

Podcast 3 Documentation

TOPIC: Documentation – walking through the relevant requirements

Hello and welcome. It's important to be clear about what the frameworks, National Quality Standard and legislative standards require for documentation, as there are many myths relating to it.

Section 168 of the *Education and Care Services National Law* states that an approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that a program is delivered to all children being educated and cared for by the service.

This program must be based on an approved learning framework and delivered in a manner in line with the approved learning framework.

The nationally approved learning frameworks are the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* for children preschool age or under, and the *My Time, Our Place Framework for school age care in Australia*, for children over preschool age.

Other frameworks are approved for use in the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia.

Section 168 of the National Law also requires that the program be based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and must be designed to take into account the individual differences of each child.

The National Law also provides that the requirements for educational programs, including the quality of those programs and their development, documentation and delivery can be found under the regulations. Let's now have a look at the relevant regulations.

I will be specifically talking about regulations 73 to 76 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Regulation 73 requires that an educational program must contribute to the outcomes for children identified in the approved learning frameworks. These are:

- the child will have a strong sense of identity
- the child will be connected with and contribute to his or her world
- the child will have a strong sense of wellbeing
- the child will be a confident and involved learner, and
- the child will be an effective communicator.

As part of the delivery of these educational programs, documentation is required and regulation 74 specifies what must be documented.

For a child preschool age or under, the following need to be documented:

- assessments of the child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program, and
- assessments of the child's progress against the outcomes of the educational program.

For a child over preschool age, documenting requires evaluation of the child's wellbeing, development and learning.

When you prepare your documentation, regulation 74 requires that consideration be given to:

- the period of time that the child is being educated and cared for by your service, and
- how the documentation will be used by educators at your service.

This regulation also requires that the documentation is prepared in a way that is readily understandable by the educators at the service and the parents of the child.

In addition, regulation 75 requires that as a provider of an education and care service, you must ensure that information about the content and operation of the educational program for your service is displayed at your premises, at a place that is accessible to parents of the children who attend your service.

If you are a centre-based service, you must also ensure that a copy of the educational program is available for inspection at your centre's premises upon request.

If you operate a family day care service, then you must ensure that a copy of the educational program is available for inspection at each family day care residence or family day care venue upon request.

Finally, in line with Regulation 76, you need to ensure that the parents of a child being educated and cared for by your service are provided with certain information upon request. This information includes:

- information about the content and operation of the educational program so far as it relates to their child
- information about their child's participation in the program, and
- a copy of the documents you've kept under regulation 74, that is, the assessments you've made for that child.

These regulatory requirements underpin Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Standard - Educational Program and Practice, where the requirements for documentation sit.

It is important to familiarise yourself with the standards and elements of Quality Area 1.

For example, I'd like to draw your attention to Standard 1.1 that is, 'an approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development'.

To meet this standard, consideration must be given to each of the six elements in the standard. It is important to think about how:

- your decision making links to the five learning outcomes of the framework
- each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program
- routines, such as afternoon tea, are organised in ways that maximise the learning opportunities
- documentation about the program and children's progress is available for families
- every child is supported to participate in the program
- children's agency is promoted – how they are supported to make relevant decisions and choices.

Standard 1.2 in this quality area focuses on educators and coordinators being focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering programs for each child.

Again, it is important to consider the three underpinning elements to this standard.

Element 1.2.1 requires that each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation. This is an area where many services experience challenges. Remember, it is not the amount of documentation you have but rather how you use it to inform your planning and evaluation. The authorised officer will be looking for evidence in your documentation that you engage in this process.

It is also important to think about how your documentation contributes to the other elements in this standard:

- how do you respond to children's ideas and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend children's learning?

- how do you reflect on (or think about) children's learning and development and how do you incorporate this thinking into the program?

It is not possible to record all the experiences and learnings that happen each and every day in your service, so it is important to prioritise. Look for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strength, skills and understandings.

Refer to the *Guide to the National Quality Standard* for more information on the standards and elements for each Quality Area. The link to the Guide can be found next to this podcast.

Additional resources can be found by clicking on the ACECQA website, where you will also find the *Guide to the National Law and Regulations*.