



## Family and Community Partnerships Policy

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**Quick reference:** collaboration | respect | engagement | communication | inclusion | access for parents | transitions | diversity and equity | communication | surveys | consulting | understanding families | shared decision-making

### PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

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- (1) To set out how we maintain authentic, respectful and supportive partnerships with families and communities to improve the outcomes for the children in our care
- (2) This policy helps us to comply with the National Quality Standard Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

### SCOPE

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- (3) This policy applies to:
  - 'Staff': the Nominated Supervisor, paid workers, volunteers, work placement students, and third parties who work at our service (e.g., contractors, subcontractors, self-employed persons, employees of a labour hire company) who perform work on our behalf that is relevant to this policy
  - Children, parents, families and care providers
  - Visitors, including members of the community
  - Committee members

### DEFINITIONS

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- (4) The following definitions apply to this policy and related procedures:
  - 'Parents' includes guardians and persons who have parental responsibilities for the child under a decision or order of court

- 'Staff' refers to the approved provider, nominated supervisor, paid employees, volunteers, students, and third parties who are covered in the scope of this policy, unless otherwise indicated
- 'Visitor' is any individual entering the service who is not an enrolled child or a staff member at the service (e.g., community members, trainers, prospective staff and allied health support workers)

## POLICY STATEMENT

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### Access For Parents

- (5) Staff must allow a child's parent to enter our service at any time their child is being cared for by us - unless allowing the parent to enter would pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or would conflict with another duty we have under the law, or Nominated Supervisor reasonably believes that allowing the parent to enter would contravene a court order (*National Regulations s 157*)
- (6) Staff must follow our Family Law and Access Policy to ensure we are upholding our obligations under family law, including for court orders, parenting orders or parenting plans

### Engagement From The Time Of Enrolment

- (7) Staff must support families from the time of enrolment to be involved in our service and to contribute to decisions about our environment, policies, programs and practices (National Quality Standard 6.1.1)
- (8) We will encourage families to be involved in any way that suits their availability, skills and commitments
- (9) Staff must follow our enrolment and orientation policies and procedures, which set out how we ensure that:
  - Families get the information they need about us (e.g., how we operate, our philosophy and governance)
  - We get to know each child and their family, their values and expectations, additional needs or considerations, knowledge and expertise, family life, language and culture
  - Parents can tell us how we can support them and their child with the settling in process
  - We record families' preferred ways to communicate and participate
  - Families know they can easily access our policies and procedures which are displayed in a central location
  - Families know the different ways they can be involved, such as through volunteering, attending events and meetings, sharing feedback or joining the committee

- We will regularly communicate to families, including grandparents and other extended family members, that they are welcome to be involved in our program, including our special events, celebrations, information sessions, excursions and open days

## **Communication**

- (10) Our verbal and written communication will be accessible and inclusive (e.g., plain language, relevant, welcoming and respectful, various formats, use of translation services)
- (11) Staff will respond to families' questions, concerns and requests as soon as possible. Urgent matters should be dealt with in person or on the telephone
- (12) Staff must inform families of any incidents affecting their child as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after the occurrence, according to the law and our relevant policies and procedures (*National Regulations* s 86)
- (13) We will use an education/communication app/portal to share with families each child's learning experiences, photos, notes on meals, sleep, important service updates, reminders about fee or immunisation due dates, and to notify about incidents or infectious disease
- (14) Communication about children between staff and families:
  - Will be two-way
  - May be formal (e.g., in parent-educator meetings, written records, assessments, evaluations, and plans etc) or informal (e.g., casual conversations at drop off and pick up, family days)
  - Will cover the child's daily interactions, friendships, needs, preferences, interests, participation, wellbeing, development, learning, strengths, achievements and experiences at our service and at home
- (15) Staff must uphold privacy in all communications with families and must not disclose to an unauthorised person the personal information of any other child or family (e.g., group messages must not disclose the personal details of other children and direct messages must be kept confidential)

