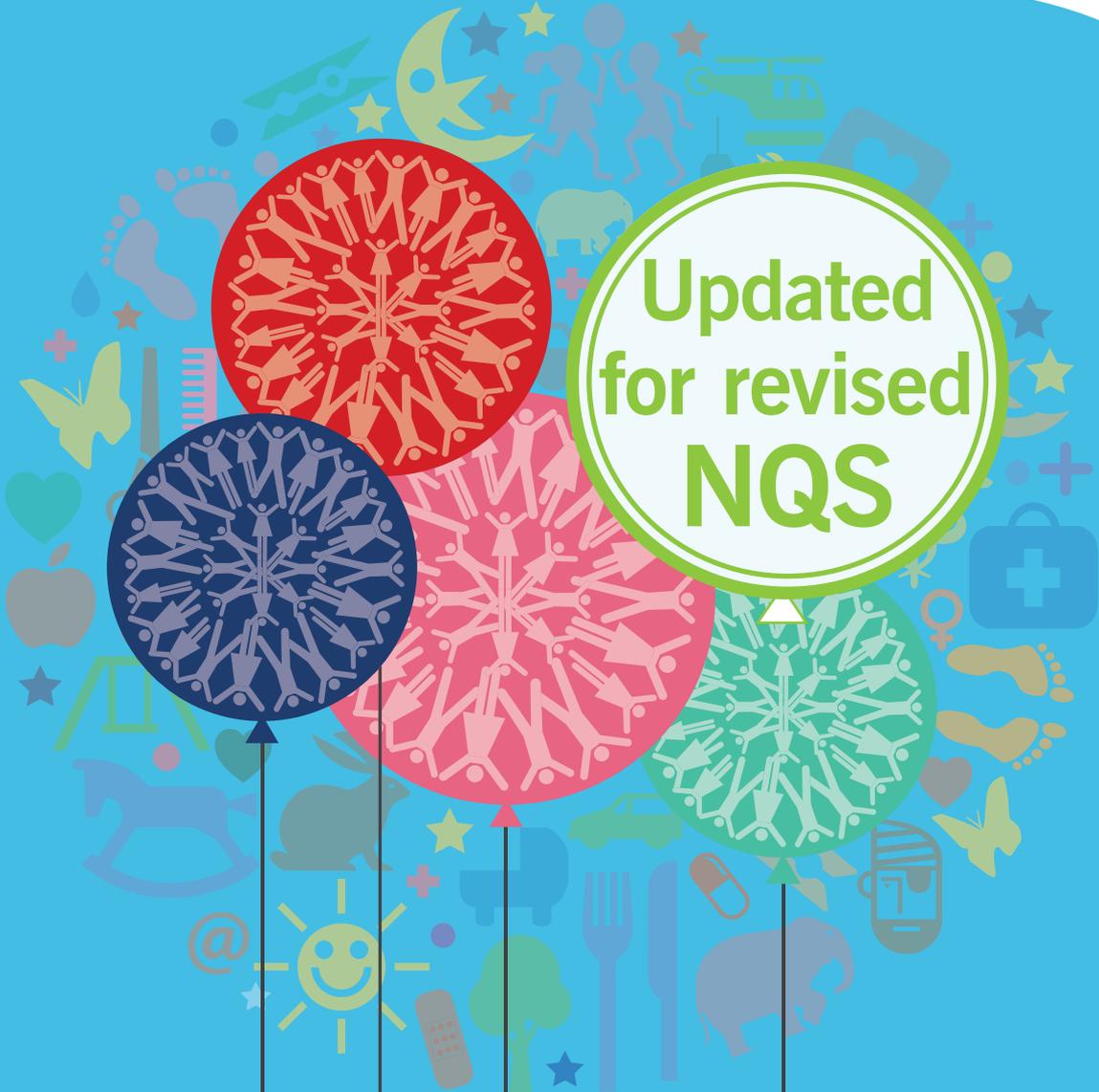


# CHCECE026

## Work in partnership with families to provide appropriate education and care for children



Updated  
for revised  
**NQS**

*Learner guide*



**aspire**  
learning resources

CHCECE026

**Work in partnership  
with families to  
provide appropriate  
education and care  
for children**

Release 3

**Learner guide**

Aspire Version 2.2



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## Version control and modification history

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Release 3, version 2.2	May 2018	Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program

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**CHCECE026 Work in partnership with families to provide appropriate education and care for children, Release 3**



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## Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE026 Work in partnership with families to provide appropriate education and care for children*, Release 3. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au).

## How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
<b>Learning content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.</li> </ul>
<b>Practice tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into practice. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.</li> </ul>
<b>Video clips</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Where QR codes appear, you can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: <a href="http://www.aspirelr.com.au/help">www.aspirelr.com.au/help</a>.</li> </ul> 
<b>Summaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning checkpoints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There are learning checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.</li> </ul>



## Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

**1A Seeking information about families**

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**1B Involving families in the service**

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## Providing families with opportunities to be involved in the service

When a child starts at your service, it is essential to make a good first impression on both the child and their family members, who may include mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, extended family, kin and foster children. The first impression you make on a family plays a large part in the opinion they form of you and the service. It may also influence their decision to use your service and the way in which they communicate with you.

