centres Regulation 1998)**

Temperature

If a child has a temperature of 38°C or higher staff will make every effort to reduce the temperature by removing clothing, tepid sponging and offering water. Staff may give paracetamol to reduce the risk of a febrile convulsion. Every effort will be made to obtain parental permission prior to the administering of the paracetamol.

It is essential that parents keep staff informed about health related issues, as a child's life could depend on staff having the right information at any given time.

Allergies or Chronic Conditions

It is essential that parents/guardians inform staff of any health-related problems. A child's life could depend on staff having the right information (eg. a history of convulsions). Allergies or chronic conditions should be discussed with staff, so that they can handle children appropriately.

The parents/guardians of a child with a chronic condition (eg. asthma or epilepsy) requiring prolonged/preventative medication should provide the centre with a doctor's certificate/management plan at the time of enrolment or diagnosis.

In these instances, individual medication books can be made available to help reduce the amount of written information required each day. Please speak to a staff member if this is relevant to your child. Please refer to Anaphylaxis policy on pages 19-20.

Immunisation

We encourage all parents to ensure that their children's immunisation schedules are up-to-date. The current immunisation record must be provided before commencement.

Parents need to advise staff of subsequent immunisations after commencement as staff are required to update these records regularly. If your child has a reaction to an immunisation please discuss with staff.

Councils provide free immunisation for children, and both day and evening sessions are available. Contact your local Maternal and Child Health Centre for details of sessions.

Parents of children who are not immunised will be contacted immediately if an outbreak occurs of a communicable disease. Children who are not immunised will not be able to return to the centre until the outbreak is over.

Sick Children

Children attending children's services are often susceptible to infections due to the close contact with other children. Parents/guardians should ensure that they make alternate care arrangements when their child is sick.

The health and safety of all children is of major concern to staff and Parents/Guardians. The centre does not have separate facilities for the care of sick children, and staff/child ratios prevent staff from providing the degree of individual care and comfort that the sick child needs.

Providing the level of care needed for a child who is sick is likely to interfere with the safety and well being of other children at the centre, so staff will ask that children showing signs of illness are taken home.

Infectious Diseases - Keeping Children at Home

Parents/guardians should notify staff immediately if a child or sibling is diagnosed with an infectious disease. This is particularly important, as there is always the possibility of a staff member or parent/guardian being pregnant. The consequences of pregnant women contracting infectious diseases such as Rubella, Parvovirus, Slapface, CMV (cytomegalovirus) and Hepatitis can be severe on the unborn child. A medical certificate is required to confirm that the child is no longer contagious before they can return to the centre.

Parents/guardians will be notified of any cases of significant infectious diseases in the centre. A child with any of the conditions listed in Illness/Disease Information on page 28 should be kept at home for the period prescribed. Notification of all illnesses at the centre will be displayed at the entrance to each room.

Accidents

Should a child have an accident, injury, trauma or illness during the course of the day, the staff will ring the parents and ask them to come and take the child home or to seek medical treatment. If staff are unable to contact the parents/guardians they will ring the persons nominated as emergency contacts. If emergency treatment is required, an ambulance will be called without delay.

All parents/guardians are required to sign an authority for staff to seek treatment at a hospital or call a doctor and/or ambulance so that emergency treatment may be commenced. Staff keep a record of any accidents which occur at the centre, and will inform parents/guardians if children are hurt. Parents/guardians **must sign** this record when it is given to them by a staff member.

Dental Care

Good oral health benefits children's general health and well being, and is important to help them eat, talk, smile and develop self-esteem. Deciduous (first) teeth are important as they guide the eruption and development of permanent teeth. **Please refer to Dental Care policy on page 30.**

Sun Protection

The sun exposure children receive while they are young increases their risk of developing skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia and our skin cancer rates are the highest in the world. It is also one of the most preventable cancers, so protecting children must be a priority. Staff at the centre are very aware of the need for the children to be protected from the harmful effects of the sun and ultra-violet radiation, and implement the strategies outlined in our Sun Protection policy (bearing in mind that *non chemical protection* is considered best for babies and young children). It is requested that parents purchase a legionnaires or broad brimmed hat that protects the face, neck and ears. Staff will ensure that a hat is worn at all times during outdoor play and will role model by also wearing appropriate hats. Please refer to Sun Protection policy on page 31.

Child Protection

The centre works to promote and ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children who attend the children's program. Children have the right to be physically and emotionally safe at all times. Children are vulnerable and dependent upon adult care. They do not have the power to stop abuse; they rely on others to help. It is our responsibility to ensure that children are safe and that their needs are being met.

Child abuse harms children physically and emotionally. The immediate effect and the long-term consequences of child abuse affect the individual, their family and the community at large. Early identification and effective intervention can have a dramatic effect on lessening the harm, and promoting recovery of the child and the family. Child abuse includes: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

All employees of Lemon Tree Children's Centre who have post secondary qualifications in the care and education of children, are required by law under the Children and Young Persons Act 1989, Section 64 (1C) to report to Child Protection Services, when, in the course of their professional duty they believe that any child may have or is likely to suffer from abuse or neglect. In the instance where a staff member has concerns regarding the safety or well being of a child, the Centre Director must be notified.

When making a report to Protective Services the following information must be provided:

- Child's name, age and address
- Parents/Guardians name and address
- Sibling's name and age
- Language of family
- Whether the family know a report is being made
- Whether the worker knows if any other agencies are involved
- Reason for concern
- Worker's relationship with the child

It is then the responsibility of the Protective Services Intake Worker to determine, if and what, further action is to be taken.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

A copy of the emergency evacuation plan can be found on the noticeboard in each room. Please make time to become familiar with the plan.