## **Respecting Families' Views And Shared Decision-Making**

- (16) Staff must show respect for the expertise, cultures, values and beliefs of families, and ensure that families are involved in making decisions about their child's learning and wellbeing (National Quality Standard 6.1.2)
- (17) We will maintain a welcoming, friendly, respectful and culturally safe environment for all families and the community
- (18) When we are making a decision about a child's education, health, safety and wellbeing, the family's and the child's preferences and needs will be taken into account
- (19) We will ask parents to contribute to the assessments and documentation of their child's progress and goals

- (20) Staff will be non-judgmental and respectful when they are discussing information about individual children
- (21) We will provide different ways for families to give feedback and share their knowledge and expertise (e.g., via in person exchanges, parents committee, newsletters, education apps, emails and direct messaging, communications book in our foyer, social media, physical notice board, surveys, information sessions, informal and formal meetings)
- (22) We will consult with all families and our committee when we are reviewing our statement of philosophy, Quality Improvement Plan, governance and management systems, programs, policies and procedures
- (23) We will keep the information we have about families and children updated, and use it to shape our communication, risk management, educational program and practices, policies and procedures, daily routines, transitions and activities

## **Sharing Information To Support Families**

- (24) Staff must share relevant information to families about our service, community services and resources to support the family and increase their wellbeing (National Quality Standard 6.1.3)
- (25) We must keep a copy of the *National Law and Regulations* available at our premises for the use families and anyone else who uses our service (*National Regulations* s 185)
- (26) We must display information about the contents and operation of our educational program at our premises in central location that is readily accessible to parents (*National Regulations* s 75)
- (27) We must give families information about our educational program so far as it relates to their child, information about the child's participation in our program and copies of their child's educational assessments and evaluation records (*National Regulations* s 76)
- (28) We must make available our current Quality Improvement Plan on request (*National Regulations* s 31(c))
- (29) We must also display the specific information about our service required by the *National Law* s 173 and *Regulations* s 173 (for a full list see our Governance and Management Policy)
- (30) Educators will support families by making time to talk and by providing reputable information about parenting and child development
- (31) We will provide families with information and links to community services and resources in our newsletters, family handbook, physical spaces (e.g., posters, leaflets) and emails
- (32) The Nominated Supervisor will ensure that our contact list for local support services is comprehensive and kept up-to-date
- (33) The Nominated Supervisor may provide and receive referrals from external professionals, services and support networks, where required

- (34) Staff may undertake further training to work with families (e.g., cultural competency, identifying biases, languages, having difficult conversations) in their professional development program
- (35) We will support families to build relationships with other families by hosting family and community events, and by facilitating our parents committee
- (36) We will host information sessions and workshops on a variety of topics that are useful to families (e.g., child development and learning, nutrition, oral health, sleep and rest, understanding children's behaviour, managing tantrums, technology and screen etc)

## Transitions

- (37) We must ensure that children have continuity of learning, and that staff support them through transitions by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities with families and external professionals and services (National Quality Standard 6.2.1)
- (38) Staff must follow our relevant policies and procedures to ensure that children experience positive transitions (e.g., Collection and Delivery Policy, Safe Arrival of Children Policy, Access and Inclusion, Positive Relationships for Children Policy, Excursion Policy, Staffing Arrangements Policy, Transport Policy)
- (39) Educators will work with families, other staff, and (where relevant) external professionals to make sure:
  - Parents have input into decisions about significant transitions for their child (e.g., moving to a different room or group or starting school)
  - Plans, procedures, authorisations, risk assessments, and communication protocols are in place, available and understood
  - Everyone knows their roles and responsibilities, including who has the duty of care
  - All relevant information about the child is kept up to date and shared among the people who are caring for the child (e.g., medical conditions, additional needs, daily routines, social and emotional wellbeing)
  - Children are supported and prepared for transitions (e.g., educators will give them time to adapt to the changes at their own pace, introduce changes gradually, use consistent routines and communicate the changes in ways the child understands)
  - Children are actively and adequately supervised at all times
  - Children's learning and development is observed and documented (and shared among educators, parents)

## Access And Participation

- (40) Our partnerships with families, communities and external professionals and services must be strong and effective to ensure every child can access, be included, and participate in, our service (National Quality Standard 6.2.2)