A positive relationship between the parents (or other significant people who have a commitment to and responsibility for the child) and the educator is very important for the child and the family.

Your enthusiasm and positive presentation also influences families' participation in the care process.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

<b>National Quality Standard</b>		
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
✓	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
<b>Early Years Learning Framework</b>	<b>My Time, Our Place</b>	
<b>Principles</b>		
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
<b>Practice</b>		
✓	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
✓	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
✓	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
<b>Outcomes</b>		
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

# 1A Seeking information about families

It is essential that educators are familiar with the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the National Quality Standard (NQS), which detail the importance of the relationship between education and care services, and the families they provide education and care for.

Element 6.1.2 of the NQS states that the expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families should be respected and that families should share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing. This element links directly to Principle 2 – Partnerships in *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF) and *My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia* (MTO). The stronger the connection between an education and care service and the child's home, the greater the ability for the child to thrive.



You need to be able to access and navigate through the documentation, and apply the information as required to ensure you can work effectively in partnership with families to provide appropriate education and care for children. You can read more about the NQS, the EYLF and the MTO at: <http://aspirelr.link/nationalqualityframework>



Watch this video about communicating with families.

## Family-centred practice

The NQS, EYLF and MTO have been developed with a family-centred practice approach that recognises parents as the experts regarding their own family and as having the right to determine what is most important for their child. As an educator, you have a responsibility to keep parents informed with up-to-date, accurate and reliable information. When parents have this information, they can then prioritise their needs according to their own family situation.

A family-centred service responds to parent requests by:

- ▶ implementing strategies to meet family needs and requests, including providing additional or alternative services and/or adapting the curriculum, routines and information to suit the families using the education and care facilities
- ▶ training and supporting staff to enable them to be family-centred; this may occur by reducing barriers and limitations to communication and ensuring that communication and the information provided is consistent
- ▶ providing information to families about their importance, so they can be prepared to participate fully if they choose
- ▶ formally adopting family-centred practice in service delivery by incorporating the principles into its policies, procedures, philosophy and practice.

## Whole of community parenting

An extension of the family-centred approach is the theory of parenting called ‘whole of community parenting’. This theory focuses on the belief that it benefits both families and society if children are supported and cared for by the whole community.

Your service is part of this as it shares education and care roles with families. Further benefits are seen when children are:

- ▶ valued by their whole community
- ▶ included in community decisions that affect them
- ▶ encouraged to express themselves and participate in community activities
- ▶ protected from harm
- ▶ helped to reach their full potential.

## Create a welcoming atmosphere

The first impression of your service is crucial to the ongoing relationship you develop with each family. When meeting families for the first time, greet them with a friendly smile. Speak clearly and use words and terms they will understand. Be sincere in your welcome with body language that matches your words. Making families feel comfortable in your service environment encourages them to speak freely and provide you with the information you need.

As part of your welcome, emphasise the service’s understanding of the importance of the parenting role and your commitment to caring for their child while the child is in your care.

Provide an appropriate welcome that mirrors the values, cultural customs and philosophies of your service, as well as those of the family; for example, how you welcome an Indigenous Australian may be different to how you welcome a Muslim family. Think about the language you need to use and the things that make each family feel important and considered.

Follow your organisational standards, policies and procedures when welcoming a family who uses languages other than English or requires cultural communication different to your own. This may include the following actions:

- ▶ Set up for success; find out everything you need to know about the family’s culture and traditions at orientation.
- ▶ Make an effort to show parents you are happy they are using your service.
- ▶ Use an interpreter and/or translator if required.
- ▶ Provide information in the family’s language if possible.
- ▶ Provide information in a variety of ways (for example, verbally, written and demonstrated) to enable parents of all abilities to understand.
- ▶ Ask about cultural practices and expectations early so you know how to communicate appropriately and consider the child’s culture when preparing activities.

Watch this video about families’ different cultural expectations.



A welcoming environment can also be created in the centre by using:

- ▶ photos, paintings and posters of families, familiar places and images
- ▶ familiar procedures
- ▶ newsletters
- ▶ comfortable spaces to sit and talk
- ▶ facilities to make a drink (water, tea or coffee)
- ▶ noticeboards/spaces for displaying news/celebrations
- ▶ an office or area available for confidential discussions.



## Finding out about families

To provide adequately for a family, you need to find out as much as you can about them before they begin their time at the service.

Family members may include:

- ▶ mothers
- ▶ fathers
- ▶ grandparents
- ▶ siblings
- ▶ extended family members/relatives
- ▶ foster children
- ▶ partners of parents
- ▶ guardians and foster parents.

### Talk to family members to find out about a child's:

- ▶ interests
- ▶ food and drink preferences and requirements (including any forbidden foods)
- ▶ sleeping and rest patterns
- ▶ health status
- ▶ preferred toys and activities
- ▶ preferred levels of social interaction/solitude
- ▶ ability levels
- ▶ additional support needs
- ▶ developmental stage
- ▶ cultural requirements.

