

Family Day Care

Prospective Educator Handbook



This Handbook is designed to give prospective Educators information about being an Educator. In addition, it will support existing Educators in their ongoing role once registered.

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Merri-Bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways known as Merri-bek. We pay respect to their Elders past and present, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.



About Merri-bek

Merri-bek City Council is a progressive council of 195,125 residents: one community, proudly diverse. Our council area sits within the banks of the Merri Creek and the Moonee Ponds Creek, and includes Brunswick, Coburg, Fawkner, Glenroy, Gowanbrae, Hadfield, Oak Park and Pascoe Vale. Our city is vibrant and energetic, known for its active community, cultural diversity, creative industries and the arts. Our long-term vision has ambitious goals for environmental sustainability, social justice, community wellbeing, and creating great places.

Racism, in any form, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any aspect of FDC operations.

Merri-bek Council strives to be a contemporary, innovative and collaborative organisation with a deep commitment to engaging and supporting the Merri-bek community. Our organisational vision is to be one team, brave and diverse, making a difference.

Merri-bek City Council is committed to being a Child Safe Organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We believe children and young people have the right to be and feel safe and that their safety and wellbeing is the responsibility of everyone. You can read more about our [Child Safety Commitment Statement](#) on our website.

Merri-bek Family Day Care

Merri-bek City Council is the Approved Provider for Merri-bek Family Day Care (FDC).

The Coordination Unit is operated by Council.

Educators are required to live within the municipality.

In some circumstances Educators who live close to the border of the municipality may be approved to become an Educator; this is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Contact Details

The Coordination Unit is based at the Coburg Civic Offices. The contact details are:

Address:	Merri-bek City Council Offices 90 Bell Street COBURG 3058
Postal Address:	Locked Bag 10 BRUNSWICK VIC 3056
Telephone:	9240 2300
Email:	FamilyDayCare@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Coordination Unit Staff include:

- Children's Services Coordinator who manages the day-to-day operations of the service.
- Resource Officers who work directly with educators and families on care provision.
- Administration Officer who manages the day-to-day administration and payment components of the FDC program.

Our Philosophy

FDC is a team of Families, Educators and the FDC Coordination Unit. The focus of our efforts in FDC is the child's safety, wellbeing and education. We work in partnership based on

cooperation, respect, and open communication to encourage each child to reach their full potential. We strive for an environment that is safe, happy, and nurturing.

We are committed to the safe and responsible use of digital technologies and online environments. Our service promotes digital literacy, protects children's privacy, and ensures that all technology use supports children's learning, wellbeing, and safety in accordance with best practices and regulatory guidelines.

Racism, in any form, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any aspect of FDC operations.

We believe:

- Every family has the right to quality children's services.
- All children are individuals and have the right to a safe and secure environment which acknowledges the Child Safe Standards.
- Our service will respond to the needs of families from all social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.
- In encouraging children to learn through play, inspiring fun, security in a stimulating and sustainably aware environment.
- All children have the right to encouragement, support, understanding and acceptance.
- In a team approach.

Our Values

Quality Children's Services enhance our community. We promote the development of:

• Mutual respect and trust	• Safety & Wellbeing
• Effective communication	• Partnerships
• Community contribution	• Reflective practice
• Cultural responsiveness	• Identity
• Community Connections and Collaboration	• Confident learning

Code of Conduct/Ethics

The Coordination Unit and educators are expected to abide by the Merri-bek City Council Code of Conduct and ECA Code of Ethics.

Policies

MFDC has a [comprehensive policy documents](#) available to all users of the service.

Educators, families and staff are consulted in planning and reviewing the provision of FDC.

What is Family Day Care?



Family Day Care (FDC) is a homebased, flexible, high-quality care and education service. The service is approved by the Victorian Department of Education (DE) and approved for Child Care Subsidy by the Federal Government.

The service operates under the National Quality Framework which includes the Education and Care Services National Law Legislation and the National Quality Standards.

FDC Educators are self-employed contractors registered with the Coordination Unit to provide high quality care and education for children. Care and education are provided for children aged birth to 12 years and Educators can care for a maximum seven children at a time, of which a maximum of four can be preschool aged. An Educator's own children are included in these ratios until they turn 13. The types of care provided by FDC includes:

- Full time care
- Casual care
- School holiday care
- Weekend care (work-related)
- 24-hour care
- Part time care
- Before and After school or Kindergarten care
- Rostered care
- Overnight care
- Evening care

Priority of access is given to families that live, work or study within the municipality.

