



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

QUALITY AREA 6

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES



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?

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

The importance of building collaborative partnerships with families is reflected under Quality Area 6 of the National Quality Standard (NQS), in particular:

Standard 6.1: Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.

Element 6.1.1: Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.

Element 6.1.2: The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.

One of the principles guiding the National Quality Framework is that the role of parents and families is respected and supported.

DEFINING PARTNERSHIP IN PRACTICE

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.

WAYS TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Developing collaborative partnerships with families is a process that happens over time, and may take longer with some families than others.

First impressions count

Your attitude, manner and approach are important, so consider how families and children are first welcomed into the service.

Embed in practice

Partnerships with families should be evident in your service's philosophy, policies, procedures, environment, curriculum and everyday practices.

Communicate and engage

Find the best way to communicate with individual families and the type of information that is important to them. Some may prefer to be contacted via print or online newsletters, or to ask questions in person, through email, SMS or social media.

Get to know the families

Engage families through informal discussions and at planned gatherings to understand their expectations. It is also an opportunity to develop shared goals for children's learning.

Be inclusive

Learn about and show respect for the background, cultural identity and strengths of each family to inform educator practices.

Consider how inclusive your service is in relation to children and families with diverse needs, family structure, including culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Initiate professional conversations and training

Engage in reflective practice and professional conversations with other educators about their everyday interactions with families. Professional learning activities may also build your confidence and capacity to build partnerships with families.

Building trust

Regularly reflect on how trust is established and maintained with families and whether the reciprocity within the relationship is working for all parties.

Things to consider :

Have you considered engaging in an action research or reflection project centred around strengthening relationships with families?

BENEFITS OF WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES

Building strong, collaborative relationships with families can be challenging. The benefits for the child, their family, the service and the wider community outweigh the challenges.

Some of these benefits are listed below.

Children:

- experience continuity of learning
- are involved in decision-making and supported to influence their world
- feel valued, their culture and identity are upheld and their strengths acknowledged
- experience an increased sense of belonging.

Families:

- feel valued and respected
- better understand their child's learning and development
- feel supported and empowered in their role as parents
- are comfortable to ask questions or express concerns
- understand more about the role of educators
- have increased confidence in the service
- families can network and support each other through shared experiences and child rearing practices

Education and care setting:

- learn from families' skills and expertise
- information gained from families can be used to support children's learning and well-being
- understand issues affecting families
- gain family feedback that helps staff to evaluate the effectiveness of their practices and overall service.

Community:

- the setting becomes a hub for families within the community
- children can be active participants in their local community.

More information is available on the ACECQA website acecqa.gov.au

Visit Starting Blocks, ACECQA's family focused website for additional resources and support startingblocks.gov.au

Acknowledgment

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