Staff know the emergency evacuation plans and all related procedures, and they are aware of the children's need for comfort and security in emergencies. These procedures are practiced regularly.

Parents/guardians are required to sign the Emergency Evacuation Practice permission form.

Please note: Parents/guardians who are in the centre during an emergency evacuation are asked to proceed to their child's room, follow all procedures as directed by staff and remain with the group until a roll call has been completed and everyone is accounted for.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

Policies in this handbook are the copyright of Gowrie Victoria and by agreement with Gowrie Victoria are to be followed to support the Lemon Tree Children's Centre during the initial stages of operation.

The policies will be reviewed and re-branded through a consultation process with staff, families and children to best reflect the Lemon Tree Children's Centre community.

The policies and procedures detailed in this handbook are working documents. Until they have been reviewed all staff must adhere to these policies and procedures.

1. LEMON TREE CHILDREN'S CENTRE FEES

Purpose

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre licensee, StarBright Learning Exchange will determine the fees charged for the Lemon Tree Children's Centre with the purpose of providing a quality program for children and their families. StarBright will review the fees twice a year and reserves the right to review fees at any stage, specifically in light of any Industrial Award amendments.

Principles

- A refundable bond equivalent to 2 weeks fees is payable to secure your child's place. This can be rolled over to the final account or be refunded (providing there are no outstanding fees).
- Fees are payable fortnightly, in advance, and are due within **seven (7)** days of the invoice date.
- If fees are outstanding, a child's place at the centre may be jeopardised.
- Fees are charged according to the days booked for a child at the centre, regardless of attendance. Additional days must be approved by the Team Leader and will be invoiced in arrears.
- Full fees will be charged for Public Holidays.
- Full fees will be charged during a child's absence. This includes absences for sickness, holidays and other leave when the place in the program is kept open for the child. During the December-January break there is a two week period when the centre is closed and no fees will be charged.
- Four (4) weeks notice in writing is required to reduce the number of days of a child's enrolment. An increase in days can be applied for, without notice, but a waiting period may be involved.
- Children must be collected from the centre by 6.00 pm or a Late Collection Fee will be charged.
- Four (4) weeks notice is required if a child leaves the centre.
- All parents/guardians can apply for Child Care Benefit (CCB) through the Federal Government's Family Assistance Office (FAO).
- Special Fee Relief may be available if a parent/guardian experiences a sudden change of income or is in financial difficulty. If parents/guardians are having difficulties with the payment of fees, they should discuss their situation with the Centre Director as soon as possible.
- A child may have one funded year in the Kindergarten Program. (The centre can apply for a second year in some circumstances)
- If applicable, children attending the funded kindergarten program in the year prior to school will be required to nominate the Lemon Tree Children's Centre as the centre for kindergarten funding for their child.

Late Fees Procedure

1. Fees overdue by 7 days Parents/guardians will receive a reminder on their next account stating that fees are overdue and need to be paid immediately.
2. Fees overdue by 14 days Parents/guardians will receive a letter from the Centre Director containing the amount outstanding and a final date for payment within 7 days. Verbal contact will also be made with the parents/guardians to discuss the outstanding fees.
3. Fees not paid within 21 days of letter from Centre Director Parents/guardians will be sent a letter from the StarBright Learning Exchange containing a final date for payment and stating that their child's place at the centre may be withdrawn.
5. Debt Recovery Any fees that are outstanding while a child is still in care, or after a child has left the centre will be recovered by a debt recovery agency.

Late Collection of Children Procedure

The centre closes at 6.00pm, children who are collected after 6.00pm will be charged a Late Fee of:

- the first fifteen minutes or part thereof will be \$15.00 per child
- every minute after that will be \$1.00 per minute per child

1. Parent/Guardian Staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian or person expected to collect the child.
2. Emergency Contacts If that person can not be contacted and more than 15 minutes have passed, the staff will then contact the people listed on the enrolment form and ask them to collect the child.
3. Notice to Parents/Guardians If the emergency contact person has collected the child, a note will be left on the door of the centre so that parents know where their child can be collected from.
4. Police/Protective Services If parents/guardians or emergency contacts cannot be reached, the child will remain at the centre with two staff until either the Police or Protective Services are contacted to collect the child.
5. Late Collection Notice Parents will receive a letter stating the late fee charges due.

2. PRIVACY

Purpose of the Policy

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre takes its obligations under the Privacy Act 1988 (Cmlth), the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) and other applicable privacy laws seriously. We respect the privacy of the personal information that we hold. This policy sets out how we handle personal information about individuals.

Lemon Tree Children's Centre collects the following personal information:

Personal information collected and held by the centre may include an individual's name, date of birth, current and previous addresses, telephone/mobile phone numbers, email address, bank account details, credit card details, occupation, drivers licence number, or Child Care Benefits details. Personal information is collected for the purposes of:

- providing our services
- researching and developing our services
- reporting to government authorities
- complying with the law

In certain circumstances we may collect sensitive information such as health information. We only collect this information with the individual's consent (or with the consent of parents, guardians or authorised representatives as appropriate) or as required or authorised by law.

How we collect Personal Information

The centre collects personal information in a variety of ways, including:

- directly from people when they provide information by phone, in person or in written form
- from third parties such as government agencies
- information from referees

Where possible, the centre will collect personal information directly from the individual concerned. However, in some cases we may receive personal information about an individual from third parties such as referees and government agencies. In either case, we will take reasonable steps to ensure that the individual is aware of the purposes for which the information is collected.