Who Can Become an Educator with Merri-bek Family Day Care?



Merri-bek Family Day Care Educators are a diverse group of people of varied ages, experience, abilities, backgrounds and cultures who support and respect all children and families.

All Educators must be aged 18 and over and meet the following criteria:

- minimum qualification of a Certificate 3 in Children's Services. (Higher children's services qualifications are preferred)
- ability to provide safe, high-quality care and education for children based on their development, interests and needs.
- Australian citizen or permanent resident in Australia

All Educators are required to:

- meet the legislative and quality standards outlined in the National Quality Framework
- abide by the child safe standards and
- adhere to the code of conduct measures
- follow the service policies and procedures

It's an expectation that educators:

- value the rights of all children
- commit to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and
- respect culturally and linguistically diverse children
- embrace the safe inclusion of gender diverse children and children with disability.

The benefits of being an Educator include:

- Earn an income working from home and achieving a positive work/family balance.
- Choosing days and hours of work (maximum six days per week).
- Extensive support given by the Coordination Unit that will include mentoring, coaching, access to training and professional development opportunities
- Provide a valuable service to the community

Educators' Families

Caring for children in the home involves the whole family. All members of the applicant's family/household should discuss the impacts prior to applying, because all members of the Educator's household play an important role in the children's experience.

Household members may wish to become involved by engaging in activities with the children in care and assisting the Educator with tasks. However, it is important to remember that the registered Educator is always responsible for the provision of care and education. Children must always be under the supervision of the Educator and confidential matters must not be shared with anyone in the household.

For FDC to be successful, it is important that the entire family/household is supportive and positive about the applicant being an Educator. FDC may also impact on household members, some things to consider are:

- The home will be viewed and visited by people other than family and friends, and this may involve them arriving or leaving at odd hours. Coordination Unit staff and authorised officers from DE can enter the home any time there are FDC children in care.
- The Educator's own children will be sharing their home environment and the Educator (their parent) with other children.
 - Belongings, equipment, and toys may be shared, or require relocation and this can sometimes be difficult for children to accept
- Television viewing and use of digital technologies will be restricted due to the content not being suitable for young children.
- The front door must always be locked.
- The need for privacy if the Educator needs to discuss issues with care families and the need to maintain confidentiality.



The provision of FDC will impact on all household members. It is important to note that if household members and regular visitors are not able to comply with the terms and conditions of the service/ educator agreements, code of conduct and the child safe standards this will have a negative impact on the Educator registration.

What type of home?

FDC can be provided in many different types of homes. Key requirements are that the children's safety and wellbeing and developmental needs and interests can be met. The home meets the

service's health and home safety check requirements. It is preferred that there is an outdoor area for play, this can include outdoor play at a local park.

Educators that live in rental properties must provide written landlord permission to use the premises for FDC with their application.

The care environment must be kept smoke and alcohol-free at all times when children are in care.

Child Safe Standards

Merri-bek City Council is a child safe organisation and makes the following child safe commitment.

Merri-bek City Council is committed to being a Child Safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

We will develop and maintain targeted policies, procedures and training to support employees, volunteers and contractors to achieve these commitments. We create environments where all children and young people have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected, and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

All Council employees, volunteers and contractors have an obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse in accordance with Council policies and procedures.

All Educators must meet the requirements of the Child Safe Standards, Reportable Conduct Scheme, and mandatory reporting. Child safety and Child protection training must be completed prior to registration and every 12 months. Once registered the Coordination Unit will provide further information and training on Child Safety requirements.

Registering as an Educator

What are the costs involved in becoming an Educator?

As with any small business there are several start-up costs as well as costs that recur on ongoing basis. Some of the start-up costs include:

- Home maintenance or changes required to meet safety standards. This could include ensuring fencing can't be scaled, child proof locks, a fire blanket or extinguisher, current first aid kit and safety glass just to name a few.
- Equipment and materials needed to equip the service. These includes age-appropriate toys, books, craft materials, bedding, small tables and chairs as well as business costs such as a printer/scanner, iPad/laptop and iPhone.

Other costs that will be part of registration as well as ongoing include:

- Working with Children and National Criminal History Checks
- Public liability Insurance
- Administration costs associated with electronic equipment, Harmony subscription and internet access.
- Training costs such as first aid
- Play materials and art supplies as well as equipment needed.

