



Murrindindi Family Day Care



Family Day Care Handbook 2024



Murrindindi
Shire Council



1. AN INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY DAY CARE

Murrindindi Family Day Care provides child care for people who live or work in Murrindindi Shire and surrounding Shires such as Mitchell and Yarra Ranges. Educators generally provide the child care in their own homes while before and after school care is often provided in venues such as schools.

Families may be eligible for a subsidy from the government towards the cost of child care.

What is special about Family Day Care?

Family Day Care (FDC) offers an alternative to centre-based or informal care arrangements. It is particularly suited to the needs of babies and small children who respond to the individual attention of the educators and the home environment provided by Family Day Care.

Up to four pre-school-aged children, or a total of seven children, are cared for in the home of a registered educator (this includes the educator's own children if they are under 13 years old).

We are committed to the safety of your children. We have made a 'Statement of Commitment' to this effect and have a clear 'Code of Conduct' which sets out expectations of appropriate behaviour. All educators have met our selection criteria, which includes a written application, interview, orientation, police check and Working with Children check. We check references of our educators, and educator's homes are safety-checked prior to registration. Our educators are also required to undertake professional development short courses, such as maintaining current first aid, anaphylaxis and asthma certificates. All our educators also have as a minimum a Certificate III in Children's Services.

The emphasis in FDC is on a safe, warm, engaging and happy family environment with an educator who enjoys and understands children, and is skilled at meeting their educational and developmental needs. We understand that families are made up of many different types of relationships and we appreciate and recognise all.

Educators may be able to collect children from school or kindergarten. Participation in playgroups and story times at the local library is encouraged, as is attendance at appropriate community events.

What can Family Day Care provide for you?

- ✦ Full-time care
- ✦ Regular part-time care
- ✦ Occasional care
- ✦ Before and after school care
- ✦ Holiday care
- ✦ 24 hour care (conditions apply)
- ✦ Respite care
- ✦ Emergency care
- ✦ Overnight care (not more than 24 hours)



The role of the educator

An educator is able to offer childcare in a home-based situation. The child is able to see the educator performing some household duties, such as preparing meals and washing, so the emphasis on normal family life is very important. Our educators use the Early Years Learning Framework that is informed by the National Education and Care regulations. Our educators plan and document daily activities which take into account the developmental needs and interests of the children in their care.

Do I have to work to be eligible to use Family Day Care?

Family Day Care is available for a variety of reasons. If places are limited, then first priority is given to children at risk and parents who have work or study related commitments. After that there are often spaces for children of parents who just need some time to themselves. You may not be entitled to Child Care Subsidy, however, so it's best to check with Centrelink.

Children with additional needs often thrive in Family Day Care because of the individual attention they receive from their educator and the small group setting.

A parent using care for respite reasons may lose their place if a child with a higher priority needs that place. Parents will be given two weeks' notice if this occurs and every effort will be made to offer your child a place on a different day with that educator or a place with a new educator.

Can I choose an educator myself?

When you have completed the enrolment form (which can be completed online via the link at <https://www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au/Our-Services/Children/Child-Care> or we can send you a paper copy) we will contact you and discuss your needs and those of your child and we will provide you with phone numbers of educators who we believe would be suitable. Many educators review their bookings each school term so may have a waiting list.

You are encouraged to contact the educators on your list and visit their homes before you make your final choice. When you have made a booking with an educator they will contact the coordination unit and we will send them your enrolment information.

Please be aware that an educator may not agree to provide care for your child. There could be many reasons for this, please do not take it personally. We may also have very few vacancies.

Monitoring of quality

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) will conduct regular assessments of our FDC scheme, and we are committed to the quality improvement process that is part of the National Quality Standards. We have recently been rated as 'Meeting' the National Quality Standards.

A field officer visits each educator regularly for support with resources and paperwork, to check cleanliness, maintenance and safety of premises, and to observe the educators and the children in care as they spend their day.

However, you visit the FDC home every time you drop a child off or collect a child. If you have any concerns about the quality of care, please try discussing those with the educator. If you find this too difficult, or you feel that you are not making any progress, please contact the FDC staff to discuss your concerns.



2. WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A FAMILY DAY CARE HOME

Children respond to their total environment, which includes the people in their lives, both adults and children. Therefore, it is worth taking care when choosing your educator.

Your child's needs

Children need a person they can trust and who genuinely likes children.

Someone who will:

- ✦ give individual attention and comfort
- ✦ provide a stimulating and safe environment
- ✦ set a balance between active and quiet play
- ✦ encourage individual creativity and social play
- ✦ promote positive social interactions
- ✦ have similar child rearing practices as you do
- ✦ provide effective documentation of time in care

Your first discussion with the educators

Your chosen educator should have similar child centred ideas to yours and should be able to communicate with your children in a similar manner to you. However, do remember that the educator sets the rules in their own home. Make sure your child/ren visit the educator with you, this will start the relationship off in a collaborative way.

Discuss regular outings with the educators. Shopping, playgroup, trips to the park, health centres, pre-school and primary school are normal family experiences, and are encouraged as part of Family Day Care. All children travelling in cars must be in approved restraints.

Please also discuss any medical needs your child might have. If the booking goes ahead, the educator will prepare a medical risk management plan which will include details of your child's needs, what triggers will need to be avoided and what to do if there is an episode of the condition – eg Asthma. You will also need to provide an Asthma plan from your medical practitioner in this case.

When you have made a booking with an educator

Make sure that you and the educator have discussed, and come to a clear understanding about: provision of food and spare clothes, who to contact in an emergency, what will happen if the educator needs to use an assistant educator, and what to do if you cannot bring or collect a child at the booked times.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES – PARENTS & EDUCATORS

You and your educator must work hand in hand to give your child the best possible experiences and outcomes.

Sharing information

Even though your life is very busy, it is important to take a few minutes to talk to your educator as you drop off or collect your child. Tell the educator the little things they need to know about your child, how much she/he enjoyed doing a particular activity.

Give the educator the assurance that you trust them and that you will support their efforts to care for your child. If they feel they have your confidence, they will be more open with you. Your educator will then feel at ease sharing the day-to-day details of your child's life, including the minor and not so minor triumphs and issues. Your educator will provide you with written, pictorial and verbal documentation about your child/ren's time in care. If you have any serious concerns please arrange to talk with your educator at a time when there are no children in care.

Immunisation

We cannot confirm the enrolment of a child that is not fully vaccinated for their age. There are exemptions, such as if they are on an approved catch up schedule, or they have a medical reason not to be vaccinated. You must provide proof of these exemptions. Conscientious objection is no longer a valid exemption. We will assist you with information about how to obtain the correct documentation. These requirements do not apply to school age children who enrol in Family Day Care. *Enrolments will not be processed without a History Statement of Immunisation with children under the age of 5.*

Illness

Educators are not able to care for ill children. If you or your educator are not sure whether your child is well enough to be at care, please take the child to your doctor to obtain a professional opinion. Please discuss illnesses with your educator.

Medication

If your child requires medication during the day, please fill in the 'authority to administrate medication' form provided by your educator. Educators cannot be asked to administer medication that requires any invasive procedures (for example give an injection) unless they have agreed to do this and have had professional training. If your child is anaphylactic and/or asthmatic they will require an action plan before they start care. An additional Risk Minimisation plan will have to be completed with educators before you start care. This will be supplied by your educator.

Emergency contacts

Ensure that your educator always has **current** work and home phone numbers for all adults authorised to collect your child. FDC cannot provide care for children if there is no-one able to collect the child in an emergency. We will ask that you update your enrolment information on a yearly basis but would appreciate if you'd notify us of any changes when they happen.

Emergency

In the unlikely event of an emergency your child is the educator's number one priority and the appropriate measures and procedures will be conducted to ensure their safety during an evacuation or emergency. You will be contacted as soon as it is safe and possible. Our educators practice evacuations every three months.

Equipment

Educators provide the equipment and toys used in FDC homes. All equipment used for children in care will meet Australian safety standards.