Use and Disclosure of Personal Information

We may provide relevant personal information about individuals to government departments and sponsor organisations where we are required or authorised by law to do so.

We may also provide personal information about individuals to our service providers who assist us in providing our services. These may include organisations that assist the centre with data processing and analysis, research or mail services.

We may otherwise use or disclose personal information (including health information and other sensitive information) about staff, children, parents or other individuals for purposes related to the main purpose for which the information was collected, with the consent of the individual (or with the consent of parents, guardians or authorised representatives as appropriate) or as required or authorised by law.

Storage

We will take reasonable steps to protect the security of the personal information that we hold from misuse and loss and unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. This includes appropriate measures to protect electronic materials and materials stored and generated in hard copy. We train our employees how to properly handle personal information and we restrict access to what is necessary for specific job functions.

What happens if an individual chooses not to provide the information?

Individuals are not obliged to give us their personal information. However, if an individual chooses not to provide the centre with certain personal information, particularly that information which we are required to collect by law, then we may not be able to provide you with the full range of our services.

Access and correction

You can request access to and correction of the personal information that the centre holds about you. If you wish to do so please refer to our Access Policy or contact the Centre Director on (03) 9347 4949. We take reasonable steps to make sure that the personal information we collect, use and disclose is accurate, complete and up-to-date.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about our privacy practices or wish to make a complaint about how your personal information is managed by the centre, please contact our Privacy Officer (the Centre Director). Complaints will be handled under the Complaints Policy which can be obtained from our Centre Director on (03) 9347 4949.

3. CHILD CARE BENEFIT INFORMATION

This information was sourced from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website. For further information please contact the Family Assistance Office (FAO) on 136150 or view this information at:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/early_childhood/publications_resources/child_care_services_handbook_2007_2008.htm

The 2008-2009 handbook has not been released at the time of printing, however, updated information is also available from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/early_childhood/default2.htm

Overview

- Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment to help families who use approved and registered child care.
- Your income affects if you will receive CCB and the amount of CCB you will receive for approved care

Who is eligible for CCB?

To be eligible for CCB one or both parents or guardians must:

- Meet Australian residency requirements and have a child attending care in an Australian Government-approved child care service and be liable to pay for this care and
- Comply with immunisation requirements.
- The 2008-2009 budget introduced family income limits to eligibility requirements

Eligibility requirements:

24 hours: all eligible families using approved care can be eligible for up to 24 hours of CCB per week.

50 hours: families using approved care can receive up to the maximum rate of CCB for up to 50 hours per child per week if either parents (or lone parent) are working, looking for work, training, studying or have an exemption from this requirement.

More than 50 hours: families may be eligible to receive more than 50 hours of CCB per child per week if parents are not available to care for the child for more than 50 hours due to work, studying, training or if the family is experiencing exceptional circumstances.

Payment Options – Approved Care

If you use approved care you can choose to receive your CCB in the following ways:

- All of your CCB as reduced fees. This may suit you best if your family income is stable and unlikely to change.
- Minimum rate CCB as reduced fees with any further entitlement at the end of the financial year. This may suit you best if your family income is medium to high and your income is likely to increase.
- Minimum rate CCB **only** as reduced fees or as a lump sum. This may help if your family income is above the income limits (see website for income limit details).
- Lump sum after the end of the financial year. You may prefer this option if your family income is stable and higher than the income limits(see website for income limit details).
- Adjusting your future CCB percentage to recover or reduce any potential payment. This is a good idea if your family income increases during the year. We can check if you have already been paid too much, and adjust your CCB percentage for the rest of the year, to recover or reduce the risk of overpayment.
- Rounding your CCB percentage. This choice is available to you if you receive your CCB as reduced fees.

The options will help you match your payments to your family circumstances and reduce the risk of overpayment. Choose the one that suits you best. You can change your choice at any time.

50% Child Care Tax Rebate

http://www.familyassist.gov.au/Internet/FAO/fao1.nsf/content/faq-child_care_rebate.htm

You may also be eligible to receive the recently announced 50% Child Care Tax Rebate if you:

- Receive CCB
- Use approved child care; *and*
- Meet the CCB work/study/training test.

The rebate will cover 50% of your out-of-pocket child care expenses you have incurred from 1 July 2008 with a maximum rebate of \$7,500.00 per child per year. The tax rebate is claimed in the succeeding year's tax return.

What should you do?

- Keep your receipts or similar records of your child care costs

More information about eligibility and how to claim the rebate is available from the Tax Office on 13 28 61 or www.ato.gov.au

4. ANAPHYLAXIS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy was developed to reflect the belief that the safety and well-being of children who are at risk of anaphylaxis is the responsibility of the centre 'community' including staff and families.

The Purpose

The aim of this policy is to:

- To raise the centre community's awareness of anaphylaxis and its management through education and policy implementation.
- Minimise the risk of an anaphylactic reaction occurring while a child is at the centre.
- Ensure that staff responds appropriately to an anaphylactic reaction by initiating appropriate treatment including administering an EpiPen®.