Costs incurred to operate a FDC service may be tax deductible.

Registration Process

These steps outline the process to become an Educator. More detail about each step is provided in the sections below.

- Submit an application form, attaching the documents requested, including evidence of relevant qualifications.
- Interview with Coordination Unit staff and consent to reference checking post interview.
- Reference checking
- Health and Home Safety Check
- Medical Assessment
- Working with Children and National Criminal History Checks
- First Aid (including CPR), emergency asthma management and anaphylaxis training certificates
- Online Child Protection Training
- Child Tafe training
- Registration with PRODA
- Mentor visits with existing Educators
- Car restraint check (if transporting children in Educator's vehicle)
- Induction and orientation
- Public Liability insurance
- Educator Agreement

At any time during the process, an applicant may be unsuccessful in meeting FDC requirements. If this were to occur, it would be discussed with the applicant.

Application, interview and reference checking

The application form should be completed with as much detail as possible and include a copy of the relevant documents asked for in the application. Where the applicant has not yet completed the required certifications, e.g. first aid, these can be provided during the registration process.

Applicants should provide a copy of their relevant qualification and when they are living in a rental property provide landlord permission. Applications from renters will not proceed until landlord permission is received.

The interview will be conducted at the Council offices with minimum two members of the Coordination Unit. The interview will be used to determine the applicant's suitability to:

- Provide high-quality education and care for children; and
- Provide a safe and hygienic environment; and
- Complete the administrative aspects of providing FDC.

If not provided on the application form, at the interview the applicant will need to provide at least two professional referees that can provide feedback about the applicant's experience working with children. Coordination Unit staff will contact the referees to discuss the applicant's previous history working with children.

Health and Home Safety Check

The Coordination Unit will conduct a Health and Home Safety check prior to registering an Educator and then every 12 months after this. If the Educator moves to a new house a Health and Home Safety check must be completed on the new home prior to children being in care in the environment.

Once the Health and Home Safety Check is completed and the home is approved, it is expected that the standards will be maintained at all times that children are in care.

The Health and Home Safety Check will be undertaken in all areas of the home. Both indoors and outdoors that FDC children will have access to. Some Educators make some parts of their home inaccessible if they don't want FDC children to access these and these areas would be sighted but not assessed.

Some examples of things that would be looked at are:

- outdoor area is fenced in a way that children can't get over or through the fence
- safety glass on windows where required
- stairways are protected so children can't access them alone
- fans, radiators and heaters are protected and covered
- Front doors and side gate/s are locked
- There is a separate area for pets

On some occasions in a small home/space an Educator may be restricted as to the number of children they can have in care.

Medical Assessment

Applicants are required to undertake a *'pre-employment medical assessment'* before commencing as an educator. The medical assessment will determine the applicant's capacity to complete the physical tasks of the role. Council will refer applicants to Council's provider to complete the assessment and costs will be met by the Council.

Working with Children Check

All Educators, household residents and regular visitors aged 18 and over must have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC). Evidence of this must be provided prior to registration. The Coordination Unit will regularly check the currency of these online.

Educators will need to pay for their WWCC. Household residents and regular visitors aged 18 and over can apply for a volunteer WWCC if they don't require one for their employment. These are free of charge.

Application can be made [online](#).

Criminal History Check

All Educators, household residents and regular visitors aged 18 and over must provide a National Criminal history check prior to registration. National Criminal history checks are repeated at least every three years in a cycle determined by the Coordination Unit.

Criminal History Checks can be obtained from several providers and the Coordination Unit can provide more information. The cost of the checks is paid for by the applicant/Educator.

First Aid Certificate, Anaphylaxis and Asthma

Prior to registration applicants must provide evidence of a current first aid, anaphylaxis management and emergency asthma management certificate/s. This includes the requirement for annual CPR updates.

All first aid certifications must be current at all times and once registered the Coordination Unit will support Educators by providing regular first aid training. The cost of training is paid by the applicant/Educator.

Mandatory Child Protection and Child Safety Training

Applicants need to provide evidence that child safety and child protection and keeping children safe training have been completed prior to working with children.

The Victorian State Government offers [a free online e-module](#) and provides a certificate of completion that takes approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete.

Once registered the Coordination Unit will ensure the Educator understands their obligations in relation to Child Safety including the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme. Additional training will be provided to support ongoing compliance with these requirements.

PRODA registration

PRODA is the system used by the Australian Government to approve services to administer Child Care Subsidy. Each Educator registered with the FDC service also requires a PRODA registration.