Safe environment

Your educator will work hard to ensure a safe environment for your child whilst in care. However the educator's home is also a workplace and as such they have a right to working conditions free from harassment, bullying and discrimination. Offensive behaviour by a parent or child contravenes workplace OH&S guidelines, and breaches may result in termination of care for the family concerned.

Our educators are Mandatory reporters under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, which means that if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse they must report it to either the police, or Child Protection. Our educators all undergo training in this area.

Sunsmart

The period of October through to April is our sunsmart period. We ask that parents supply hats for care along with the appropriate clothing. Further discussion will be had with your educator before starting care. Sunscreen will be provided, however if your child has sensitive skin, we ask you to provide your own.

Accidents

All illnesses and accidents will be recorded on an illness or accident form, and reported to FDC staff. You will be asked by your educator to sign accident report sheets.

In your *Parent Agreement* you will give permission for the educator or FDC staff to seek medical attention if you cannot be contacted. It is recommended that you have a current ambulance subscription as any expenses will have to be paid by parents.

In the event of an accident or injury occurring to a child due to what you consider to be negligence on the educator's part, it would be necessary for such negligence to be proven and damages established through the normal legal process.

Transport

Parents are generally responsible for transporting children to and from the educator's home. In your *Parent Agreement* you will have given permission for any trips up to 5 km but you must give written permission if the educator wishes to travel more than 5 kms with children in care. Risk assessments and Authority forms will be completed by educators and signed by parents before children are taken on routine outings or excursions.

Time sheets and booking of care

Booked hours must be confirmed at the beginning of each fortnight. To confirm a booking parents sign the 'booked hours' section on the right side of the timesheet. Fees will be charged for the booked hours whether the child attends or not. If the child stays longer than the booked hours this will be recorded on the timesheet.

If you do not wish to pay fees as above, care should only be arranged on the morning of the day the care is needed. Care will only be available if there is an educator who has a casual vacancy. Casual care rates are often higher than booked hours.

Parents must sign time sheets at the beginning and end of care each day. The educator can only initial timesheets for drop off or collecting children from school or kinder.

Many of our educators use electronic sign in/sign out. If this is the case, when your enrolment is accepted, you will receive an email from our software provider with a PIN number you will need to use to sign your child/ren in and out each day. At the end of each fortnight, you will be emailed the timesheets for your verification and approval before we lodge them for processing. We would appreciate if you could approve and return as soon as possible to expedite processing.

Fees will be charged for care booked but not used.

If families have given two weeks notice of termination of care, CCS will not be granted to parents if child is absent on the last day of care.

We ask that you inform educators the need for casual care 48 hrs beforehand and a discussion around this will be had with your educator. Please note there is a possibility that casual care is generally a higher fee than a standard hourly fee.

Contracts for care

Educators and parents may sign a contract for regular hours, which will be charged each week. Small differences in time used will be adjusted as necessary. Each educator will decide individually whether to offer contracts.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent due to illness or holidays, please notify your educator as soon as possible. Fees are charged on all bookings not used, irrespective of the length of time ahead that notice is given. See Absences and Child Care Subsidy on page 9.

Late arrivals

Educators are not expected to be available if the child is more than half an hour late without notice. Fees will be charged if children are booked but do not arrive.

Collecting children

Please be prompt when picking up your child. If you cannot avoid being late collecting your child, let your educator know as soon as possible so they can prepare your child for a change in routine, or contact your emergency person to collect them.

When you register with FDC you provide a list of people authorised to collect your child. The educator cannot allow a child to leave the home with anyone not nominated by you. If a person not originally nominated on your application is to collect the child please give the educator written permission in the 'Messages' space on the timesheet. **If your educator uses an electronic sign-in/sign-out system, this will need to be arranged beforehand so the person collecting your child can be issued with a PIN number. Please DO NOT give them your PIN number.**

If there are any court orders relating to your child the coordination unit and your educator will need to have a copy.