- (41) Staff must follow relevant policies and procedures to ensure all children can access and participate in our service, including our Access and Inclusion Policy, and our Positive Relationships with Children Policy

## Community Engagement

- (42) We must build relationships and engage with our community (National Quality Standard 6.2.3)
- (43) Our spaces, resources and activities will reflect a range of experiences, cultures and ways of being we see in our community
- (44) We will celebrate diversity and various cultural festivals in partnership with the community
- (45) Staff will liaise with other organisations that work with families and children in our area, including other children's services, local businesses, allied health professionals, playgroups, libraries, schools, environmental and heritage associations, and cultural, health and family support services
- (46) Children will learn about their social and cultural context and history during regular excursions to parts of our local area
- (47) We will invite members of the local community to contribute to our educational program, including through regular incursions
- (48) As part of their program of professional development, educators may learn about cultural safety for children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- (49) Our culturally safe practices are embedded across our service, including in our educational program and practices, communication, physical spaces, special events, play and daily routines, and menu plans

## PRINCIPLES

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- (50) We value the diverse backgrounds, cultures and point of view of all families and we want them to feel welcome, supported, included and respected
- (51) We see families as central to their child's education and care. We actively seek their involvement in making decisions about their child's education and development, and our broader governance and management
- (52) We celebrate the unique strengths, backgrounds and family structures of each child. We have a culturally safe and inclusive environment and practices
- (53) We maintain regular, clear and accessible communication with families about their child's development, learning and wellbeing
- (54) We provide families with current information about our service and other relevant community services and resources to support their parenting and children's wellbeing

- (55) We build and maintain partnerships with the community to strengthen our relationship with children and families, and to encourage each child to develop their identity within a wider context
- (56) We regularly review and update our policies and procedures to make sure they still reflect current best practices and address emerging health risks

## POLICY COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND MONITORING

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- (57) This policy and related documents can be found in the foyer
- (58) The Nominated Supervisor provide information, training and other resources and support regarding the Family and Community Partnerships Policy and related documents
- (59) All staff (including volunteers and students) are formally inducted. They are given access to, review, understand and formally acknowledge this Family and Community Partnerships Policy and related documents
- (60) The Nominated Supervisor can facilitate a professional development program for each staff member, which covers this policy
- (61) Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in this policy and in individual position descriptions. They are communicated during staff inductions and in ongoing training
- (62) The Nominated Supervisor monitor and audit staff practices and address non-compliance. Breaches of this policy are taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action against a staff member
- (63) At enrolment, families are given access to our Family and Community Partnerships Policy and related documents
- (64) Families are notified in line with our obligations under the *National Regulations* when changes are made to our policies and procedures

## LEGISLATION (OVERVIEW)

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### Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

Law	Description
s 175	Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents
s 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
Regulations	
s 74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
s 75	Information about educational program to be kept available
s 76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
s 86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
ss 99 - 102	Collection of children from premises and excursions
ss 102AA – 102AAC	Safe arrival of children
ss 102A – 102F	Transportation of children other than as part of an excursion

s 157	Access for parents
s 160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
s 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
s 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
s 177	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by the approved provider
ss 181 ,183 - 184	Confidentiality and storage of records

## Other applicable laws and regulations

Act/Regulation/Standard	Description
Privacy Act 1998	Principal act protecting the handling of personal information

## National Quality Standard

Standard Element	Concept	Description
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing
6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
6.2.3	Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community

## Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) V2.0

Outcome	Key component
2: CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED WITH AND CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WORLD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children develop a sense of connectedness to groups and communities and an understanding of their reciprocal rights and responsibilities as active and informed citizens</li> <li>Children respond to diversity with respect</li> <li>Children become aware of fairness</li> <li>Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment</li> </ul>

## National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Most relevant principles
Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.



