

MERRYLANDS/HOLROYD FAMILY DAY CARE



Childcare in a Friendly
Home Environment

**A Handbook for Prospective
Carers and other
Household Members**

Family Day Care Office

Address : 74A Military Road
MERRYLANDS NSW 2160

Telephone : 9681 6511

Fax : 9632 1061

E-mail Address: mhfdc@holroyd.nsw.gov.au

Office Hours : Monday to Friday
8.00am – 4.30pm

Holroyd City Council

Address : 16 Memorial Avenue
MERRYLANDS NSW 2160

Postal Address : P O Box 42
MERRYLANDS NSW 2160

E-mail Address : hcc@holroyd.nsw.gov.au

Telephone : 9840 9840

Fax : 9840 9915

Office Hours : Monday to Friday
8.00am – 4.30pm

Manager- Holroyd City Council
Children's Services : 9840 9903

Useful Contacts

NSW Dept of Community Services
PO Box 2645
PARRAMATTA NSW 9630 0199

DOC's Helpline : 132 111

Family Assistance Office : 136 150

National Family Day Care
Council of Australia : 4588 6000

Notes:

Family Day Care –An Introduction

Family Day Care is a community based quality childcare service that offers professional and supervised care for children up to 12 years of age in the private homes of approved, registered family day care carers. Schemes are managed by coordination units to provide the highest standards of quality care for children in a secure and stimulating home environment.

Schemes are accredited by the National Childcare Accreditation Council and follow a Quality Assurance process every two and a half years. This process recognises the scheme's strengths and where improvements can be made. The process involves carers, staff, families and the management committee and covers all aspects of Family Day Care, documenting the many processes and procedures in place.

The Aim of the Service

The aim of the service is to provide a quality home based service which abides by the regulations of the NSW Government (Department of Community Services), the conditions of the Federal Government (Department of Family and Community Services) and adheres to the policies of Holroyd City Council's Children's Services.

Carers are required to implement a program of suitable experiences each week for all children in care. Daily experiences and opportunities that encourage learning, increase socialisation, promote physical growth and maintain emotional stability are aims of each carer.

Merrylands / Holroyd Family Day Care supports the principles of anti-bias, which ensures that all children and families are treated equally with no bias against race, sex, religion or abilities. Suitably qualified and experienced people from a diverse range of backgrounds are encouraged to apply for positions within the scheme.



OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Merrylands/Holroyd Family Day Care...

We believe that all carers should be given ongoing support to enable them to provide quality childcare in a home environment.

We believe that all children in care are individuals. We aim to provide age appropriate activities which foster development and lead a child to reach their full potential.

We endeavour to meet the needs of all families in the community by providing flexible, affordable and accessible quality childcare.

We acknowledge that each family is unique and respect each family's individual values, beliefs and customs.

We recognize that children in care may have additional needs

We aim to support and assist the children, their families and the carer to meet their individual needs.

We recognise the diversity in family structures, environmental and cultural backgrounds.

We recognise that each carer is a professional and brings to the scheme a variety of qualities and skills.

We recognize that each carer is unique and brings to our scheme different beliefs, customs and values.

We believe that carers and coordination unit staff should have access to quality training and professional development.

We believe that carers need opportunities to network and liaise with other carers.

We encourage communication and welcome feedback from carers and parents.

We believe that ongoing reviewing and evaluation of policies and practices is essential in maintaining a high quality service.

(Reviewed February 2008)

DO YOU WANT TO DO FAMILY DAY CARE?

Family Day Care makes you rich!

RICH

in

the joy of life

children's affection

new skills

lasting friendships with adults and children

days of variety and spontaneity

experiences of cultural and social diversity

self knowledge

achievement

Contact Merrylands/Holroyd Family Day Care

Phone: 9681 6511

Email: fdc@holroyd.nsw.gov.au

How Do I Join Merrylands/Holroyd Family Day Care?

If you are confident that you wish to continue with your application, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to our office at 74A Military Road, Merrylands.

Be aware that the scheme does not always need carers in all areas. This means your wait on the waiting list might be longer than someone who lives in an area in which there is a high need for care.

When the need in your area arises, the co-ordination unit will contact you by telephone or letter to arrange an interview and home safety check in your home.

Please note that an application to be a carer with Merrylands/Holroyd Family Day Care does not necessarily result in registration. The selection criteria must be met and there is a limited number of vacancies for carers in each suburb.