The registration process is [completed online](#). There is no cost to register.

Mentor visits with other Educators

The Coordination Unit will match applicants with one to two other existing Educators for a mentoring visit. This is an opportunity for the applicant to view FDC in operation, ask questions of a peer and commence developing peer relationships.

Car Restraint Check

Educators that want to transport children in their vehicle must undertake a car restraint check and provide evidence of this to the Coordination Unit. This is **not** required prior to registration, however transporting children in a vehicle is not permitted until this has been completed. Car restraint checks are repeated annually.

The Coordination Unit will provide information about accessing this, there is a cost to Educators for this.

Induction and Orientation

The Coordination Unit will complete orientation and induction with each applicant. This will include providing documents and online resources that will support the applicant once they are working as an Educator.

Induction and orientation will occur in a couple of sessions and the types of information covered will include:

- Service policies and procedures
- Experiences for children, programming and documentation
- Communication and working with families, the Coordination Unit, and other Educators
- Partner and family member support form
- National Quality Framework
- Education and Care Services National Legislation
- Child Safe Standards
- [Merri-bek City Council Employee Code of Conduct](#)
- [ECA Code of Ethics](#)
- Administration requirements

Public Liability Insurance

All Educators must always have current public liability insurance. Public Liability Insurance covers Educators against damages claimed by families in the event of an accident or injury occurring to a child whilst in care, where the negligence or carelessness is proven to the satisfaction of a court.

It is the Educator's responsibility to pay and maintain currency of their insurance.

Educator Agreement

Once all requirements of registration have been completed the applicant will sign an Educator Agreement and be registered as a FDC Educator. The applicant will receive the Agreement in advance to read through, and a member of the Coordination Unit will go through the Agreement to ensure the applicants understanding of it. The Agreement outlines all the requirements of the

role that must be maintained by Educators. It is linked to the Education and Care Services National legislation, National Quality Standards, the Child Safe Standards and the services policies and procedures.

The initial Agreement will be a three-month probationary Agreement and will be reviewed at the end of the probationary period. If the Educator satisfactorily completes the probation period, an Agreement will be signed to align with the due date of all Educator's Agreements. Agreements run from first of October to end of September each year and are reviewed with all Educators annually.

What to expect once working as an Educator

Legislative Requirements

Educators are required to comply with the Education and Care Services National Legislation, the National Quality Framework and the Child Safe Standards while they are working with children. The Educator Agreement and Service Policies and Procedures are in place to support the Educator to do this.

The Coordination Unit will provide access to the policies and procedures and discuss them with Educators to ensure their understanding of the requirements as well as provide support on an ongoing basis.



Delivering the Care and Education Program

Children's program

Educators are expected to develop the children's program based on the developmental needs, interests, and experiences of each child in their care. This will include incorporating each child's requests and feedback, being guided by their engagement with the experiences provided, and responding to and including incidental events as they arise.

The program needs to reflect the diversity of children and families in care and the wider community as well embedding appreciation and celebration of First Nations culture.

The program needs to be documented and made available to families; with their participation and feedback encouraged.

The Coordination Unit has Educational Leaders, and they, with the rest of the team, will provide support to assist Educators to meet programming requirements.

Supervision of Children

Children must always be under the direct supervision of the Educator. Educators must not leave children in the care of someone else or allow another person to collect a FDC child from school or kindergarten. Children must never be left unsupervised in a vehicle.

Equipment Requirements

Educators are required to provide appropriate educational toys and equipment for children in their care. These must be in good working order and safe for children to use. Where a piece of equipment has an Australian Standard, the standard must be met.

Educators are also required to have a mobile phone, a computer or hand-held device/tablet and a printer and scanner.

Transport

Educators are permitted to transport children to and from child appropriate outings. Some examples of these are visits to a park or playgroup, short shopping trips that are child focused or attending story time at a library. Educators are not permitted to take children on long or inappropriate (non-child focused) outings.

Educators can also transport children to and from school and kindergarten. In undertaking this, Educators must consider the number of venues they will transport to, and the amount of time children not attending the venues will spend in the car.

Prior to transporting children by car Educators must have completed a car restraint check.

Written authorisation from each family is required for all routine outings and excursions, along with the relevant risk assessments. The Coordination Unit provide these documents.

