



Policy Name:	Participation, Inclusion and Access Policy	Policy Number:	FCP-005
Date Approved:	9 May 2017	Approved By:	Board of Management
Date Issued:	12 May 2017	Review Date:	May 2020
Version 1.4	This version of the policy was approved 9 May 2017 and replaces the version approved 11 March 2016.		

1. Aim

Firstchance is committed to ensuring that all children/young people who are eligible for our programs have the right to access, participate and be fully supported to achieve inclusion in their chosen communities.

Staff will provide maximum opportunities for all children/young people and their families to participate and be included in our programs. Staff will also encourage participation and inclusion for children/young people in any community activities they wish to be involved in and provide advocacy when necessary.

The purpose of this document is to set out the approaches that Firstchance will take for fully inclusive practices where children/young people are able to access programs, participate in those programs and be active agents in their own lives and learning. Firstchance will provide information for families to access interpreter services for all communication (including verbal and written), as required and dependant on the format required (e.g. language interpreter, resources for vision or hearing impairment)

The supporting systems and procedures will ensure that there are guidelines and consistency around how we implement this policy.

2. Scope

This policy applies to children, young people, employees, volunteers and families receiving Firstchance services/supports.

This policy also applies to any community or government organisations that Firstchance liaises with in the process of supporting families as we work to increase the options and opportunities for people with a disability.

3. Policy

Firstchance staff will facilitate participation and inclusion for children and young people with a disability through four key areas of our practise:

- a) Enacting the Firstchance Vision and Philosophy
- b) Participation
- c) Access
- d) Support

3.1 Firstchance Vision and Philosophy

The Firstchance vision and statement of philosophy will guide our interactions with children/young people and their parents/carers and reflect our approach to participation and inclusion:

3.1.1 Vision

The vision of Firstchance is to be a leading service provider, respected and renowned for partnering with families, and building inclusive communities that value and celebrate diversity.

3.1.2 Philosophy

At Firstchance we believe that each family is the expert on their child and that every child, young person and family comes with their own strengths, capabilities and diversity. We recognise the value of working together with families and other services in supporting families to achieve their goals and aspirations.

We value the importance of building, supporting and fostering relationships and for families to connect with each other and their communities.

Our programs are therefore based on current research and innovative approaches that support children and young people to learn through play, experiences, interactions and their environment.

We acknowledge and respect the traditional owners of the land on which we provide services to families and communities.

3.2 Participation

Firstchance believes that every child/young person is entitled to access and participate in education and care programs which recognise them as unique individuals who can exercise choice in their lives and learning. Firstchance wishes to partner with families and engage with their diverse backgrounds and cultures. Firstchance believes principles for participation should include the best interests of the child/young person, the importance of their families, engaging with diversity and having high expectations for every child/young person.

The following practices will guide Firstchance in achieving the above:

3.2.1 Firstchance will provide services to children, young people and families that meet the eligibility criteria by following transparent and fair referral and priority of placement procedures.

3.2.2 Firstchance is committed to effective communication between workers and parents/carers and encouraging the participation of parents/carers in the program.

3.2.3 By encouraging family members to be involved in the service, we aim to provide a service that best meets the needs of our community.

3.2.4 Firstchance acknowledges that some children/young people will require additional assistance and support to fully participate in their service/community and we will take measures that we are able to in order for these children/young people to participate.

3.2.5 Parents/carers are encouraged and welcomed to nominate for the Firstchance board.

3.2.6 Families are encouraged to share aspects of their culture with Firstchance.

3.2.7 Workers will reflect on the service's philosophy and ensure that our practices and attitudes towards participation concur with the philosophy.

3.2.8 Workers will ensure that workers visiting our service or volunteering at the service are aware of our participation values and practices.

3.2.9 Children/young people will be encouraged and supported to become as independent as they can be and be engaged with their peers.

3.2.10 Firstchance workers will not isolate a child/young person from participating for any reason other than infectious illness or accident.

3.2.11 All activities provided by Firstchance will be offered to all children/young people and their parents/carers to participate in where they feel safe and comfortable to do so, however if any child/young person or parent/carer chooses not to participate in a certain activity this will be respected.

3.2.12 When workers are preparing activities/experiences for children/young people they will be mindful of each child's abilities and the tasks and activities that will benefit and promote their independence and inclusion.

3.2.13 Firstchance encourages all workers and families to be involved in sharing in the overall benefits to the Firstchance community and wider community that flow from participation by the widest range of people.

3.3 Access

Firstchance believes that children and young people with a disability share with all children and young people the right to be valued as individuals and as contributing members of families, communities and society. Firstchance values that are relevant to inclusion include equity, evidence based practice, diversity, collaboration and partnership. Inclusion at Firstchance involves Workers supporting children and young people with a disability to achieve learning and development outcomes with high expectations.

In order for children, young people and families to be fully included whilst being supported by Firstchance, the following practices will be maintained:

3.3.1 Workers will build rapport with parent/carers to safely gain important information about the child/young person's needs and those of the family.

3.3.2 -Workers will use interpersonal warmth and welcome for all families, children and young people.

3.3.3 Workers will take the time to ensure parents/carers fully understand what Firstchance does and how we will ensure inclusion in all programs/activities.

3.3.4 Firstchance will endeavour to provide alternative options for children/young people on our wait-lists if there is an opportunity for them to be engaged in the community in other ways.

3.3.5 Workers will be resourced and supported to the level required to fully include all children with a disability and to achieve high quality outcomes for all children.

