

## Partnerships and Communication with Families Policy

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### Rationale and Policy Considerations

The education and care service understands the primary influence that families have in their children's lives, and that effective relationships between educators and families are fundamental to the quality education and care that children receive. 'Effective collaboration with families regarding the education and care their child receives occurs when constructive strategies for ongoing two way communication are established by the service.' (QA 6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities) Families can provide invaluable information about children's interests, strengths, and abilities that assists educators to meet their needs.

### Legislation and Government Requirements

- Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012.
- Federal and State Equal Opportunity Legislation
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth.)

### Needs

#### Children's

Recognition of the important attachment relationship that exists between the family and the child; respectful and warm relationships between families and educators; educators that understand their interests, strengths and abilities; continuity between home and education and care.

#### Families

That their primary influence in their children's lives is respected and supported; opportunities to share information about their child, and make decisions about their child's experiences at the education and care service in partnership with educators; to be kept informed about their child's participation and development within the service; family needs to be met; ability to raise concerns/complaints if required.

#### Educators

Information about children's interests, strengths and abilities; regular open two way communication with families; time to speak with families about their child's progress, relationships and experiences at the service.

#### Management

That families will approach management or the service educators/staff to share important information about their child, or raise problems or concerns; to manage concerns or complaints about the service promptly and effectively; to encourage families to support the philosophy and principles of quality education and care.

### Scope

This policy is written for children, families, staff and visitors of Merino Court Childcare Centre

### Policy Statement

The education and care service will provide regular information about, and on-going opportunities for families to participate and have input into the service and their child's experiences and learning. Family influence is valued, respected and supported to enhance children's experiences in education and care. The service will actively promote shared decision making with families to support consistency between children's experiences at home and at the service. Families will be viewed as partners in providing quality education and care for children. Any family concerns will be dealt with promptly to minimise any negative impact on children, and support the good relationships that have been formed between the service and family members.

Merino Court Childcare Centre understands that communication is an important and necessary part of life. To this end, we will ensure that all who use the service are spoken to with respect and kept up to date on matters relating to the centre. Staff will familiarise themselves with methods of communicating with families from non-English speaking backgrounds and use outside resource people where necessary.

## **Policy Principles**

### **Partnerships with Families**

- Information is exchanged with families at arrival and departure times on a daily basis.
- Educators will welcome and value family input and treat all suggestions or concerns with respect.
- The service will create a welcoming environment for all families using the service.
- Families will be provided with regular opportunities to contribute to curriculum decision making and provide feedback about the experiences planned for their child.
- Parents/Families will have individual logins to download and use the OWNA programming App to communicate with staff and have access to children's digital records.
- Families are encouraged to speak with educators regarding any aspect of the care of their child at any time.
- This may be spontaneous, by telephone or by appointment. Educators will respond to families' questions, concerns and suggestions in a prompt and courteous manner. Educators will not discuss information of a confidential nature regarding any other child or family within the service.
- Families will be directed to the website to see a copy of the service's procedure for dealing with family concerns at the time of enrolment. These procedures will also be displayed in the foyer.
- Families will be informed promptly and sensitively of any incidents affecting their child.
- Where a family's request for their child is not able to be implemented within the education and care setting due to safety and health or ethical concerns, the reasons for this will be carefully explained to the family, and an agreed outcome will be negotiated.
- Families will be encouraged to contribute to the development and review of the service's operations, policies and procedures.
- Educators will communicate with parents/guardians in a positive and supportive manner that encourages the parent-child relationship. Information with regard to family issues and personal lives will be handled confidentially. Every effort will be made to treat both parents/guardians equally. Without legal documentation, staff cannot act as though one parent is more fit than another to the legal rights of their child.
- Parents/guardians may visit the service at any reasonable time whilst their child is in education and care.
- Parents/guardians may bring other relatives to visit at convenient times that have been organised through the educator/nominated supervisor.
- Staff and families will use communication methods which convey respect and acceptance.
- Families will be kept up to date with centre details by the use of OWNA app, Emails and Merino's Social Media platforms.
- Child information will be passed on through the OWNA app as well as verbally through phone conversations, interviews and daily conversations.
- Visitors and students will not be responsible for passing on information to families.
- The centre will access Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) if necessary on 131450.

### **Communication Strategies**

- The OWNA app will be used to pass on;
  - Information about current programs and special activities happening at the service;
  - Highlight specific policies & procedures for families;
  - Welcome new families;
  - Short surveys for families to complete and return to the service;
  - Information about social events and ways in which families can participate in the service;
  - Invitation to families to give input and feedback.
- Emails will be used to pass on;
  - Advise of changes to educators and other staff;
  - News from centre management;
  - Information about changes to payment of fees or the operations of the service;

- The service provides information of a general nature to families and interested people through the service's website. Information such as location, learning environment, operational hours, enrolment procedures, types of learning experiences offered, fees etc. is available on the website.
- Information and fun facts are passed on via Social Media. We also include children's photos highlighting their activity within the Centre, if permission is granted by Family.
- A Parent/Guardian Handbook will be accessible on the website for enrolled families detailing operational information and relevant policies and procedures.
- Families may also be contacted by email, letter or phone to communicate information about the service or seek feedback from the family.
- The service brochure will provide general information about the service to prospective customers.
- Families who use the service will be surveyed each year to receive feedback on how the service is meeting their needs and whether they would like to see any improvements to the services provided.
- In school age care services children will be surveyed at least every 6 months to give their input on the service and how they would like to see it improved.
- When families leave the service they will be asked to complete an Exit Questionnaire to document their reasons for leaving.
- The service's Grievances and Complaints Management policy will be followed to address any concerns raised by families about the service.
- The approved provider/nominated supervisor will organise social events for families and educators from time to time to encourage participation and maintain open communication.
- Staff will ensure that all relevant messages and information regarding the centre and care of your child/ren are passed on to the appropriate person.
- Staff will check the message bank each morning for any overnight calls.

