



# COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES POLICY

**SUB CATEGORY:** Communication and Consultation

## POLICY GOAL

To facilitate respectful, open and effective relationships with families, educators, community and others involved in the education and care of the child. To ensure that families are valued and their input respected by the service.

## RATIONALE

**Collaborative partnerships with families and communities is Quality Area 6 of the National Quality Standards.** The relevant definitions provided in the Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 include:

- **Collaborative partnership:** *A partnership between the educators, families, children and community/ies of an education and care service that is based on active communication, consultation and collaboration and aims to build respectful relationships, support families and promote children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.*
- **Community:** *The local or wider social, cultural or geographical context shared with an education and care service.*
- **Community engagement:** *Developing respectful and responsive connections with the immediate or wider community to build connections and relationships.*
- **Family member:** *In relation to a child, means:*
  - *a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or cousin of the child, whether of the whole blood or half blood and whether that relationship arises by marriage (including a de facto relationship) or by adoption or otherwise; or*
  - *a relative of the child according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition; or*
  - *a person with whom the child resides in a family-like relationship; or*
  - *a person who is recognised in the child’s community as having a familial role in respect of the child (National Law).<sup>1</sup>*

*“Quality Area 6 focuses on supportive, respectful relationships with families which are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children. Community partnerships that are based on active communication, consultation and collaboration also contribute to children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.*

*Families are the primary influence in their children’s lives; they often have strong beliefs and values regarding the education and care of their children. When families and services collaborate and build respectful relationships, children have the opportunity to develop a positive sense of self and experience respectful relationships. As well, the child, the family and the service do not exist in isolation; they are part of a much wider community. Children benefit from services engaging with*

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<sup>1</sup> “Guide to the National Quality Framework” Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority Jan 2020

*local communities because these partnerships strengthen children's interest and skills in being active contributors to their community. Collaborative partnerships are achieved when the service's philosophy has a strong commitment to valuing diversity, inclusive practice and connecting to the community."*<sup>2</sup>

*"Research shows children are much more likely to reach their full potential in life when their family and education and care service work together. These benefits are evident when families and educators exchange information regularly and collaborate on consistent approaches to daily routines, child development and learning.*

*Things to consider:*

- *When and how do you establish a positive relationship?*
- *How is collaboration with families valued and reflected in your service's philosophy, policies and everyday practice?*
- *Do educators show respect for the lifestyle and traditions of families?*
- *Do educators understand the requirements of the National Quality Framework?*
- *How do educators use and share resources and information for families on ACECQA's family-focused website, Starting Blocks?*

*To establish relationships with the families at your service, you need to find genuine ways to listen to and communicate with families. In genuine partnerships, families and educators:*

- *value each other's knowledge of each child*
- *value each other's roles in each child's life*
- *trust each other*
- *communicate freely and respectfully with each other*
- *share insights and perspectives about each child and engage in shared decision-making.*

*Your service can create partnerships with families by:*

- *involving families in decision-making*
- *inviting families to participate in events at the service*
- *building a sense of community by helping families feel comfortable talking with staff and educators*
- *increasing family-educator collaboration in planning of quality outcomes for children.*

***"A COMMON GOAL BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES IS QUALITY OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN. CONSIDER HOW SERVICE PRACTICES, THE DIALOGUE YOU HAVE WITH FAMILIES AND HOW EDUCATORS RESPOND TO FAMILIES' REQUESTS DEMONSTRATE THIS SHARED GOAL."***<sup>3</sup>

*"Research tells us that:*

- *If their children have an emotional or behavioural problem, parents frequently turn to teachers for help.*
- *Parents feel comfortable in the school environment, which makes them more likely to ask for help or support related to their child.*
- *Parents who get involved are more likely to understand and support any particular approaches that are being used with a child and will support these strategies at home.*

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<sup>2</sup> "Guide to the National Quality Framework" Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority Jan 2020

<sup>3</sup> "Building Partnerships with Families" Quality Area 6 Information Sheet Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (accessed on-line March 2020)

[https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-01/QA6\\_BuildingPartnershipsWithFamilies.pdf](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-01/QA6_BuildingPartnershipsWithFamilies.pdf)

- *Parents who get involved take a greater role in their child's education and activities around schooling, which leads children do better academically and socially.*

**School partnerships are about focusing on the child**– they are about considering the needs of both the school and the family in creating the best environment for the child. They aren't about schools taking responsibility from parents.