## RELATED DOCUMENTS

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### Key Policies

Child Safe Environment Policy | Continuity of Education and Care| Enrolment Policy | Orientation Policy | Physical Environment Policy | Medical Conditions Policy | Positive Relationships for Children Policy | Access and Inclusion for Children Policy | Physical Activity Policy | Fees Policy | Education Curriculum and Learning Policy | Visitors Policy | Safe Arrival of Children Policy | Delivery and Collection of Children Policy | Transport Policy | Excursions Policy | Governance and Management Policy | Family Law and Access Policy

## SOURCES

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Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations | National Quality Standard | Approved Learning Framework | Regulatory Authority resources | Raising Children Network | Australia Education Research Organisation – Family Engagement resources | Early Years Learning Framework Practice Based Resources – Connecting with families

## POLICY INFORMATION

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### Approval

Rachel Black Frame

### Review

Reviewed annually and when there are changes that may affect this policy or related procedures. The review will include checks to ensure the document reflects current legislation, continues to be effective, or whether any changes and additional training are required

Reviewed: May 2025

Date for next review: January 2026

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – Family and Community Partnerships

### Nominated Supervisor / persons in day-to-day charge responsibilities (not limited to)

Ensure our service meets its obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law* and *Regulations*, including to:

- Ensure that parents are allowed to enter our services at any time their child is being cared for by us unless allowing the parent to enter:
  - Would pose a risk to the safety of the children or staff
  - Would conflict with another duty we have under the law, or
  - There is a reasonable belief held by the approved provider or nominated supervisor that it would contravene a court order

Support the approved provider to:

- Communicate and display all the prescribed information to parents (as described in the Family and Community Partnerships Policy)
- Ensure we collect all the prescribed information about children and their families at enrolment and that this information is kept up to date (as described in the Enrolment Policy)
- Notify parents according to our procedures as soon as possible and within 24 hours of any incidents affecting their child

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Ensure that our service's governance, management, operations, policies, plans, (including risk management/action plans), systems, practices and procedures for partnerships with families and communities are appropriate in practice, up-to-date, best practice, and comply with all relevant legislation, standards and guidelines

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Ensure this Family and Community Partnerships Policy and related procedures (including for safe transitions and access and inclusion) are in place and available to access and implemented

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Take reasonable steps to ensure our Family and Community Partnerships Policy and related procedures are followed (e.g. through clear and accessible communication, and systemised inductions, training and monitoring of all staff – including volunteers, students)

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Consult with families and the community and incorporate their feedback into our policies, procedures and program

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Regularly review this Family and Community Partnerships Policy and related procedures in consultation with children, families, communities and staff

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Keep a contact list of support agencies, professionals or networks and make sure to regularly update it. Refer families and receive referrals following relevant procedures (e.g., see our procedure for providing support in Child Protection Procedure)

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Build connections with local community organisations and facilities

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Ensure that policies and procedure reviews and risk assessments and plans are implemented in consultation with children, families, communities and staff.

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Notify families at least 14 days before changing this Family and Community Partnerships Policy if the changes will: affect the fees charged or the way they are collected; or significantly impact the service's education and care of children; or significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service

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### **Educator / other staff responsibilities (not limited to)**

Follow this Family and Community Partnerships Policy and related procedures (including for safe transitions and access and inclusion)

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Maintain respectful relationships with families and support parents in their role

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Involve families in decision making about their child's learning and development. Communicate with families regularly about their child's experiences at the service and at home

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Get to know families and children. Incorporate each family's expertise, culture, values and beliefs into our program and practices

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Discuss with the room leader/Nominated Supervisor if a family needs support or resources for their child's learning, development or wellbeing. The nominated supervisor can make and receive referrals for families (with their consent)

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Maintain confidentiality for children and their families

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Support children through periods of transitions according to our procedures and policies

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Plan and participate in community events, excursions, inclusions and build relationships with local organisations

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Participate in any training / professional development that will help your work with families or the community

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Contribute to policy and procedure reviews and risk assessments and plans, and participate in training and professional development opportunities on health and infection control

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### **Families responsibilities (not limited to)**

Participate where you can in any way that suits your availability, skills and commitments (e.g., service events, meetings, surveys, volunteering etc)

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Discuss any concerns or feedback to improve our service

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Provide our service with the information we require at enrolment and keep the information updated

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Communicate regularly with educators about your family and child (e.g., values, beliefs, needs, interests, experiences at our service and home)

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Participate in decision making with educators about your child's learning and development, and about our wider curriculum, policies and practices

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Contribute to our positive and culturally safe environment

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