Termination of care

Parents must give educators two weeks (10 business days) notice that care is no longer needed. A reason is not required. Educators should give parents one week (5 business days) of notice of termination of care.

However in some circumstances, with the approval of FDC staff, care may stop immediately. No booking fees are payable if immediate notice is given. If an educator gives notice and the parent wishes care to continue, both parties should contact the coordination unit.

Clothing

Parents should provide sufficient changes of clothing for children in care to allow for accidents and/or messy play experiences. Children attending FDC should arrive at care wearing suitable footwear and clothing for the day's activities. A hat and sunscreen are required when it is warm, and a coat, hat and waterproof boots during cold periods. It is very important for young children to take part in all sorts of play without worrying about getting dirty.

Nappies

Please discuss with your educator. Generally parents with children in nappies are asked to provide enough nappies, wipes and creams for the child each day but some educators may choose to include these in the cost of care.

Food

Most parents provide the food for their own children in FDC, however some educators may include the cost of food in their fee schedule. Ask your educator about this option. If you have not provided enough food for your child the educator will supply some and may charge you for this. Payment for food is made directly to the educator.

We encourage healthy food options for your children only. Special occasions such as birthdays can be celebrated with a 'sometimes food', and fruit and vegetables will be available during the day for your child if needed.

We recommend only milk or water be provided for your child as a drink. Soft drinks and cordials are full of sugar and not a healthy option.

Bathing

It is the parent's responsibility to bath children in their own home. However, if a child is staying overnight at an educator's home, or it is very hot, it may be appropriate for children to have a bath. This should be discussed with your educator.

4. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Families who use the Family Day Care Scheme may be entitled to assistance towards the cost of their fee through Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

The CCS is an income/activity tested subsidy. Families who earn less than \$80,000 per year receive a subsidy of 90% of the actual amount charged up to a capped hourly rate (for FDC this amount is \$13.24 per hour). The subsidy decreases as your income increases.

Family entitlement to the subsidy will be determined by a three step activity test. You will need to contact Centrelink on 136150 for information on how to complete the activity test.

All Centrelink requirements regarding the CCS must be completed and your enrolment approved prior to you commencing care with our service. We suggest that you commence the process with Centrelink the moment you decide you will need care as it can take several weeks to complete.

5. FEES FOR CARE

Educators may review their fee schedule on a regular basis (usually annually). Parents will be notified in writing at least two weeks in advance of any changes to fees.

Fees for care

Educators set their own fees with approval from Murrindindi Shire Council. Some educators may provide food or nappies as well as the care of your child. Please make sure you are clear about what is provided, especially if comparing educators on cost. An educator's fee can increase at any time during the financial year. Appropriate notice of two weeks will be given to families before there is a change of fee.

Administration levy

The FDC service will also charge an **administration levy of \$2.50 per child** per hour in addition to the fee charged by the educator. This levy is capped at \$150.00 per family per week. This is to make it easier for families that have more than one child.

Bookings

Please book the days required at the start of each timesheet fortnight. Families are required to give two weeks' notice of change of booked days, this includes increasing or decreasing of days. Your educator will ask you to sign for the hours required to confirm the arrangement. This will guarantee a place for your child on the days booked. A place is not guaranteed unless booked hours are signed. A booking is considered 'permanent' if the same hours are booked and signed for each fortnight.

Casual arrangements are made on the day the care is to take place and do not constitute a regular commitment by either the educator or the parent.

Our service's standard operating hours are from 8am – 6pm. Any care outside of these hours may be an additional fee.

Holding fees for absences

Full fees are charged for all absences from booked hours, whether the bookings are regular or not. There are no holding fees for school aged children during the school holidays for regular before and after school care that is normally had during the school term.

On Code Red Fire Danger Rating (FDR) days, if your educator is not able to provide care, a normal absence will apply. Educators may have their own payment policy for Code Red days.

Absences and Child Care Subsidy

Each child whose parents receive CCS is eligible to receive CCS for up to 42 absence days per child per financial year to cover public holidays, minor illness and any other reasons for absence. Additional absences are allowable under certain conditions such as if the child attends preschool, a pupil free day where other arrangements have been made as well as several other reasons.