Encourage family members to tell you about aspects of their lives and culture, so you can integrate this into the child's program, and extend their skills and knowledge so you can encourage them to contribute to the operation of the service.

You may discover that many families are unsure what to tell you, so make use of required information on your service's enrolment forms when interviewing them. Encourage people to share their beliefs, values and needs so you can use this information to structure a family-centred program based on sound education and care practices.

Incorporate a family's cultural background into the environment. Always check with the parent to ensure you are using language and cultural items correctly.

Unless you are familiar with the family's language and cultural practices from your own experience, you may be creating offensive situations without realising.

**To demonstrate that you respect the family and their values, you may wish to:**

- ▶ display key words and label items in English, but include other languages in smaller print; young children learn new languages quickly
- ▶ play culturally relevant music (check with the family that this is child-appropriate)
- ▶ incorporate cultural items, including food, into the environment where appropriate, but check with the family that this is an accurate representation
- ▶ discuss traditions of other countries through literature, games and songs.

## Understanding the child

The most important role you can play is to support and protect the relationship between a child and their parent. Parents or other family members need you to respect their values and support them in achieving what they want for their child.

**They will identify whether the ideals they have for their child are important to you by considering:**

- ▶ how you interact with them
- ▶ the questions you ask
- ▶ how confident you are in leading the relationship
- ▶ how you relate to their child and other children
- ▶ the policies and procedures of your service
- ▶ how you involve them in the service environment.

As most parents and family members look to you to lead their relationship with you, they are likely to expect you will investigate what their values are. They will expect you to make a greater effort than just getting them to fill in an enrolment form. They need you to work with them and support them.

Families will feel involved by sharing their values and beliefs with you in a range of ways. They will also feel involved if they are confident that their wishes for their child are being respected and that you are considering their wishes throughout the day as you care for their child.

Families know if these things are happening. When they drop off or pick up their child, they see, hear and feel whether they are valued and whether their child is in a place that respects their family. Their emotions about leaving their child in your care can be a major indication of whether your approach is family-centred.



## Strategies for finding out information

There are many informal and formal ways you can collect family information. An informal method may be a conversation at drop-off and pick-up times each day. A formal method may include:

- ▶ an enrolment form: a standard form that collects the same information for each family and is updated at least once a year
- ▶ an enrolment interview: an orientation process in which families are shown around the service, introduced to the environment and asked some questions about their preferences
- ▶ a referral agent: information from other services used by the family given with the family's consent; this may be ongoing or a one-off situation
- ▶ a meeting: uninterrupted time in which information about children's interests, routines and preferences can be exchanged, discussed and negotiated; these may be scheduled throughout the year
- ▶ a survey: asking about particular information; this may be done regularly or just on certain occasions
- ▶ a curriculum strategy: involving parents at curriculum planning times and requesting their knowledge of certain areas and information about their needs, goals or hopes for their child.

## Communicating clearly

Communicating clearly is a crucial aspect of your role. You need to speak clearly and in language the parents are familiar with to ensure everyone understands what you are asking and why you need the information.

The open communication you establish by managing communication effectively and courteously ensures that families not only share their needs and issues, but choose to do so in a positive way as part of their partnership with you. They will also feel confident sharing milestones and events, and feel comfortable participating in your service.

The following table provides five suggestions for managing communication.

<b>Listen actively</b>	Active listening involves all your communication skills as you focus on what the other person is saying.  Use language to reflect and acknowledge what their discussion is about, and use body language to demonstrate a positive and open attitude.
<b>Inform families promptly</b>	Always respond promptly. Never wait until the last minute to tell parents something. Keep everyone up to date and give families the chance to think about issues and events. This way they can prepare, consider their thoughts, ask questions and address issues positively.

<p><b>Give enough information</b></p>	<p>Ensure you tell families everything they need to know to make a decision or to feel comfortable in a situation. If the information is negative, do not leave out the parts you have concerns about.</p> <p>Present the information positively and openly in a variety of methods that suit each family.</p>
<p><b>Ensure your information or message is consistent</b></p>	<p>Prepare appropriately and check that you are clear about the information. Be aware of issues and questions that may arise so you can be ready to respond positively.</p> <p>Demonstrate consistency by following through, and consider the body language and gestures you use, as these can convey a negative attitude or lack of interest.</p>
<p><b>Have realistic expectations</b></p>	<p>The role of parent is demanding, and draws on many areas of skills and knowledge. The parent must balance this demanding role and any others they undertake outside of the family during the time their child is in an education and care service.</p> <p>Things that may seem very important to you may seem irrelevant to a parent who is focused on getting from one place to another on time and is completing a range of tasks.</p>

## Collaborative relationships

Collaboration is essential in a family-centred approach as you are in a partnership with the parents, supporting each other and working together towards a common goal by sharing knowledge and learning, and building consensus.

An ongoing collaborative relationship enables families to keep you up to date with their current needs and enables them to share significant events with you. Most of these key events have an impact on the child's abilities, behaviour or needs.