Unsuccessful Applicants

An application may be rejected for reasons that include, but will not be limited to the following:

- Unsatisfactory "Working With Children Check" of applicant or other household member/s.
- Unsatisfactory character of the applicant or other household member/s.
- References unavailable or unfavorable.
- Unsatisfactory Risk Assessment of the applicant's home.
- Unsatisfactory medical report.
- Inability to demonstrate the capacity to supervise and care for the children adequately.
- Refusal by prospective carer to comply with an obligation within scheme and legislative requirements.

A prospective carer that disagrees with the decision of the coordination unit may appeal this decision to the sponsoring body in writing stating the reasons for appeal.

Family Day Carers

There are many reasons why people want to offer day care in their homes. Some find that caring for other children is a good way to provide playmates and companionship for their own children. Some need to add to their income without having to work outside the home, others may have started by offering to care for the child of a neighbour or friend. Many others enter Family Day Care because they truly enjoy the laughter and excitement that children bring to their homes.

Whatever your reasons, if you respect, understand and enjoy children and know how to provide for their growth and development, you will probably be able to succeed as a Family Day Carer. More than likely you will enjoy the experience. But before you decide to offer day care for children in your home there are some practical things you should consider very seriously. If you are aware of these factors before you begin to offer day care, the chances that you will enjoy your venture will be greater.

Important Points to consider...

Caring for children is hard work, physically and emotionally. So ask yourself: Am I in good health? Do I have the physical strength and stamina that will be needed? Can I handle accidents and emergencies calmly and efficiently? Am I flexible enough to handle the surprises that come when children are around?

Children tend to feel insecure and unloved if they are shifted around from home to home. They need the care of the same adults over a period of time. Would I be able to give the children the continuity of care they need? Can I continue to offer my service for a year or until the children and their families no longer need it.

Anyone considering becoming a carer should be able to offer at least one year's commitment to the scheme.

Family Day Carers are people who:

- Provide a safe and secure child care service in their own home environment.
- Are sympathetic to the welfare of children.
- Are of suitable maturity, health and personality to adequately care and supervise children.
- Have adequate knowledge and understanding of children and families so as to be capable of meeting their needs.
- Offer a close relationship with the child and his or her parents.
- Are recruited, trained and monitored by the coordination unit.
- Have access to training to develop their skills and knowledge of children and childcare practices.
- Have a current First Aid certificate.
- Represent the cultural diversity that exists within the community.



What will the scheme expect of me?

- To conduct your service according to the regulations, guidelines and policies of family day care.
- To be reliable, flexible and co-operative.
- To attend and participate in playsession regularly.
- To keep the coordination unit staff informed of all changes in care.
- To conduct your service as a small business.
- To respect children's and parent's confidentiality and not to discuss them with other carers or parents.
- To regularly attend carer training inservices.
- To allow the coordination unit staff into your home.

Carers can decide their work hours but availability between 7am – 6pm is preferred. The availability of children to suit your hours is dependent on the community needs. The more flexible you are as a carer, the quicker your vacancies will be filled.



What equipment & resources will I need?

As you will be caring for children of various ages you will need equipment for all stages of development. Most carers start out with a small amount of equipment and their imagination. Resources then build up over time.

Carers are required to join the Holroyd Council Toy Library where toys, equipment and a wide range of books, CD's and tapes are available to borrow to extend your resources.

As you purchase toys and equipment it is important to remember that children need a variety of activities throughout the day. Be sure to have at least:

- Art and craft material.
- Construction toys.
- Infant toys.
- Books, puzzles and threading material.
- Accessible shelving for children.
- Child sized table and chairs.
- Dress-ups – bags, shoes hats etc. (Dress up clothes of any type and props from the home children can use. You do not need to spend a lot of money on toys and equipment if you set up your home creatively).
- Items to build with – this could be as simple as empty boxes.
- Things to make music with, or listen to music on.
- Space to crawl, walk, run, roll and throw a ball.
- A place to play with water or sand without worrying about a mess being made.

Other Household Members

As the words “Family Day Care” indicate, caring for children in your home involves your entire family. Working in the home brings a unique set of issues around how your family (spouse and children) might respond, support or adjust to this. If you have a partner, children, or other family members living in your house, you should, as a family, talk over your plans before starting.

Important points to consider...

- How will your partner feel about caring for other people's children as well as your own?
- If there are other relatives in the house, such as grandparents, how will this affect them?
- Your own children could find it hard to share their mum with other children.
- Your own children will have to share their home and possessions.
- Older school children may find the rules hard to accept (eg: not being able to have friends over, due to day care numbers).
- Many carers experience guilt to some degree around their own family commitments / conflict of interest issues.
- There is less freedom for you to do what you want / need to do.
- Carers own child management skills are under the magnifying glass by parents, staff and other carers.