Home Visits

Once registered the Educator will receive regular ongoing visits from a Resource Officer. The Resource Officers aim to visit each Educator twice a month. Visits are more regular for newly registered Educators and can also be more regular if the Resource Officer, Educator, or parent has a concern.

Home visits will be a combination of scheduled and unscheduled; Educators must accept a visit any time there are FDC children in care.

The focus of home visits is to assist and support the Educator as both a childcare professional and as a small business operator. The safety, needs and development of the children in care are a priority and the matters discussed are relevant to the care and development of the children as well as service development.

Home visits are an opportunity for Educators to discuss any concerns about the children, families or administration and an Educator can request a visit if they need additional support.

Support

The Coordination Unit is open Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5pm excluding public holidays. An emergency on call phone is available for Educators outside these hours, should they require support or assistance when the office is not open.

Continuous Improvement

As required in the National Quality Framework, FDC participates in an ongoing Quality Assessment and Rating process. This is a continuous improvement cycle to assess and improve provision of quality programs for children and families.

As part of the continuous improvement process the Coordination Unit develops and regularly updates a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Educators are encouraged to have an input into the QIP which can be done on home visits, as part of meetings, via phone or email.

Educators can provide feedback on the service at any time to a member of the Coordination Unit.

Professional Development

All Educators are required to participate in ongoing professional development. The Coordination Unit will arrange training opportunities and Educators can also seek professional development opportunities of their own.

Some sessions will be compulsory, while other sessions Educators can elect whether to attend or not.

Training provided by the Coordination Unit is usually in the evening. The Coordination Unit aims to promote any training in advance allowing Educators to plan their attendance.

Meetings

The Coordination Unit has Educator meetings during the year, these can be in person, online or a combination of both.

Educators are encouraged to contribute agenda items, and the agenda is distributed prior to the meetings. These meetings generally have a specific focus, such as fees, while also providing an opportunity to discuss any other relevant topics.

Educators are required to attend meetings.

Working Days/Hours

Educators can set their own days and hours of work; within a minimum of three and maximum of six days per week. Educators choose their earliest start and latest finish times and can select to work on weekends if care is required. Days and times can be adjusted, and the Educator can discuss this with the Coordination Unit to make changes.

Fees

The Coordination Unit provide a fee range for all Educators and each Educator sets their fees, within that range. This is for the provision of care only. If Educators provide meals or transport. additional fees are charged to the family – these fees are set by the Coordination Unit.

Families accessing FDC may be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). The service will receive both the CCS and the Gap Fee payments and will transfer these funds into the educator's nominated bank account fortnightly, provided timesheets are submitted accurately and on time to the coordination unit.

How much will I earn?

This is dependent on the days and hours the Educator is available, the number of children in care and the hourly fee set by the Educator. There is no guaranteed minimum earning.

Administration

To meet legislative requirements and ensure accurate payments Educators must keep daily attendance records (timesheets) for each child.

FDC uses Harmony software to administer the service. Each Educator is provided access to Harmony to complete and submit timesheets, as well as to access the enrolment and other information about the children in their care.

A Personal Identification Number (PIN) is provided to each Educator, as well as an individual PIN for each person authorised to collect and drop off each child. PINs must not be shared. Families use their PIN to sign children into and out of care each day they attend as well as to approve the timesheet.

Tax Information

Educators are self-employed contractors, running their own business. The Coordination Unit does not withhold any tax from CCS payments and tax is the responsibility of the Educator.

Many set up and ongoing costs can be claimed on tax – Educators are encouraged to seek advice on this.

The Coordination Unit provides each Educator a Payment History report at the end of each financial year.

Occupational Health and Safety

The health and wellbeing of all Educators is paramount. The Coordination Unit will provide training, including manual handling, for all Educators on an ongoing basis. This will assist Educators to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to their health and safety.

If an Educator becomes sick or injured while working, they must notify the Coordination Unit as soon as possible. If the sickness or injury are more severe the Coordination Unit can assist in organising children to be collected and support the Educator to get the medical attention they require.

When an Educator has become sick or injured while working an incident report will be completed, the Coordination Unit will work with the Educator to do this. Merri-bek Council provides Workcover for Educators, and more information is provided when needed.

Manual Handling and Safe Lifting Practices

The Coordination Unit will assess each home and identify any manual handling risks and then work with the Educator to minimise the risks and ensure the Educators understands the correct procedures to follow.

Educator hygiene, clothing and footwear

Educators must present themselves, their home in a clean and hygienic manner and must always wear appropriate clothing and footwear when children are in care.