### Family Disputes

- Where a child attending the service is not living with both parents/guardians, or where disputes arise in relation to responsibility for the child the following will apply:
  - Parental responsibility remains with both parents/guardians jointly and individually except where it is altered by an order of the Family Court of Australia. In the absence of such an order the child will be released to either parent/guardian who is an authorised person to collect the child on the **Enrolment Form**.
  - Where a non-enrolling parent cites an Order of the Family Court giving him/herself lawful access to the child, the educator/nominated supervisor will contact the enrolling parent to confirm the existence of the order and seek their direction on how to respond to the non-enrolling parent. Educators/staff will not try to interpret or act on any court order without the approval of the enrolling parent.
  - The child will only be released into the care of the enrolling parent/guardian, or other person specifically authorised by the enrolling parent/guardian, except when child protection authorities or the police specifically direct otherwise under the provisions of the applicable child protection legislation.
- In the case of a parent/guardian with parental responsibility for the child arriving at the service to collect their child in a visibly intoxicated or unfit state to drive the parent/guardian will be encouraged to contact an alternative adult to drive them and their child home or the service will offer to call a taxi. If the parent/guardian insists on taking their child, the police will be informed.
- Where human life is at risk any part of the above may not be able to be complied with and in such circumstances the police will be immediately informed. In such circumstances the service staff will follow the centre's **Critical Incident Management Plan**. For further information on collection of children refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy.

### Related Documents

- **Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012** - Section 3(e); 301 (3) (j) (k); 157
- **Education and Care Services National Regulations:** 75-76; 80; 86; 99; 102; 111(b); Part 4.6; 161; 171-172-177-178; 181-183

- **National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (Nov 2010)** - Element 4.2.1; Standard 6.1; Standard 6.2; Element 7.2.1; Standard 7.3
- **Early Years Learning Framework for Australia** - Practice: Holistic approaches; Responsiveness to children; Cultural competence; Continuity of learning and transitions - Outcomes: 1, 2, 3
- **Framework for School Age Care in Australia** - Practice: Holistic approaches; Collaboration with children; Cultural competence; Continuity and transitions - Outcomes: 1, 2, 3
- **Confidentiality Statement**
- **Critical Incident Management Plan**
- Educator/staff Code of Ethics
- **Exit Questionnaire**
- Grievance procedures
- Orientation checklists
- Procedure for dealing with privacy complaints
- Survey forms

#### Links to other policies

- Community Involvement
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Educational Programs
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Equal Opportunity
- Establishing a Protective Environment
- Excursions and Transport
- Grievances and Complaints Management
- Interactions with Children

#### Sources

[www.pscalliance.org.au](http://www.pscalliance.org.au)

#### Further Sources

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**DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2011 - 2012; Section 6.5 - What are my services responsibilities to parents?** - Retrieved 9 May 2012, from [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)

**Elliott, R - Engaging families: Building strong communication** - Early Childhood Australia - Research in Practices Series - 2005

**Fact sheet for families - Sharing information about your child** - extract from Putting Children First, the Newsletter of the National Childcare Accreditation Council - Issue 36, December 2010

**Hughes, L & McFarlane J - A collaborative approach to achieving and maintaining quality** - extract from Putting Children First, the Newsletter of the National Childcare Accreditation Council - Issue 5, March 2003

**Professional Support Coordinator WA - EYLF fact sheet - Partnerships with families** - Retrieved 19 April 2011, from <http://www.pscwa.org.au/getdoc/f459b897-ce8c-4f6d-bf78-b995b6c8eeb3/EYLF-Fact-Sheet-WA.aspx>

**Raising children network - Involving parents in school and child care** - Retrieved 19 April 2011, from [http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/involving\\_parents\\_in\\_school\\_and\\_childcare.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/involving_parents_in_school_and_childcare.html)

The Royal Children's Hospital - *Child Care and Children's Health an information sheet for parents (Dec 2008) - Partnerships between families and carers* - Retrieved 19 April 2011, from [http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ecconnections/CCH\\_P\\_Dec2008\\_English.pdf](http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ecconnections/CCH_P_Dec2008_English.pdf)

The Royal Children's Hospital - *Child Care and Children's Health an information sheet for parents (Feb 2006) - Talking with child care professionals about your child* - Retrieved 19 April 2011, from [http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ecconnections/CCH\\_P\\_February2006\\_English.pdf](http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ecconnections/CCH_P_February2006_English.pdf)

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#### Document History

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