### **Benefits of parent involvement**

#### **For children**

- *Children perform better at school when their parents are involved in their education.*
- *Children settle better into school programs when their parents are involved.*
- *Children feel valued and important when their parents take an interest in their lives.*
- *Children observe and learn positive interactions through watching others interact.*

#### **For staff**

- *Staff experience a higher level of job satisfaction in an environment that encourages listening, respect and appreciation.*
- *Staff stress levels are reduced when staff and parents work in partnership.*
- *Staff can develop important social skills when they communicate with parents.*

#### **For parents**

- *Involvement gives parents the opportunity to discuss their child's interests with staff, and to have some input into the program.*
- *Parents who are familiar with a program feel more comfortable about raising concerns and negotiating solutions with staff.*
- *Positive partnerships with staff can relieve parent stress.”<sup>4</sup>*

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Open, respectful communication with families:**

We understand the importance of regular communication with families and strive to ensure that open, transparent and effective communication is delivered to families daily.

- Educators will share the service philosophy with families and actively seek their input into reviews.
- The Client Service Charter will be displayed in the entrance for families and shown to families during the orientation process.
- Families will be provided with the opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect their child including centre policies.
- Educators will ensure that communication between themselves and all other persons related to the service is respectful, professional and is guided by our Educator Code of Conduct Policy.
- Educators and families should be engaged in shared decision making to support consistency between children's home experiences and those at the service to assist children to feel safe, supported and secure.
- We understand the families have different communication needs and will use a range of communication methods share information and seek feedback.
- Where families have specific or diverse communication needs educators will access services to assist including interpreter and translation services, on-line resources in other languages and choosing verbal communication over written to support families with lower literacy levels.

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<sup>4</sup> *"Involving Parents in School and Child Care"*, Raising Children Network -The Australian Parenting Website Last accessed March 2019

- Shared decision making with families supports consistency between children's experiences at home and at the service, helping children to feel safe, secure and supported. It is also important to recognise that families, and parents in particular, are often busy, juggling a number of priorities, and that the service will need to consider a range of strategies to build and maintain relationships with them.

**Open, respectful communication with other professionals and community members**

- Educators will ensure that communication between themselves and all other persons related to the service and local community is respectful, professional and is guided by our Educator Code of Conduct Policy.
- Educators and staff members will show respect and value the diverse contributions and perspectives of their colleagues and other professionals.
- Educators must establish and maintain open communication and collaboration with other professionals within the community to support the needs of each child.
- Opportunities will be regularly made to allow educators to engage in open discussions with other educators and professionals.
- Educators must ensure that messages and information relating to children, educators and other aspects of the service are communicated accurately to relevant parties.
- When educators change responsibility for a group such as during a shift change they must ensure that all relevant information is transferred both verbally and on any relevant forms.

***Our commitment to building positive partnerships:***

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators and staff will ensure that:

- All persons entering our service are welcomed and that their experience is both positive and informative.
- We develop a sense of belonging in our service for family members.
- New families are invited to spend time at our service with their child prior to beginning care to build confidence and a sense of belonging.
- Our philosophy, policies, programs, environments and everyday practice reflect our commitment to positive partnerships with families and are reviewed in consultation with families and educators.
- We will seek to find the best way to communicate with each family so that our sharing of information is relevant and meaningful.
- We will engage families through informal discussions to help understand their expectations and to set shared goals for children.
- We will communicate honestly with families about how their child is settling into care
- We will actively learn about and show respect for the background, cultural identity and interests of each family and incorporate these into learning programs and practices.
- Engage in reflective practice and professional conversations with other educators about everyday interactions with families.
- Respect families views and preferences and consider how best to implement these, taking into consideration relevant legislation, the philosophy, service policies and advice from recognised authorities.
- Initiate conversations with families and be proactive in building relationships.
- Share information with families on a range of topics to support their parenting role and understanding of the National Quality Framework and our service delivery.
- Be active participants in our local community and seek to share information about our local community with both families and children.