In cases of Emergencies, where the Government has declared a State of Emergency (such as natural disasters) and your child is unable to attend care, there may be an option to waive the gap fees on any applicable day. An absence will be utilised in this instance.

If a child is leaving the service, CCS will only be paid for absences during the notice period if the child attends the last session of care. If the child does not attend the last session, the family will be billed at full fee for the entire notice period where care has not been used.

Minimum fee

Educators may charge a minimum fee per child per day (sessional fee). If children are in before and after school with the same educator their hours are totalled for the day. If a child is in care with two different educators on the same day the minimum fee will be charged per educator. Booking times however, cannot overlap.

Kindergarten/ Preschool

If your child attends Kindergarten during your booked days for period of time you will be charged for the full day of care if the educator is required to take/collect the child and they are the nominated emergency contact with the Kindergarten. This will be an additional conversation with your educator around this arrangement.

Public holidays

If you have a booking on a Public Holiday, fees may be charged by the educator as normal, even if the Educator is not working on that day. Some educators will choose to work. Educators can, if they wish, have a higher fee of charge for public holidays. This will be a discussion with your educator around this.

Educator sick

No fees are payable if the educator is unavailable due to illness or for urgent personal or family reasons. The rules around using absences for Covid related illness are changing regularly. We suggest that you discuss the most recent ones with your educator should the need arise.

School aged children

A 'school aged child' is one who is attending school. Family Day Care is not able to take the place of school for a school aged child on a regular basis. Family Day Care is available for school aged children during the school holidays, before and after school, pupil free days, weekends and public holidays.

6. PAYMENT OF FEES

Family Day Care fees are based on timesheets submitted by educators to council each fortnight. It is as much your responsibility to sign your children in and out as it is the educator's. Both parties need a record of the time entering care and leaving care for insurance purposes.

This timesheet is very important as it is, in effect, a statutory declaration verifying the child's whereabouts, making a claim for your CCS, and authorising payment to the educator.

Fees are charged for the hours booked plus any time used over these hours. Your CCS subsidy, less the administration fee, is paid to your educators by direct credit. The balance of your account (the 'gap' fee) is payable by you directly to your educator.

Distribution of statements & payment of accounts

Each fortnight, your educator will give you an invoice showing the amount you owe. This invoice is a record of the care used and the cost of care for the last fortnight only. Where a child attends care with two or more educators, separate invoices for each educator will be sent directly to you instead.

The amount on your invoice is payable to your educator by the date specified. Educators are self employed and will be relying on your payments.

Payment must be made electronically, deposited into the educator's bank account. This is because the educator and the service must prove to the government that the gap fee has been paid.

If you do not pay fees on the due period educators have the authority to cease care immediately.

Debt management & stop care

Your educator's aim is to keep your children in care but this cannot be done if you do not pay your accounts promptly. If payment of your account becomes a problem please talk to your educator. Care will not be available if your account is overdue and a repayment plan is not in place.

Your educator may have a debt management policy. This will be discussed with you at your interview at the educator's home.

Educators run their own small business. Educators are able to engage the services of a debt collection agency to pursue unpaid fees. Additional costs to you would apply if the services of the debt collection agency are used to pursue unpaid fees.

However, if you are having trouble paying your account due to exceptional circumstances, please speak to your educator about your situation or if you feel uncomfortable, call the coordination unit.

7. GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE

Priority of access

Family Day Care is aimed primarily at children from birth to five years but can assist primary school children where there is no OSHC service, and older children in emergency situations.

If the demand for child care exceeds the number of places available the following priorities will be followed when filling vacant places where possible.

1. Child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
2. Child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the activity test through paid employment.
3. Any other child

Please note that we have so few vacancies that it is rare for families to be using FDC for social reasons (Category 3).

Publications that guide our practice

The following resources provide parents, educators and the FDC Co-ordination team with a framework within which the service is run. Copies are held at the office and these are available for loan to any parents who would like to read them. If you would like to discuss any issues related to these guidelines, please phone 5772 0333 for an appointment with FDC staff.