To help your collaboration be successful, you must implement skills that are common to all your education and care services relationships. For example:

- ▶ be non-judgmental
- ▶ be open to different perspectives
- ▶ apply empathy
- ▶ demonstrate active listening
- ▶ check understanding
- ▶ follow organisational standards, philosophies, policies and procedures.

Respect the amount of information a family provides about their life, as it is essential that you create a relationship in which families feel comfortable confiding in you. Often the amount of information you receive relates to the positive or negative feelings that the parent links to the event. This may also be influenced by their fear that they will be judged or that their child will be treated differently.

Always consider how you would feel about sharing with others the details of your own key events.

You can refer to the following websites to help you understand families more clearly.

Resource	Site	Description
KidsMatter	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/kidsmatter-role-of-families">http://aspirelr.link/kidsmatter-role-of-families</a>	Information on the role of families with a focus on mental health
Australian Foster Care Association (AFCA)	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/foster-care-australia">http://aspirelr.link/foster-care-australia</a>	Information about foster care and links to state and territory associations
Grandparents as parents again	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/grandparents-and-kinship-carers">http://aspirelr.link/grandparents-and-kinship-carers</a>	Resource for grandparents raising their grandchildren
Australian Institute of Family Studies	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/aifs">http://aspirelr.link/aifs</a>	Information and fact sheets on family trends in Australia

## Key events

Families may or may not wish to share key events with you in detail. The following table provides some examples of key events, and how these may positively or negatively affect the child.

Key event	Possible positive influence on the child	Possible negative influence on the child
Separation or divorce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Relief, as a negative living situation may be resolved</li> <li>▶ Change causing closer bonds between each parent and child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feeling confused or upset</li> <li>▶ Feeling that they are to blame for the situation</li> <li>▶ Feeling clingy or insecure</li> <li>▶ Resentment</li> </ul>
Change to family work situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Financial relief</li> <li>▶ Family situation more suited to needs of all members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Financial difficulty</li> <li>▶ One or both parents being unavailable or sometimes not seen by the child</li> </ul>
Addition of a family member, such as a sibling or step-parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Excitement</li> <li>▶ Easy transition into new role in the family</li> <li>▶ Support and/or stability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Confusion over change</li> <li>▶ Difficulty accepting or being able to take on a new role in the family</li> <li>▶ Jealousy or resentment</li> <li>▶ Disappointment if the situation is not what was expected</li> </ul>

Key event	Possible positive influence on the child	Possible negative influence on the child
Crisis and family problems; for example, drug addiction, gambling dependency or imprisonment of a family member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Underlying or undetectable issues may come to the surface to be rectified</li> <li>▶ Care of the child may improve if the family receives assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Fear and uncertainty</li> <li>▶ Impact on play, relationship development and interaction</li> <li>▶ Continually being placed in unsafe or uncertain situations</li> <li>▶ Resentment</li> </ul>
Conflict and violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Underlying or undetectable issues may come to the surface and be rectified if help is sought</li> <li>▶ Care of the child may improve if the family receives assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Impact on play, relationship development and interactions</li> <li>▶ Fear and uncertainty</li> <li>▶ Continually being placed in unsafe or uncertain situations</li> </ul>
Loss and grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Learning about life and death</li> <li>▶ Thinking about feelings and how they influence us</li> <li>▶ Relief after a long or difficult illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Inability to understand the situation</li> <li>▶ Confusion</li> <li>▶ Various explanations being given</li> </ul>
Recent move to Australia, interstate or into the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Safety and security</li> <li>▶ Opportunity to settle in one environment after a trauma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Confusion and insecurity</li> <li>▶ May add to a string of changes</li> </ul>
Parental absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Safety and security</li> <li>▶ Interest in communicating in different ways; for example, through drawings or letters for the parent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Lack of safety and security</li> <li>▶ Confusion</li> <li>▶ Resentment</li> </ul>
Family and other celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Excitement</li> <li>▶ Pride</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Anxiety</li> <li>▶ Over-commitment</li> </ul>

## Gaining feedback

By providing opportunities for parents to give you feedback on the service provided, you can find out what things are working well, whether the child is comfortable and happy or if there are problems. Regular questionnaires, informal chats and observations all help you to understand the child and their family, and allow family members to give you additional information that may impact the way you provide your service.

# Practice task 1

1. Briefly outline the nonverbal ways a service says ‘welcome’.

.....

.....

2. What would indicate whether or not a service is family-centred? Explain using examples.

.....

.....

.....

3. Read the communication choices in the following table. Place a tick next to the appropriate communication choices and a cross next to the choices you feel are inappropriate, and explain why.

<b>Communication choice</b>	<b>Appropriate/ inappropriate?</b> (✓ or X)	<b>Explanation</b>
Leila, an educator, helps to settle Amethyst into the room. Once Amethyst is settled, Leila reminds Amethyst’s father about the family day on the weekend and comments that it would be lovely if they could attend.		
Wibawa, an educator, asks Gunne, a parent, if he has completed the survey about the lunch menu. Gunne says he doesn’t really care. Wibawa tells him that his parenting needs to improve and that he should care about what his child eats during the day.		