Principles

- An assessment of the potential for accidental exposure to allergens while children at risk of anaphylaxis are at the centre will be conducted and a risk minimisation plan will be developed in consultation with staff and families.
- Staff caring for children at risk of anaphylaxis will attend anaphylaxis management training and this training will be updated annually.
- All relief staff will be made aware of a child at risk of anaphylaxis, the child's allergies, anaphylaxis management plan and EpiPen® kit. If relief staff are not trained in anaphylaxis management it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that at least one staff member trained in anaphylaxis management is present at the centre and that they are aware that they are responsible for the administration of an EpiPen® in the case of an emergency. If this is not possible parents/guardians must be informed of this situation before the child at risk of anaphylaxis is left in care at the centre.
- A child who has been prescribed an EpiPen® cannot attend the centre or its programs without that EpiPen®.
- This policy is to be included in the Family Handbook.
- Ongoing communication between parents/guardians and staff regarding the current status of a child's allergies, the centre's policy and its implementation will be encouraged.
- A generic ASCIA poster called *Action Plan for Anaphylaxis* will be displayed in the staff room.
- An ambulance contact card will be displayed next to telephones.

Procedures

Staff responsible for the child at risk of anaphylaxis will ensure that:

- The child's anaphylaxis action plan is visible to all staff
- This action plan is followed in the event of an allergic reaction which may progress to anaphylaxis
- Where a child who has not been diagnosed as allergic, but appears to be having anaphylactic reaction:
 1. An ambulance is called immediately by dialling 000
 2. First aid procedures are commenced
 3. Parent/guardian is contacted
 4. Emergency contacts are notified if parent/guardian cannot be reached
- EpiPen® administration procedures using an EpiPen® trainer and 'anaphylaxis scenarios' are practised on a regular basis, preferably quarterly.
- As part of the enrolment procedures, prior to a child attending the centre, any allergies will be documented on the child's record. A medical management plan signed by a doctor must also be provided.
- Parents/guardians provide anaphylaxis action plan signed by the child's doctor and a complete EpiPen® kit when the child attends the centre.
- EpiPen® kit is stored in a location that is known to all staff, including relief staff; is easily accessible to adults; inaccessible to children; and stored away from direct sources of heat.
- EpiPen® kit for each child at risk of anaphylaxis is carried by a trained adult on any excursion that the child attends.
- EpiPen® expiry date is regularly checked. (The manufacturer of the kit will only guarantee the effectiveness of the EpiPen® to the end of the nominated expiry month.)
- Information is provided to the centre community about allergies and anaphylaxis.

Parents/guardians of children will:

- Comply with relevant policies and procedures related to nutrition and health and hygiene.

Parents/guardians of a child at risk of anaphylaxis will:

- Inform staff on enrolment or diagnosis, of their child's allergy and communicate all relevant concerns to staff relating to their child's health.
- Provide staff with an anaphylaxis action plan and written consent to use the EpiPen® as detailed by the action plan.
- Provide staff with a complete EpiPen® kit.
- Regularly check the EpiPen® kit expiry date.
- Assist staff by offering information about their child's allergies, notifying staff of any changes to their child's allergy status and providing a new anaphylaxis action plan in accordance with these changes.
- Comply with relevant policies and procedures related to nutrition and health and hygiene.

For the child at risk:

- The child should only eat food that has been specifically prepared for them.
- Where the centre is preparing the child's food ensure that it has been prepared according to the parent/guardian instructions.
- All food for the child should be in accordance with the risk minimisation plan.
- Bottles for the child should be clearly labelled with their name.
- There should be no sharing of food, food utensils and containers with the child.
- In some circumstances a highly allergic child may not sit at the same table when others consume food or drink containing or potentially containing the allergen.
- Children with allergies should not be separated from other children or socially excluded from activities.
- In the case of a very young child their own high chair should be provided to minimise the risk of cross-contamination.
- To protect babies with allergies from exposure to an allergen, non-allergic babies should be held individually when they drink milk/formula.
- Ensure appropriate supervision of the child on special occasions such as excursions, incursions or family outings.

Other practices at the centre:

- Ensure that tables and bench tops are washed after eating.
- Ensure that all children wash their hands on arrival at the centre and before and after eating.
- Restrict use of food and food containers, boxes and packaging in craft, cooking and science activities depending on the allergies of particular children. The use of food in such activities should be consistent with the risk minimisation plan.
- All children need to be closely supervised at meal and snack times and consume food in specified areas. To minimise risk children should not wander around with food.
- The risk minimisation plan will inform the centre's food purchases and menu planning.
- Food preparation staff will be instructed about the necessary measures to prevent cross contamination between foods during the handling, preparation and serving of food including careful cleaning of food preparation areas and utensils.

5. NUTRITION POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of the nutrition policy is to provide clear guidelines for staff and families regarding the provision of food in the centre and ensure that the early childhood staff adhere to the nutritional requirements for children in a long day care setting in order to provide meals that are:

- Nutritious and culturally appropriate
- Served to children in an environment which promotes good eating habits and social interactions.

The policy has been adapted under agreement from Gowrie Victoria and will be reviewed by centre staff, management, parents and the *Start Right Eat Right* team.