If, after carefully considering these questions and talking them over with your family, you decide that you would really enjoy and benefit from the experience of taking care of children in your home, then you can begin to plan to become a care provider. You will need to think about many things now – possibly rearranging your house, licensing, budgeting, business and legal matters, all the things involved in running a small business.



Support

The coordination unit is staffed by trained professionals who provide the link between carers and parents.

The coordination unit supports carers by visiting them regularly in their homes. The scheme also provides:

- Administration help.
- Resource people.
- Alternative and emergency care for children.
- Regular newsletters.
- Guidance and support to assist carers accommodate children with additional needs.

There is also a well-established parent/carer Advisory Committee who take an active part in all aspects of the service.

New carers are linked to other carers in their locality on a “buddy” system to develop networking skills amongst carers.

Licensing

The State Government (Department of Community Services) provides the regulations under which family day care can operate. Carers are required to sign an agreement to abide by these regulations and any additional policies and procedures adopted by Council and/or the scheme. Failure to meet Council and/or scheme policies and procedures could lead to deregulation.

Each registered carer may care for a maximum of seven children aged under 12 years of age, including their own, but never more than five children who have not yet started school.

It is expected that carers complete a level of training as approved by the coordination unit. All carers and adult household members over the age of 18 years are required to complete a “Working With Children Check” and sign a Prohibited Employment Declaration before being accepted as a carer.

Other areas to be followed up when accepted include insurance and a completed First Aid certificate.

Insurance

The Children’s Services Regulations 2004 require all carers to have Public Liability Insurance. The National Family Day Care Council has negotiated a Public Liability package to cover carers at a very competitive rate that is payable yearly. The coordination unit can assist you with all the necessary information.

Home Environment

As the service offers a “family” environment the use of the major part of your home is essential in this concept. Some wear and tear on your house is normal when young children are around. Think about the cost of repainting and other upkeep.

Potential carers are required to pass an interview and have a Risk Assessment Audit conducted in their home. This is a thorough inspection that covers both the indoor and outdoor environment. Children cannot be placed in care until all safety requirements have been met.

Potential carers who live in rented premises need written authority from the owner, real estate agent or Strata Title body, to care for children on the premises. A standard form is available from the coordination unit.

As a childcare service of Holroyd City Council, you must provide a smoke free environment for the children in your care. This means that you will not smoke, nor allow any others to smoke in the presence of children in your care. This rule also applies when travelling in your care.



Playsession

Playsessions are held weekly at the family day care premises during school terms. Planned experiences for both children and carers are available.

The aim of playsession is not only to have fun and stimulate the children but to also provide social and supportive interaction for carers. At playsession the children can participate in a range of learning experiences supported and encouraged by the carers and coordination unit staff. Playsession also gives carers the opportunity to learn new ideas and activities to use in their own homes.

Carers who are licensed to drive (carers must have held their “P” plates for a minimum of six months) are invited to attend playsession on a weekly basis. Non-driving carers will be placed on a roster and transported with their children by a council van.

There is no cost to attend playsession.



Financial Matters

As a self-employed person registered with family day care all carers are responsible for paying their own taxes, and keeping adequate records relating to their business. If you rely on a weekly income we advise against considering family day care as a career option.

The scheme has a “recommended” fee schedule that is reviewed annually. Carers can either adopt the scheme’s hourly rate or set their own fees.

Some of the costs of caring for children in your home are deductible from your income tax. The National Family day Care Council has produced a taxation guide which has details of a package specifically designed for its members, covering such items as:

- What deductions are carers entitled to claim?
- Formulas for differentiating between Family Day care business and family use.
- Record keeping – how do carers prove their claims?
- Tax rebates, Medicare levies, superannuation, Gains Tax.



Financial Matters continued...

The following is a list of possible deductible expenses you may be able to claim. These are guidelines only and to be certain you should check with Taxation Office:

- Food and food preparation equipment, utensils etc.
- Educational equipment (books, records, extra television, computer).
- Special furniture (high chairs, car seats etc).
- Safety devices (including socket covers and fire extinguishers and blankets).
- Extra beds, cots and bedding.
- Expendable supplies (toilet paper, tissues, cleansers, laundry materials, disposable gloves and disposable nappies).
- Utility expenses (extra heat, light, water used in the operation of the day care service).
- Telephone calls.
- Insurance (if additional coverage is needed).
- Maintenance expenses and depreciation for any rooms and furniture used for day care.