<b>Communication choice</b>	<b>Appropriate/ inappropriate?</b>  (✓ or X)	<b>Explanation</b>
Yesterday, Eder, an educator, asked Gabby, a parent, if she can help to organise the fundraising event as they need volunteers. Gabby immediately started crying and said she is just too overwhelmed at the moment. Today, Eder approaches Gabby again and asks about the fundraising event.		

4. Provide **two** examples of how services gain information from families.

.....

.....

5. What strategies could you use to ensure families are comfortable providing you with different types of information relating to their child?

.....

.....

.....

6. Provide an example of a feedback method a service may use to gain further information from families.

.....

.....

# 1B Involving families in the service

Part of your role as an educator is to respond to parents' questions, concerns and requests promptly, accurately and courteously, and to encourage them to participate in your service's activities. Communicating well is a crucial skill that includes:

- ▶ excellent writing, speaking and presentation skills
- ▶ knowledge of your workplace and children
- ▶ good people skills; that is, being able to relate to a variety of people and communities
- ▶ strong organisational skills.



As described in Section 1A, the communication methods you use with families include informal chats and discussions, and formal methods such as enrolment forms, enrolment interviews and meetings.

### Other suggestions for communicating and involving families:

- ▶ Schedule meetings with the parents and the child to establish goals and communicate any changes in the service.
- ▶ Listen to parents tell you about their child's strengths and how they learn.
- ▶ Ensure educators have access to phones or email to communicate with parents during the day.
- ▶ Ensure parents know the phone numbers or email addresses of the service.
- ▶ Try to communicate with any parents who do not normally attend the service; for example, if a child's dad always drops off and picks up the child, try to occasionally make contact with the mother.
- ▶ Provide parents with structured ways to comment on the service's communications; for example, by email, phone or take-home surveys.
- ▶ Speak to parents directly (this does not include leaving messages on an answering machine).
- ▶ Provide copies of service information in a variety of ways; for example, handbooks or online.

There is a fine line between attempting to increase your relationship with a family through communication, and disrespecting their involvement choices or abilities by pressuring them. To ensure you are being respectful, always:

- ▶ try to assess what level of participation a parent wants to have, based on their situation and their level of involvement
- ▶ watch for body language; this may indicate to you that the person is shy, not interested, in a hurry or needs to tell you something
- ▶ consider your message and how it may affect or influence the person.

## Provide opportunities for family members to participate

Getting parents to participate in the service can be challenging, as each family has their own commitments and level of comfort. The varying skills, abilities, time available, ideas and interests of individual parents influence their involvement, as do their ideas about what education and care is and how it should function.

Many services consider family involvement to relate to prearranged events, such as a family picnic or information evening. Some services consider family involvement to be parents doing something for the service, such as fundraising or being on a committee.



A parent's ability to participate varies according to their situation; for example, many parents work and may not have a lot of opportunity to participate with the service. Remember that parent involvement can be as simple as them staying a little longer at drop-off or pick-up times, and enjoying an activity with their child or a small group.

The most important aspect of family involvement is the relationship you develop with the parents. This relationship helps you to encourage active family involvement as you will know about the parents, and can focus on their individual interests and capabilities.

You can view parent participation in a four-level system, described in the following table. This allows you to assess each family, and identify their needs or capabilities.

### Level 1

Your service will have some families who are positive about your service but are unable to, or choose not to be, directly involved. These families may include people who:

- ▶ have a disability
- ▶ would have a conflict of interest if they were involved; for example, they have interests in other areas of education and care services, and cannot be biased towards a particular service
- ▶ have other commitments that prevent them from participating
- ▶ are experiencing stressful events
- ▶ are new to Australia
- ▶ have beliefs around sharing information or being involved in a service
- ▶ are not interested in becoming further involved.

These reasons should not be used to exclude a family or assume that a family is unable to participate. These parents, along with others, will benefit from support networks you facilitate. Support networks involve:

- ▶ allowing time and space for parents to communicate with one another
- ▶ hosting meetings for parents
- ▶ providing information or referrals to facilitate contact with a network.

<b>Level 2</b>	<p>At this level, families are mostly involved in situations that are important to their own child. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ read the noticeboard and/or newsletter</li> <li>▶ provide information about their child</li> <li>▶ place feedback forms in suggestion boxes when the feedback is in relation to their own family needs</li> <li>▶ contribute to general activities such as bringing in recycled materials or selling raffle tickets.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	<p>At this level, families offer or agree to do tasks that benefit the whole service, not just their own child. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ fix broken toys or equipment</li> <li>▶ be a support person during an excursion and take responsibility for some tasks</li> <li>▶ help organise fundraising and activities</li> <li>▶ complete surveys and evaluations</li> <li>▶ respond to and review strategies</li> <li>▶ be involved in newsletters or noticeboard presentations.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4</b>	<p>At this level, families take on management roles and are able to contribute to the running of the service. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ join a committee</li> <li>▶ offer to share a skill with the children</li> <li>▶ work in the service as a volunteer or casual worker</li> <li>▶ attend meetings and help to develop policies for the service.</li> </ul>

Some families may not participate in your chosen activities or fundraisers due to their beliefs. For example:

- ▶ Chocolate, lolly or cake drives: Some families feel this goes against their nutrition beliefs and the food policies of the service.
- ▶ Raffle tickets: Some families may find this to be a form of gambling.
- ▶ Events, prizes or gifts involving alcohol: Some religions prohibit participation in activities that involve alcohol.