Principles

- Room staff will be required to undergo training in safe food handling and good hygiene practice. The cook responsible for the preparation of meals will have knowledge of nutrition for children less than 6 years, a Safe Food Handling certificate and attend regular training as required. At least one member of staff must hold a Food Safety Supervisor certificate. Staff training requirements are identified on commencement of employment and on an ongoing basis through annual staff appraisal.
- The centre will provide meals, including lunch and morning and afternoon tea, which meet 50% of the Recommended Daily Intakes (RDIs). The centre menu will operate on a 4-week cycle and take into consideration the RDIs, the age of the children, and the cultures of families using the centre and the expectations of children at mealtimes.
- Children will be given the opportunity to try new foods.
- Meal times are social occasions and children are encouraged to help with the preparation of tables. Each Room has a planned routine for the children at meal times. Presentation of food is designed to make food appealing and appetising and a variety of textures, tastes and colours will be provided.
- New foods will not be introduced to babies unless they have been given at home. Staff will actively support both the mother and child where the child is being breast fed.
- Parents/guardians will be asked to provide one piece of fruit per day for snacks. Lollies, chips and sweet biscuits are not permitted.
- To reduce the risk of an allergic reaction, no peanut butter or nut products will be used or kept on the premises, in line with the Food Safety Plan.
- If a child has a known food allergy a Health Management Plan must be completed in consultation with the Team Leader. Medical evidence must be supplied to support the allergy or food intolerance.
- The centre will celebrate children's birthdays in consultation with the Team Leader. Due to allergy restrictions parents are not permitted to provide cakes or party food for children's birthdays.
- This policy will be reviewed by the staff and the parent committee on an annual basis.
- This policy will appear in the Family Handbook and be displayed on the Menu and Nutrition Information noticeboard near the entrance to the children's rooms. General Information about nutrition will be displayed on the Menu and Nutrition Information noticeboard or distributed via the newsletter or in the family communication pockets. This information will be regularly updated and displayed or distributed to families each term (4 times per year).

Training

All room staff will be required to have training in safe food handling and good hygiene practice. The cook will hold a Safe Food Handling Certificate, have knowledge of nutrition for children under the age of six years and attend regular professional development as required. At least one member of staff will hold a Food Safety Supervisor Certificate.

Food and Meal Times

Meal times at the centre are social occasions, and children are encouraged to help with the preparations of the tables. We believe that the presentation of the meals must look inviting for the children. Each room has a planned routine for the children at meal times. Please refer to specific room information regarding meal times. Children are required to bring a piece of fruit each day. Staff will respect the different cultural values of families in relation to foods and expectations of children at meal times. This information will be collected at enrolment by parents completing the Additional Information Enrolment Form and when meeting with the Team Leaders.

The formulation of good eating habits is critical for 0-6 years children. The centre staff will talk with children about food in a positive way. We will endeavour to increase the children's awareness of food and nutrition by including food education as part of our regular programs planned for the children.

Prevention of Choking

Recent investigations into why young children choke on raw foods such as carrots and apples have discovered that young children, especially toddlers, usually use their two front teeth to scrape off small chunks of food and store these in their mouths, without further chewing, then they try to swallow, which can cause choking. To minimise the risk of choking, children under 3 will only be offered foods that dissolve in the mouth or soft foods to very young children eg. bread, banana etc.

Other measures which help to prevent choking:

- All children to be seated when eating
- Staff will supervise and sit with children during when they are eating and drinking
- No raw apple will be served to children under the age of three years
- The centre will avoid giving raw carrot, celery sticks and other hard foods to children 3 years and under. These foods will be grated, cooked or mashed.
- All meat served will be cut into small pieces.
- Children will not be forced to eat.

Food provided by the Centre

The food provided by the centre is chosen and prepared according to the Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADG). A copy of the ADG for Children and Adolescents in Australia is located on the Menu and Nutrition Information noticeboard. These are the recommended daily requirements of food from the five food groups for children aged two to five years:

RDIs are as follows:

- 6 serves of dairy = 600ml
- 4 serves of bread and cereals = 120g
- 2 serves of fruit = 300g
- 2 serves of vegetables = 150g
- 2 serves of meat and meat alternatives = 90g
- 3 serves of fats and oils = 14g.

In a long day care centre where a child is in care for 8 hours, we are required to offer 50% of the Recommended Daily Intakes (RDIs) for children aged one to five years.

- 3 serves of dairy = 300ml
- 2 serves of bread and cereals = 60g
- 1 serves of fruit = 150g
- 1 serves of vegetables = 75g
- 1 serves of meat and meat alternatives = 45g
- 1.5 serves of fats and oils = 7g.

The centre menu operates on a 4-week cycle. There are two courses served at the lunch time meal. Menus take into consideration the RDIs, the age of the children and the culture of the families using the centre. We endeavour to provide a variety of foods to accommodate everyone's taste. We believe that offering a variety of textures, tastes and colour is important when preparing the meals. Water will be available to the children throughout the day. The menus are displayed outside of the kitchen and also in the rooms for parents to view.

The staff will encourage children to taste the food that is offered for the main meal at lunch. Staff share this meal time with children, providing an opportunity to role model behaviour and assist children if necessary. If a child does not want to eat this meal they will not be forced. As an alternative the centre will offer the child a piece of fruit at this time. All children will still be offered second course. If a child over a period of time is not regularly eating their meal, the Team Leader will meet with the parents to look at the reason behind the child not eating and to develop strategies to assist the child in consultation with the parents.

In the case of an emergency evacuation where children need to be removed from the centre or there has been a safety risk in the kitchen, children will be given fruit to eat and milk or water will be available. Parents will be informed of the emergency when they collect their child.

Infants

If children are being breast fed, please notify staff so they can actively support both baby and mother.

Infant formulas and breast milk must be supplied in bottles clearly labelled with the child's name and placed in the refrigerator in your child's room on arrival.

If a child is being fed cow's milk or soy milk, parents/guardians should leave an empty bottle at the centre labelled with the child's name and staff will fill it and sterilise it after each use if the child is less than 12 months. Children will also be given boiled water as an alternative fluid during the day as needed.

Breast, formula and other forms of milk will be warmed in a bottle warmer where the bottle is surrounded by warm water. If not all of the milk is finished when first given, it will be thrown out. Parents are requested to bring an extra bottle of their baby's milk to ensure that staff will have enough for the whole day.

Solid Foods

New foods will not be introduced to infants unless it has first been given at home. It is the parent's responsibility to inform staff of any changes in their child's diet.