Education and Care Services National Regulations

National Quality Standards

Child Care Provider Handbook

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Your educator has each of the following local guidelines available for use. Please talk to your educator if you would like to borrow a copy of any of these.

Policy and Procedure Manual (see next page for a list of policies)

You can also access a copy of the Policy and Procedure Manual

[here](#)

Educator agreement

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8. CONCLUSION

We always try to provide a service that caters for the needs of children, parents and educators, but there may be a time when you wish to make a complaint about the scheme.

Grievances or complaints

If you have a grievance or complaint about any aspect of the FDC service, this may be made verbally or in writing to FDC staff, children's services co-ordinator or a manager. Your grievance or complaint will be treated with respect and will be investigated fully.

If your complaint or grievance was made verbally in the first instance, you may be asked to meet with a staff member or put the grievance or complaint in writing so that we can confirm the facts about the issues that have been raised.

If a complaint is upheld appropriate consequences will be applied. This may take the form of retraining, a formal warning, suspension, or termination of agreement.

When we have completed our investigation we will inform you of the outcomes and the actions that will be taken. It may be necessary for the parties concerned to agree formally about future actions. In this case a written agreement would need to be signed by all parties concerned.

If you are not satisfied with the response to your grievance or complaint

Murrindindi Shire Council is the provider for FDC, so a grievance or complaint which you believe has not been addressed fairly or completely should be referred in writing to:

Community Wellbeing
Murrindindi Shire Council
PO Box 138,
Alexandra
3714

Office hours for FDC staff

Office hours are Monday through Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm (public holidays excluded)

Phone 5772 0333 or toll free 1800 633 792

If this phone is unattended please leave a message and we will return your call

Mobile 0407 509 531

Email familydaycare@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

Murrindindi Family Day Care Philosophy

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which Murrindindi Family Day Care educators and staff work and live on. We would like to pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Murrindindi Family Day Care believes in providing the best quality early childhood education and care possible, while accommodating the different needs and requirements of families, children, educators, and the community.

Our purpose is to ensure all children feel safe, secure and nurtured within each educational environment. We take great pride in meeting our responsibilities as mandatory reporters. Our goal is to support educators to provide an environment that is welcoming and inclusive, and offers all children the opportunity to play and learn in a safe and accommodating environment.

Identity

We encourage and admire children's individualities and welcome children of all genders, religions, cultures and abilities.

We trust that educators establish and maintain respectful trusting relationships with the children in their care and their families. We have confidence all of our educators and Family Day Care staff help children to feel recognised and respected for who they are, as well as encouraged to empathise with and express concern for others.

Communication

Our goal is to create a mutually-respectful and equitable environment where parents and educators communicate politely, honestly and regularly with one another about the children's care. Honest and professional communication by all parties creates an environment where needs can be discussed and solutions found.

Wellbeing

A child's self-esteem, sense of self-worth and feeling of belonging is nurtured through role modelling and the positive interactions they have with our educators and Family Day Care staff. We are committed to ensuring all children attending our Family Day Care service experience learning success and are motivated to accept new challenges through which they can grow.

Learning

We believe in the importance of play in a child's development. At our Family Day Care service, children have access to planned and spontaneous activities every day and are offered opportunities to explore their environment safely. They participate in a variety of rich and meaningful inquiry-based experiences. Our educators develop learning programs that are responsive to each child's needs and build on their individual culture, strengths, interests and knowledge.

We cherish the relationships children have with their families and understand family is the most important connection a child has to support their development and learning.

Community

Our Family Day Care educators continuously update their early education and care and skills through training, study and professional development. We are committed to improving our knowledge and skills to provide a quality service.

We recognise and praise the individuality each educator brings to our Family Day Care service - this creates an environment of respect and diversity.

We value the Early Years Learning framework and recognise it upholds the principles of 'Belonging, Being and Becoming', which creates a holistic approach in caring for children.

We strive for excellence as facilitators in this sector and strongly advocate to the government for the role Family Day Care plays in the wider community.