You may not be able to cater for all possible beliefs, but you must respect these. Some families may prefer not to participate at all in these activities or events.

## Increasing involvement

One strategy for increasing the participation of parents is to identify the level of involvement they currently have, then offering them options for involvement at the next level.

Some other strategies that may encourage parents to become involved in the service include volunteer opportunities. You may:

- ▶ encourage families and other community members to volunteer their support by attending service events
- ▶ ask family members how they would like to participate as volunteers and respond to these indications by arranging appropriate opportunities

- ▶ encourage family and community members to become involved as:
  - participants in management meetings
  - presenters of activities
  - assistants with art shows, read-aloud events, workshops, book swaps and other activities
  - volunteers on excursions
  - instructional assistants in specific activities
  - non-instructional assistants in general activities
  - from-home contributors; for example, assembling materials or typing at home.

Participation can also be increased by encouraging families to take part in learn-at-home activities. These activities should be designed to enable the family to gain a better understanding of how learning occurs, how it benefits the child, what is involved and how the service operates. You can do this by:

- ▶ offering learning activities and events for the whole family
- ▶ inviting parents to borrow resources from service libraries for themselves and their families
- ▶ linking parents with resources and activities that promote learning in the community
- ▶ giving parents materials they can use to evaluate their child's progress and provide feedback to educators
- ▶ linking home learning activities to learning in the service.

## Sharing information

Another strategy for involving parents is to familiarise them with how the service operates. This is commonly done during the orientation process or early in the family's relationship with you, but can be extended at any time by planning time to share information. This information may include discussion about routines and rituals in the service.

### **This information-sharing is most effective if you take the following actions:**

- ▶ Invite the family to comment on each aspect of the day's plan, and advise you if they feel their child's day should be different.
- ▶ Ensure the family knows how to share information in the future and who to share it with.
- ▶ Clarify what they should do if they are not happy with something their child is involved in.
- ▶ Explain how to read the plan of activities and identify the important parts for their child.
- ▶ Encourage them to participate in planning activities for their child by providing information, informing you of their needs and wants, asking questions, and giving feedback and further ideas, as well as participating in evaluation activities.
- ▶ Explain how the family can become involved in children's experiences. They may be able to come on excursions, help out for a short time, lead a group, teach the children a skill, teach you a skill that you can then share with the children, or provide resources or information about experiences they think are valuable.
- ▶ Include some management information so that they feel you are open to their being involved in decision-making and service operation.

To make sure you do not overload parents with information, you may choose a different topic each week or month.

## Decision-making

Parents are likely to become more involved in service operation if they are provided with the appropriate opportunities and methods that suit their abilities and communication styles.

The levels of involvement described earlier in this section detail the types of decisions that parents may be able to make. They also link to the questions and concerns parents may have.

The following table shows how you can involve parents at each level.

Level	Possible decisions	Questions, concerns and decision-making examples
<b>Levels 1 and 2</b>	Things that assist their own child's daily care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Whether the menu is suitable for their child's needs</li> <li>▶ What hours of care best suit their needs</li> <li>▶ Whether they would be negatively affected by a change that is being considered</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	Things that benefit the whole service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How they may participate</li> <li>▶ What fundraising activities to implement</li> <li>▶ How to implement surveys and gain suggestions</li> <li>▶ How policies and procedures can be improved</li> <li>▶ What items/topics are useful for the newsletter</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4</b>	Management decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ When committee meetings should take place</li> <li>▶ What items/topics need to be discussed at committee meetings</li> <li>▶ Which policies or procedures need to be altered</li> <li>▶ How to involve other families</li> </ul>

In any decision-making process, you must consider who should be involved and what decisions each person could be involved in. Some decisions need to remain in the control of staff or the management team; others can benefit from the support and feedback of parents or even children.

Here are some examples of appropriate and inappropriate decisions.

Appropriate decisions	Inappropriate decisions
<p>The coordinator has developed a budget and is proposing to increase the fees by \$5 a week to cover the costs of a music session.</p> <p>She asks the parents on the management committee to help develop a feedback method to review whether this will be feasible or if families would have difficulty with the fee increase.</p>	<p>The coordinator asks some parents to help work out a budget.</p> <p>They decide that if they raise the fees by \$5 a week they will be able to include a music session once a week.</p> <p>The service is run by the local council (the funding and management body) and is located in a low socioeconomic area.</p>

Appropriate decisions	Inappropriate decisions
<p>A new menu is developed by the service cook. All parents are asked to comment on its suitability and to offer suggestions if possible.</p> <p>Some families are not concerned about the menu, but others take time to give their feedback.</p> <p>Each comment is considered by the cook and coordinator, who make a final decision regarding the changes.</p>	<p>One parent is asked to help decide what types of food should be provided in the menu for the whole service.</p> <p>This parent has a child who is lactose intolerant, so lactose-free options are included.</p> <p>The needs of the other families are not considered or catered for.</p>

The positive examples show that the leader recognised each person’s role and when it was important to consult them. Without consultation about decisions, families may feel isolated and that their needs are not being acknowledged.