At around 6 months, infants can be introduced to pureed or sieved food such as rice cereal, cooked fruits and vegetables. Infants should be offered 1 – 2 teaspoons after a milk feed. New foods should be introduced for at least three days.

Around 6 to 9 months, infants can be introduced to minced, mashed or grated food such as meat, meat alternatives, fruit, vegetables and cereals. These foods should be offered three times a day before milk feeds.

From 9 to 12 months, children can be offered a wide variety of minced meat, chopped and mashed vegetables and fruit, cereals and finger foods. These foods should be offered as three meals a day with healthy snacks in between. Full cream milk foods can be slowly introduced and breast milk or formula should still be offered three times a day after meals.

Food Allergies

Allergy is an abnormal sensitivity to a normally harmless substance that involves the body's immune system. The foods most commonly implicated in food allergy include, milk, eggs, nuts, fish and wheat products.

An allergy may be indicated by an almost immediate appearance of symptoms such as breathing difficulties, vomiting, diarrhoea, eczema and swelling of the face and neck. Some of the symptoms can be life threatening.

Food allergies are more common in infants (10% at 1 year of age) than older children (3% at 6 years of age) and adults, because infants and young children's bodies are not fully developed (Kulig, 1999).

Due to the centre caring for children under 6 years we need to ensure that we are taking appropriate precautions when preparing and serving food.

If a child has a known food allergy a **Health Management Plan** must be completed and a meeting with the Room Leader will be required to discuss the plan. Medical evidence from the child's doctor will be required to support the allergy or food intolerance. Information will be treated as confidential according to the centre's Privacy policy. When preparing the meals for the children the cook will ensure that they cater for these allergies/intolerances when setting the menu. Alternative meals will be provided that are similar to the regular meal of the other children.

Parents are required to meet with staff at least every **six months** to talk about their child's condition and to inform staff of any changes. All new information will be recorded in the child's enrolment details and information will be passed onto the staff working with the child and the cook.

In case of a medical emergency staff will follow the child's Health Management Plan and administer the appropriate first aid. All early childhood staff hold a first aid certificate. An ambulance will be called if needed or the child's doctor and parents will be called for clarification. The centre will keep detailed records of the incident for further investigation.

If a staff member suspects that a child has an allergy or intolerance, they will organise a meeting with the parent to discuss the issue and develop an action plan. This will include documenting what the child has eaten at home and at the centre, they will monitor their behaviour and seek or refer the child to their medical doctor for refer investigation. If an allergy or intolerance has been identified, parents will be required to complete a Health Management Plan.

To reduce the risks of an allergic reaction, **no peanut butter or nut products** will be used or kept on the premises, due to the associated health risk associated with a peanut allergy. This is in line with our **Food Safety Plan**, which is overseen by the City of Melbourne's Environmental Health Officer.

Parents and staff can seek further information regarding allergies and intolerances from the following:

- The child's doctor
- Maternal and Child Health Nurse
- Dieticians
- Centre information
- Allergy support groups
- www.allergyfacts.org.au
- Written references of different food allergies and intolerances.

6. REST AND RELAXATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Purpose

It is the policy of The Lemon Tree Children's Centre to provide opportunities throughout the day for rest and relaxation for all children attending the centre. This is to ensure the health and wellbeing of the children and to combat the negative effects of stress in their lives.

Principles

- All children will be provided with a quiet area or space for rest and relaxation if needed throughout the day.
- Rest and relaxation times may vary throughout the centre depending on the age of the child, their individual requirements and the room the children are in.
- During rest times children will be provided with an opportunity to relax and rest their bodies in an environment that is conducive for relaxation, including appropriate bedding or cushions for comfort.
- Children who do not require a sleep during their time in care will be required to have a time of relaxation after their lunch.

Procedures

Children under 3 years

For children less than 3 years of age, sleep and rest time are important requirements for healthy development. Staff will seek ongoing information from parents regarding their child's sleeping patterns and routines. Staff will endeavour to follow and maintain the same routine that is occurring at home. Parents are required to complete a form asking for information about the child's sleeping patterns.

Children sleeping in hammocks:

The Lemon Tree Children's Centre uses *Amby* Baby Hammocks for infants under 12 months.

These hammocks simulate the conditions of the maternal womb so that your baby can experience the same spatial restriction and sensory stimulation as he did for nine months. Here your baby can still enjoy what nature provided - the gentle vertical motion (as mother moved and walked) and the tactile security of the womb wall. (www.babyhammocks.com.au).

Infants lie naturally in the SIDS recommended supine (on the back) position in the hammocks and research from infants centres that use hammocks offers positive and supportive parent feedback. Two cots are also available. Should you have any queries regarding the use of hammocks, please visit the *Baby Hammocks* website or speak to the Centre Director.

Children sleeping in cots:

Staff follow the recommendations of the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome requirements for putting a child to sleep. The centre will ensure that parents have access to this information.

- Staff will place children on their backs only when putting a baby to sleep
- The child's feet will be placed at the bottom of the cot
- Bedclothes will be securely tucked in.
- Staff will check on the sleeping children regularly.
- Information will be recorded regarding the time and length of sleep.

Children sleeping on mattresses:

While children rest on their mattress staff will sit and help the children to relax. Ambient music and reduced lighting will be used at this time. Children are able to get up when ready and in their own time. Staff will assist children with getting dressed as needed.

Children aged 3 - 5

Many of the children in room two over the duration of the year move from having an afternoon sleep to a period of relaxation. Staff in will seek information from parents on changes to children's day time sleep. Learning to relax is a lifelong skill.