3.3.6 Firstchance will fully include children with a disability to achieve high quality outcomes.

3.3.7 Workers will collaborate with parents and any other relevant professionals (with consent) e.g. education and care settings or medical specialists, to provide high quality inclusion.

3.3.8 Leaders at all levels within Firstchance will work to build positive attitudes, beliefs and values about inclusion in their professional communities.

3.3.9 Workers will acknowledge each child's strengths, meet each child's specific needs and abilities and support the active participation and engagement of all children

3.3.10 Workers will use intentional practice that is interactive, purposeful and thoughtful and recognises the individual needs of each child and their parent/carer.

3.3.11 Workers will recognise and provide support for parents' advocacy for their child/young person.

3.3.12 Firstchance will have systems that are easy to navigate and readily available information about disabilities and our services.

3.3.13 Firstchance will ensure accessible physical environments in the premises it controls. We will support families to advocate for accessible environments for their child/young person in their chosen communities.

3.3.14 Workers will have access to ongoing professional development and support to increase knowledge and practices around participation and inclusion.

3.3.15 When Firstchance –workers provide services in settings other than Firstchance, we will be mindful of promoting inclusive and respectful practices for all children/young people.

3.3.16 Our service will promote inclusion and diversity through books, pictures and stories which show an awareness and acceptance by our service of the diversity within our community.

3.3.17 Our service will recognise and value cultural diversity in our community and promote positive attitudes and equity for all children/young people, families and workers.

3.4 Support

Firstchance believes that children and young people with a disability should have the opportunity to participate in their community as they wish, as other children and young people do. To be active members of community life this means going beyond children and young people with a disability being present in the community to being actively included and engaged.

Firstchance is committed to abiding by the following practices to achieve meaningful inclusion for children/young people in our community:

3.4.1 Workers will actively seek information about other supports and services in our local community that will enable children/young people to achieve their goals. Workers will use this information to build the capacities of families.

3.4.2 Workers will model respectful and inclusive behaviour when supporting children/young people in our community as a way of promoting the uniqueness of each individual.

3.4.3 Firstchance will develop and maintain connections in our community so that opportunities for children/young people to be included and valued are increased over time.

3.4.4 Workers will respectfully advocate for families rights to full participation and inclusion in our community regardless of disability, age, gender or cultural background.

3.5 Advocacy/legal advice/independent support

Firstchance welcomes the inclusion of support for families which is external to the organisation, to assist families in their interactions with Firstchance. Assistance may be provided by a friend, family member, workers, translator, advocate or anyone else who is acceptable to the family / person. Where necessary, Firstchance will offer assistance to a family by making a referral to an advocacy service with the consent of the family.

Related Policies

Relationships with Children/Young People Policy

Entry Policy

Parent/Carer Interaction and Involvement in the Service Policy

4. References

Firstchance comply with, and are governed by relevant standards, regulations, legislation and Acts to provide Participation, Inclusion and Access to the children and families that access the services provided.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Position statement on the inclusion of children with a disability in early childhood education and care (Early Childhood Australia and Early Childhood Intervention Australia), 2012.

NSW Disability Service Standards

Standard 1 – Rights

Standard 2 – Participation and Inclusion

Standard 3 – Individual Outcomes

Standard 5 - Service Access

5. Persons Responsible

All families are responsible for:

- Partnering with Firstchance and sharing information that will enhance their child's/young person's opportunities for participation and inclusion.

All employees are responsible for:

- Providing an inclusive experience of Firstchance for children, young people and their families where they are able to access, participate and be fully included at Firstchance.

Supervisors are responsible for:

- Approving professional development that is relevant to assist workers in providing high quality inclusive practice.

Managers are responsible for:

- Recruiting and retaining workers who value inclusive practice for all and who demonstrate high levels of understanding of how families can participate fully at Firstchance.
- Building positive attitudes, beliefs and values about inclusion in their professional communities.

Board of Management are responsible for:

- Approval of this policy.

6. Definitions

Firstchance – all Firstchance Incorporated services and programs

Board of Management – the governing body of Firstchance, comprised of elected or appointed members who jointly oversee the activities and legal responsibilities of the organisation

Manager – refers to the General Manager or Program Manager, whichever is relevant in the context of the situation

Supervisor – refers to all senior staff who are responsible for supervising one or more workers

Workers - refers to employees and volunteers of the organisation

Family – refers to the parents/caregivers of the children or young people that receive support from Firstchance

Visitor – any person who is visiting a Firstchance service who is not a worker, client or family

Document review history

Date	Section	Change
October 2014	Policy Name	Change of policy name to include the word Access ie Participation and Inclusion Policy changed to Participation, Inclusion and Access policy
	Aim	Inclusion of statement that Firstchance will access services for interpretation to enable access to our services as required.
	References	Inclusion of statement that we comply with legislation, standards, regulations and Acts.
March 2015	4	Additional reference to Disability Inclusion Act
	1	Paragraph two changed term "educator" to "staff"
	3.2.7 , 3.2.8 & 3.3.2	Changed term "educator" to "staff"
	6	Removed reference to Educational Leader, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, Educator
	Related Policies	Removed Orientation for Children/Young people Policy
March 2016	3.3.11	Deleted as no longer relevant. Subsequent points re-numbered.
	3.5	Addition of standard clause re advocacy/legal advice/independent support
	4	Removal of reference to NQS, EYLF and National Regulations as Firstchance is no longer a licenced service
	All	Change of reference to programming to preparing activities/experiences
May 2017	All	Change of terminology – workers to replace staff; Firstchance to replace 'our service'.