## Practice task 2

1. Provide **two** examples of how a service may encourage parents to participate in children’s experiences.

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2. List **three** questions a family may have about their child’s education and care.

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3. What strategies can you use to respond courteously and promptly to a parent’s question?

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4. Provide an example of a decision that parents should be involved in. How can you encourage the parents’ involvement?

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5. Provide an example of a decision that should be resolved by the management team of the service.

## Summary

- ▶ A family-centred approach as outlined in the NQS, EYLF and MTOP involves genuine partnerships with parents in which educators and families value each other, and share the knowledge they have of the child.
- ▶ Provide a welcoming environment for families by speaking clearly, using words and terms they understand and using appropriate body language.
- ▶ By making families feel comfortable in your environment, you encourage them to speak freely and provide you with the information you need.
- ▶ A welcoming environment may be different for each family, but always includes your open communication.
- ▶ Demonstrate that you understand parents' beliefs and values by being aware of different cultural considerations.
- ▶ Parents communicate their needs and expectations to you. It is crucial that you respond to parents' questions, concerns and requests promptly, accurately and courteously.
- ▶ Parents have skills, knowledge and expertise that you may not already have in your service.
- ▶ By encouraging parents to become involved in the service, you can benefit from their ideas and involve them in decision-making processes.
- ▶ Parents may have a different view of your service, so consult with them and use their ideas to improve it.

# Learning checkpoint 1

## Providing families with opportunities to be involved in the service

### Part A

Read the case study, then complete the questions that follow.

#### Case study

At High Street Child Care, the foyer is filled with colourful signs and posters of happy-looking families from a variety of cultures. There is a cosy couch to sit on and the noticeboard demonstrates various celebrations occurring in the community. From the ceiling hangs the word 'Welcome' in a variety of languages.

A new Vietnamese family has arrived who speak very little English. They enter their children's play space. Educators are busy undertaking a variety of tasks. There are whispers saying, 'You go, you speak to them!' The family cling together waiting for someone to make them feel welcome and safe.

A child now arrives with her father, Reg. Kymberly, an educator, comes over and says, 'Happy birthday, Mindy! We have a cake for you'. Mindy's dad is angry as he has explained to Kymberly that Mindy will not celebrate her birthday due to their religious beliefs (they are Jehovah's Witnesses).

1. How would you ensure the Vietnamese family is made to feel welcome? Provide **two** ideas.

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2. What knowledge, skills, expertise or aspects of family life and culture could you encourage the Vietnamese family to share with you and the group of children?

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3. How would you make sure you know about Reg's cultural requests if you were Mindy's educator?

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## Part B

1. What process could you use to gain feedback from families? Provide examples.

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2. Explain how parents can be included in consultation and decision-making in a service.

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3. Provide **two** points of evidence demonstrating how a service could meet Element 6.1.2 of the NQS.

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## Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

**2A** Sharing information about children

**2B** Making decisions with families

**2C** Responding to incidents

## Providing information to families about their child

When parents understand the program you have developed, they are better able to relate to you and share information about their children. This helps you work in a collaborative relationship in which you and the parents regularly make decisions together.

When parents understand the curriculum and continually share information with you about their children, they will confidently request additional requirements they feel are important. This involvement is part of providing a quality responsive program.

Incidents may occur during the day that you need to discuss with parents. The way you handle these discussions reflects on your professionalism, the value you place on the children's wellbeing and your relationship with parents.

Watch this video on collecting and recording information about children.



The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

<b>National Quality Standard</b>		
✓	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children’s health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
✓	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
✓	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
<b>Early Years Learning Framework</b>	<b>My Time, Our Place</b>	
<b>Principles</b>		
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
<b>Practice</b>		
✓	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
✓	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
✓	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
<b>Outcomes</b>		
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

# 2A Sharing information about children

Your level of involvement with each family and the support you provide to them influences the level of trust and confidence parents have in your ability to understand, educate and care for their child.

Apart from parents' general involvement in daily activities, you should take the following actions to share information about their child's progress, interests and experiences.



What to do	How to implement	Methods to use
<p>Keep parents up to date by sharing information and feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Let them know what you are working on, what successes you experience and when you need more support.</li> <li>▶ Develop communication methods so you both keep in touch.</li> <li>▶ Share the documentation you have collected about the child and their relationships.</li> <li>▶ Share information about community events.</li> <li>▶ Share information about the child's:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– progress and learning</li> <li>– interests</li> <li>– experiences.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Plans that are displayed</li> <li>▶ Goals</li> <li>▶ Diaries</li> <li>▶ Portfolios</li> <li>▶ Photographs</li> <li>▶ Displays</li> <li>▶ Interviews</li> <li>▶ Daily chats and discussions</li> </ul>
<p>Respect family goals and objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Show you understand their family and community connections.</li> <li>▶ Always take the goals and objectives seriously and consider the priorities of the family.</li> <li>▶ Support and encourage parents to carry through any strategies they use, and acknowledge their contribution toward successes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Communication books</li> <li>▶ Portfolios</li> <li>▶ Emails</li> <li>▶ Interviews</li> </ul>
<p>Use the family's ideas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consult family members about how things might be done, and ask them to share their skills and knowledge with you. Remember that parents know the child better than anyone else.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Surveys</li> <li>▶ Emails</li> <li>▶ Their attendance and involvement</li> <li>▶ Interviews</li> <li>▶ Meetings</li> </ul>