All children are provided with a mattress and fitted and flat sheets. With growing independence children are encouraged to make their own bed and decide on the amount of clothing they will wear according to temperature and individual preference. Beds are generally placed in the same position every day to provide continuity and security.

Children who do not sleep will have a short relaxation time and will then be offered quiet experiences. Staff will sit with children to assist with helping them to relax. Ambient music and reduced lighting will be used during this time. Children who sleep are able to get up in their own time. Other periods of relaxation are implemented incidentally throughout the day.

Alternative forms of relaxation will also be offered to older children, including yoga; visualization; and candle stories.

7. BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is that the education and care program of The Lemon Tree Children's Centre co-constructs an environment that develops a sense of community, encourages mutual respect for the diversity of all children and families based on the equality, rights and dignity of all human beings.

The two behaviour guidance principles for the program are to protect the safety of the children and the adults and to protect the environment.

Principles

- Strategies will be developed for different children to help them work cooperatively and collaboratively with others, taking into account their temperament, age and understanding.
- Children are given opportunities to take on responsibilities and develop the ability to do things for themselves. Children's self-esteem is developed through encouraging self-help skills.
- Children are included in decision-making and the setting of limits and the deciding of consequences for behaviour. Natural and logical consequences are used to help children understand the reality of a situation.
- Children are encouraged to develop social skills that allow them to resolve conflicts without the use of aggressive or destructive behaviours.
- In situations that require adult intervention and support, staff will provide children with clear explanations as to why a particular behaviour is not respectful of the rights of others. Children and staff work together to find alternative solutions.
- The development of self-motivated learning and inner discipline in children is encouraged.
- Collaboration is encouraged between children, parents and staff to develop strategies to support age-appropriate social skills within each group of children.
- If a child or family require professional support services not offered by the centre referrals can be made with parent/guardian permission.

The centre values the support of parents/guardians in educating and encouraging all children with regards to rules and limits of the centre. These limits are based on respect and are set to maintain safety and appropriate behaviour of children, including siblings who are not enrolled in the centre.

8. INCLUSION POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to ensure that the education and care program of The Lemon Tree Children's Centre acknowledges the diversity of the children, families and staff that make up the centre community.

This policy of Inclusion is reflected through the following:

- enrolment procedures
- attitudes of staff and management
- staff training and professional development
- the facilities and environment of the centre
- the programs provided for children
- health and safety procedures implemented by the centre
- participation of parents and the community

Principles

- Children are given opportunities to experience diversity through play.
- Children can participate in non-gender stereotyped experiences.
- Parents and staff from all cultural backgrounds are encouraged and invited to contribute their knowledge and experiences to enhance the program.
- All policies and procedures reflect sensitivity to cultural and individual needs.
- Staff undertake on-going training to develop their skills and confidence in working with diverse groups of children so that they can meet the range of individual needs within a group, manage specific medical conditions and understand different cultural values and needs.

9. ILLNESS/DISEASE INFORMATION

The following information indicates the **MINIMUM** period of exclusion from children's service centres for infectious diseases cases and contacts as prescribed under Regulations 13 and 14 of the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001 – Schedule 6. In this Schedule 'medical certificate' means a certificate of a registered medical practitioner.

Contacts - those who have been living in the same house as the person with the disease, must not attend during the period stated under the heading 'Exclusion of Contact'.

Conditions	Exclusion of Cases	Exclusion of Contacts
Amoebiasis (Entamoeba histolytica)	Exclude until diarrhoea has ceased.	Not excluded
Campylobacter	Exclude until diarrhoea has ceased.	Not excluded
Chicken Pox	Until fully recovered for at least 5 days after the eruption first appears. NB: some remaining scabs are not an indication for continued exclusion.	Any child with an immune deficiency (eg. leukaemia) or receiving chemotherapy should be excluded for their own protection. Otherwise not excluded.
Conjunctivitis	Exclude until discharge from eyes has ceased.	Not excluded
Diarrhoea	Exclude until diarrhoea has ceased or until medical certificate of recovery is produced.	Not excluded
Diphtheria	Exclude until medical certificate of recovery is received following at least 2 negative throat swabs, the first not less than 24 hours after finishing a course of antibiotics and the other 48 hours later.	Exclude family/household contacts until cleared to return by the Secretary.
Haemophilus type b (Hib)	Exclude until medical certificate of recovery is received.	Not excluded
Hand Foot and Mouth disease	Until all blisters have dried.	Not excluded
Hepatitis A	Until a medical certificate of recovery is produced, but not before seven days after on-set of jaundice.	Not excluded.
Herpes ('cold sores')	Young children unable to comply with good hygiene practices should be excluded while the lesion is weeping. Lesions to be covered by dressing, where possible.	Not excluded
Human immuno-deficiency virus infection (HIV/AIDS)	Exclusion is not necessary unless the child has a secondary infection	Not excluded
Impetigo	Exclude until appropriate treatment has commenced. Sores on exposed surfaces must be covered with a watertight dressing.	Not excluded
Influenza and influenza like illnesses	Exclude until well	Not excluded

