



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

QUALITY AREA 6

ENROLMENT & ORIENTATION



Meaningful, respectful and supportive relationships with families contribute to a smooth transition and quality outcomes for children in the service. They can also form the basis of ongoing communication and trust between families and the team.

Enrolment and orientation, when conducted well, are an opportunity to get to know each child and their family. They also enable families to become familiar with the service, its educators, and the program.

There are a variety of strategies that can be used to promote relationships with families through the initial processes of enrolment and orientation.

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Framework for School Age Care (FSAC) remind us that children thrive when families and educators work in partnership to support children's wellbeing and learning (EYLF, page 9; FSAC page 7).

Standard 6.1: Quality Area 6 promotes collaborative partnerships with families and communities. Standard 6.1 is focussed on supportive relationships with families, including elements:

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.

Element 6.1.3: Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.

WHAT FAMILIES BRING

Every family is unique. Remember, when a child enrolls in the service, you are embarking on a journey with the whole family. The child's relationship with the family is the most important, and families have valuable information about their child to share.

It is important to provide opportunities for families to feel comfortable talking about their child and their expectations of the service. This information will inform collaborative decision-making about how the orientation of their child will occur.

As the education and care service may be a new experience for a family, they may be uncertain about what to expect or what is required of them. It may take time for them to feel confident about expressing themselves and indicating their preferences.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

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Take the time to understand and discuss:

- what the family wants for their child and themselves
- the things that are important to them
- any concerns they may have.

First impressions

Before establishing a partnership with the family, you need to build a relationship that is welcoming and shows mutual respect. This begins from the first time the family makes contact with your service, whether it's to make an enquiry or to enrol their child.

First impressions are important. One way to ensure impressions are positive is to establish procedures for everyone to follow when families make initial enquiries. This could involve something as simple as providing a guide for team members who answer the phone that reflects the professionalism and warmth of your service.

Further, children take cues from their family as they observe them interacting with the educators and other team members. If children see their family welcomed, and their ideas and suggestions listened to, respected and valued, it will build on the child's sense of belonging in the service.

ENROLMENT

Once the family has accepted the offer of a position for their child, the enrolment process usually begins with a meeting between the nominated supervisor or another team member and the family.

Preparation

An individual enrolment meeting with each family is a great way to share information and build relationships. Prior to the meeting, it is good practice to write to the family with the following details:

- the date and time of the meeting
- directions to the service, parking and access information
- invite them to bring their child along
- a list of documents they should bring, e.g. immunisation record, birth certificate, medical plans, support from referral agencies, relevant court orders
- explain that you would like to get to know them and their child and encourage them to consider what is important for them to share with you at the meeting
- if there are any fees payable at the meeting and how payment is accepted.

The enrolment form and service family handbook can be sent to the family prior to the enrolment meeting, giving them time to collect the required information and look through the handbook. However, others may prefer if you ask the questions and write their answers. You will also need to take into consideration families who do not have English as their first language, as they may need support to complete the information required and access the enrolment documentation.

For a family who is not fluent in English, you might consider using an interpreter at the enrolment meeting. Options could include a telephone interpreter, a bicultural support worker or a member of another family attending the service who speaks the same language.

The enrolment meeting

Some tips to ensure the meeting runs smoothly:

- Be organised and available at the arranged time, so the family isn't left waiting.
- Avoid interruptions where possible.
- Learn the names of family members (with correct pronunciation) and use these when you speak to them.
- Consider the environment for the meeting. Is it warm, comfortable and welcoming? Is it appropriate for the culture of the family?
- Sitting on lounge chairs rather than at a desk may be more relaxing, particularly for a family who is feeling uncertain or anxious. If sitting on lounge chairs, provide a clipboard to write on. Alternatively, consider a seating arrangement at a table which encourages relationship building.
- Ensure there are experiences for children to engage in while you are speaking with the family. Thoughtfully choose experiences that reflect your service's philosophy about play.
- Offer a drink and some general conversation before beginning the more formal discussions. Families want to know you are genuinely interested in them and their child.
- Gently begin to enquire about their family structure, lifestyle, child rearing practices, beliefs and values, and their expectations in relation to the child's time at the service, both during and following enrolment and orientation.
- Discuss any concerns they may have about their child commencing at the service.
- Provide information about the service's philosophy, and policy and procedures. Also let them know how feedback is valued and what procedures are in place for families to be decision-makers.

- Discuss the activities and experiences that children will engage in, and how these align with the Approved Learning Frameworks.
- Explain the value of orientation visits and encourage families to discuss their preferences for orientation and separation.
- Provide an opportunity for the family to ask questions and seek clarification.
- Showing genuine interest and acceptance, answering questions honestly, and taking concerns seriously, will reassure families of your support.

ORIENTATION

To support the child's transition to the service, it is recommended that families spend time at the service with the child a few times before leaving the child. The time required for orientation and settling in will vary for each child and their family, so it's important to be flexible and individualise orientation for each family.

Some families, due to time constraints or other circumstances, may not be able to participate in a lengthy orientation process. These families can be re-assured that all families are welcome to spend time at the service at any time.

Considerations

- The child and their family can become familiar with the various routines of the service by visiting at different times during the day.
- Reassure the family that they may stay with their child for as long as they choose during orientation and once the child commences.
- Provide the family with suggestions for developing and maintaining a routine for saying goodbye to their child.
- If the child is having difficulty with separation, the family member could leave the child for a short period during the orientation visit and go into another room. This reinforces to the child that the family will return.

Settling in

Reassure the family:

- they can leave the child initially for a shorter day, gradually increasing the time
- they may call and speak to the child's educator(s) at any time
- the educators will keep them updated on how the child is settling in and progressing
- they will be updated about any changes or circumstances which may affect them or their child.

Following up

As well as ensuring ongoing daily communications with the family are two way and meaningful, extra things can be done during the child's first days in the service, such as:

- leave a welcoming note to the family in the child's bag
- send an email during the day to update the family on their child. Perhaps you could include a note about their interests, as discussed at the enrolment meeting. If the child has settled in, include a photo or two of the child
- ask the family how they have settled in and if they have any questions or concerns.

Moving forward

To support the progress you have made during enrolment and orientation, continue to promote the partnership and demonstrate to the family that you value them and their child.



For further information on engaging families refer to the [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).