## **OUR CLIENT SERVICE CHARTER**

### **What Families Can Expect from Our Educators**

- **Open, Respectful, Honest Communication;**
  - Relating to your child's daily routines and developmental progress.
  - Relating to your account.
  - About our Policies and Procedures.
  - About a range of parenting topics and services.
- **Quality Educational Programs** designed to meet individual and community needs across all developmental areas. Achieved by;
  - Providing educators with training to build on current early childhood practices.
  - Providing a range of resources and facilities to meet educational needs.
- **Fair and Equal Services**
  - We are sensitive to the diverse range of cultures and abilities in our community and will ensure that all children, families, educators and visitors are treated with the same high quality of service and access to care.
- **Courtesy and Respect;**
  - We treat all children, families, educators and visitors with courtesy and respect and welcome them into our service.
- **Confidentiality** of child, family, educator and service information and records

### **How Families Can Assist our Service**

- Share information about your child and family situation so we can best meet your needs.
- Tell us when things change so we have up-to-date, accurate information including phone numbers, authorised collectors and immunization.
- Pay accounts on time through our range of payment methods.
- Be aware of and follow our Policies and Procedures.
- Families should work closely with educators to ensure children's needs are met.
- Provide educators with invaluable information about children's interests, strengths and abilities.
- Show educators and other families courtesy and respect and communicate in an open and honest manner.
- Tell us how we are doing, all feedback is useful to ensure our service continues to provide the highest quality care which meets you and your family's needs.
- Follow the Grievance Resolution Policy.
- Communicate respectfully at all times with educators, families and children and ensure that language used within the centre is suitable for the environment.
- Comply with our values when interacting with children, families and staff. Aggressive, bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be accepted.
- Be respectful of the privacy of children, families and staff and refrain from taking photographs without consent from the Nominated Supervisor.
- Refrain from smoking in or around the service and not be adversely affected by alcohol or other substances when attending our service.
- Ensuring other authorised contacts are aware of these requirements.

## COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

- Educators and families will have access to this policy at all times.
- Educators and families will be provided with opportunities to be involved in the review of this policy.
- Educators will be advised of the importance of communication and consultation during the induction process.
- Families will be advised of the importance of communication and consultation during the induction process

## RELATED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

- Educator Code of Conduct Policy
- Family Orientation Checklist
- Educator Induction Checklist
- Client Service Charter Poster

## SCOPE AND ENFORCEMENT

The Failure of any person to comply with this policy in its entirety may lead to;

- Termination of child enrolment or restriction of adults from our premises may occur where serious breaches of this policy occur.
- Performance management of an employee which may lead to termination

## RECOGNISED AUTHORITIES AND DOCUMENTS WHICH GUIDE POLICY

- *“Involving Parents in School and Child Care”*, Raising Children Network -The Australian Parenting Last accessed March 2019
- *“Business – Customer Service Charter”* Australian Government <https://www.business.gov.au/about/customer-service-charter> (accessed on-line March 2020)
- *“Building Partnerships with Families”* Quality Area 6 Information Sheet Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority Feb 2018. (accessed on-line March 2020) [https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-01/QA6\\_BuildingPartnershipsWithFamilies.pdf](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-01/QA6_BuildingPartnershipsWithFamilies.pdf)
- *“Guide to the National Quality Framework”* Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority Jan 2020

**DATE CREATED:** November 2011

### REVIEW DETAILS:

Review Date	Details of Changes
January 2013	No changes made, sources updated where applicable
January 2014	No changes made, sources updated where applicable
June 2015	No changes made, sources updated where applicable
April 2016	No changes made, sources updated where applicable
Jan 2017	Updated responsibilities for families and educators and inclusion of Client Service Charter Poster – see forms for this document. Client Service Charter also included to be shown in the orientation form for families.
May 2017	Sources updated only
April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated source to <i>“Guide to the National Quality Framework”</i> Australian Children’s Education &amp; Care Quality Authority Feb 2018</li> <li>• Updated latest versions for other sources</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Goal updated</li> <li>• Inclusion of additional quotes in Rationale and additional sources to guide policy</li> </ul> <p>Under Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of methods of communication to allow a broader scope</li> <li>• A range of additional ways to build partnerships with families and community included</li> <li>• Inclusion of steps to ensure our commitment to building positive partnerships</li> </ul>
March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated sources</li> </ul>
March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated sources</li> </ul>