Conditions	Exclusion of Cases	Exclusion of Contacts
Leprosy	Exclude until approval to return has been given by the Secretary.	Not excluded
Measles	Exclude for at least 4 days after onset of rash.	Immunised contact not to be excluded. Unimmunised contacts should be excluded until 14 days after the first day of appearance of rash in the last case. If unimmunised contacts are vaccinated within 12 hours of their first contact with the first case they may return to school.
Meningitis (bacteria)	Exclude until well.	Not excluded.
Meningococcal Infection	Exclude until adequate carrier eradication therapy has commenced.	Not excluded if receiving carrier eradication therapy.
Mumps	Exclude for 9 days or until swelling goes down (whichever is sooner).	Not excluded.
Poliomyelitis	Exclude for at least 14 days from onset. Re-admit after receiving a medical certificate of recovery.	Not excluded.
Ringworm, Scabies, Pediculosis (head lice)	Re-admit the day after appropriate treatment has commenced.	Not excluded.
Rubella (german measles)	Exclude until fully recovered or for at least 4 days after the onset of the rash.	Not excluded.
Salmonella, Shigella	Exclude until diarrhoea ceases.	Not excluded.
Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)	Exclude until a medical certificate of recovery is produced.	Not excluded unless considered necessary by the Secretary.
Streptococcal Infections (including Scarlet Fever)	Excluded until the child has received antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hours and the child feels well.	Not excluded.
Trachoma	Re-admit the day after appropriate treatment has commenced.	Not excluded.
Tuberculosis	Until a medical certificate is produced stating that the patient is no longer infectious.	Not excluded.
Typhoid fever (including paratyphoid fever)	Exclude until approval to return has been given by the Secretary.	Not to be excluded unless considered necessary by the Secretary.
Vertoxin producing Escherichia coli (VTEC)	Exclude if required by the Secretary and only for the period specified by the Secretary.	Not excluded.
Whooping Cough	Exclude the child for 5 days after starting antibiotic treatment.	Exclude unimmunised household contacts aged less than 7 years and close day care contacts for 14 days after the last exposure to infection or until they have taken 5 days of a 10 day course of antibiotics.
Worms(intestinal)	Exclude if diarrhoea present.	Not excluded.

Exclusion of cases and contacts is **NOT** required for Cytomegalovirus Infection, Glandular Fever (mononucleosis), Hepatitis B or C, Hookworm, Molluscum Contagiosum or Parvovirus (erythema infectiosum fifth disease)

This information is referenced from http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/regulations/id_regs#exclusion (28.07.2008)

10. DENTAL CARE POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that procedures implemented in the Children's Program care for children's teeth in a manner that reflects an understanding of sound dental care principles, and the ways to prevent the development of dental decay and gum disease.

Many young children suffer from dental diseases, of which there are two major types:

Dental decay (the most common) is caused by the interaction of sugar and plaque to produce acids. These acids dissolve the enamel (outer) layer of the tooth. Bacteria in plaque produce these acids after ingesting sugars commonly found in our diet.

Gum disease is caused by certain bacteria in plaque that accumulate on the gum line of the teeth allowing toxins to seep down between the tooth and the gum causing them to become reddened, inflamed and bleed. This can then cause loosening of teeth.

Both of these diseases are preventable with good dental hygiene, and in young children are usually reversible.

Principles

- Parents and staff are provided with information and training so that they understand the value of good oral health and tooth brushing.
- Nutritious meals and snacks are provided children to promote healthy eating habits as an important part of the dental care program.
- Individual and group discussions are facilitated with children about oral education and hygiene and the importance of these practices.
- A tooth-brushing program that incorporates appropriate hygiene principles to promote the habit of brushing teeth will be implemented for older children.
- Children are encouraged rinse their mouths with water after meals if they are not able to clean their teeth.

11. SUN PROTECTION POLICY

Purpose

This policy has been developed to ensure that at the Lemon Tree Children's Centre all children and staff are protected from damaging levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

It is the purpose of this policy is to ensure that all children are protected from the harmful effects of the sun and ultra-violet radiation through a combination of hats, clothing, shade and the use of sunscreen milks and creams.

All information provided in our Sun Protection policy has been adapted from information provided by The Cancer Council Victoria, 2003 and the SunSmart Schools and Early Childhood Program 2006.

Principles

- Children are required to wear a legionnaire, broad brimmed or bucket hat that protects the face, neck and ears. (Baseball caps are not recommended as they do not provide enough protection.)
- Children's clothing should be made of closely woven fabrics that block out the light and should cover as much skin as possible.
- The centre playgrounds have adequate shaded areas where children can play.
- Outdoor play is monitored between the hours of 10.00am and 2.00pm (11.00am and 3.00pm during daylight saving hours) and children are encouraged to seek out shaded areas for play at other times on high risk days.
- As recommended by The Cancer Council Victoria, children's broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen 30+ will be applied to skin that cannot be covered by clothing at two hourly intervals.
- All staff will provide a role model to children by wearing appropriate hats, clothing outdoors and sunglasses, applying sunscreen as necessary and seeking shade whenever possible.
- Many parents are concerned about the use of sunscreen on infants and young children. There is no evidence that using sunscreen on infants is harmful. It should be used in conjunction with other forms of protection such as hats, clothing and shade. Sunscreen milks or creams formulated for sensitive skin usually contain titanium dioxide or zinc oxide and are less likely to contain alcohol or fragrances that might irritate the skin. As with all products, use of any sunscreen should cease immediately if any unusual reaction is observed.
- As UV radiation is not nearly as high during the months from May through to August, parents will have the choice of whether they want staff to continue applying sunscreen during this period. Parents/guardians will be required to complete a form stating their preference.
- On enrolment parents/guardians are informed of the centre's sun protection policy and asked to provide a suitable hat and sunscreen for their child. Written permission for staff to apply sunscreen to their child is also required.
- The centre shares information about sun protection with children, families and staff. This is implemented through meetings, newsletters, noticeboards and children's activities.
- This policy is reviewed each year.