What to do	How to implement	Methods to use
Request the family's insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ask parents about any issues they have or foresee, past experiences, personal feelings and unsuccessful strategies.</li> <li>▶ Gain greater background knowledge of the child.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Diaries</li> <li>▶ Communication books</li> <li>▶ Surveys</li> <li>▶ Discussions</li> <li>▶ Forms</li> <li>▶ Interviews</li> </ul>
Provide information or support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide information about their child and the child's situation and progress, so they are able to work toward future goals positively and successfully.</li> <li>▶ Put parents in touch with support services and advocacy networks.</li> <li>▶ Parents are likely to be interested in any research or relevant parent education you come across.</li> <li>▶ Provide parenting advice and education to any parent who seeks it in relation to an issue, such as toilet learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Resources such as books, videos and brochures</li> <li>▶ Photographs</li> <li>▶ Portfolios</li> <li>▶ Routine displays</li> <li>▶ Interviews</li> <li>▶ Meetings</li> <li>▶ Guest speakers</li> </ul>

## Discussions with parents

You need to make time in your day for discussions with parents. By sharing what you know about a child with parents, you include them in your curriculum and demonstrate your interest in their child. In addition, if parents view their child's records, they can then pass on information that you may not be aware of, including cultural aspects and experiences outside the service.

Parents may share concerns or ways they have dealt with issues themselves at home. This assists you to communicate with the parent and discuss shared strategies. This collaborative approach shows respect for families and their connection with their community.

Your approach to parents should reflect your thoughts about the parenting role. One important aspect to consider is your beliefs about your own role. If you act like an expert at all times, you may miss the opportunity to be involved in a shared role with parents. For example, you may be giving advice all the time and never asking for opinions or information from parents. This is likely to build a wall that may stop effective communication, and parents may feel that they are being belittled or that their role is not valued.

**Example**

**Communicating with parents about the child**

Emma arranges to spend time talking about Despina and her family with Despina’s mum, Angela, in order to develop care strategies. They look at the documentation Emma has been gathering about Despina’s interests and skills.

When Angela looks through the developmental checklist, she identifies three skills that Despina is able to achieve competently at home that are not marked on the checklist.

Emma updates this information, then organises a time that they can catch up again and talk about Despina’s interests, skills and development as well as any interests they have at home.

## Practice task 3

1. List **three** ways you can collect and use ideas provided by families.

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2. Explain why it is crucial to share information about a child’s progress, including their interests and development, with the child’s parents. What may be the consequences if this is not done regularly?

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3. Why might you need to explain to parents the relationships their child has at the service?

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# 2B Making decisions with families

Being in a partnership with parents means that all decisions are shared. Your service should have a range of strategies you can implement to facilitate this and ensure all parties are satisfied with the outcome. Decisions may need to be made about an aspect of the program or requests parents have made.

## Understanding parent requests

Families may make requests for you to provide or do something for their child.

A family may make a special request because they:

- ▶ feel it is important to their family
- ▶ have seen or heard of other families requesting it
- ▶ have had this request provided for them in another service, or know someone who has
- ▶ were brought up in this manner
- ▶ lack skills in certain areas
- ▶ need additional support.



Requests from families may be appropriate or inappropriate, as the examples in the following table demonstrate.

Appropriate requests	Inappropriate requests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Having a supply of alternative or additional food or drink to meet dietary needs.</li> <li>▶ Special requirements for routine times; for example, cuddles before sleep, no sleep, cloth or disposable nappies, unusual content in a bottle or no late snacks.</li> <li>▶ Taking the child to the doctor or dentist.</li> <li>▶ Relaying messages to people who work outside your organisation, such as a teacher or a specialist.</li> <li>▶ Transporting the child to kindergarten or a school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Requests that are inappropriate for your program or do not fit with your philosophy; for example, bottles, dummies or nappies provided for older children, or infants undergoing toilet learning.</li> <li>▶ Expecting alternative strategies for behaviour management; for example, smacking, biting back or isolating the child.</li> </ul>

Agreement on specific requests deemed appropriate can be reached by negotiating. This requires you to be sensitive to the family's point of view. Try to see things from their perspective and solve the situation, not just by identifying what you think your role is, but by considering why or what the family really wants or needs. Although you may encounter a small number of families who can be difficult, critical, demanding, irresponsible or uncooperative, most families have a justifiable reason for asking for your cooperation, so consider these requests openly and flexibly.

A parent's request for something that you or the service considers inappropriate is not an indication of their parenting ability or a reason for you to be critical of their decisions. These requests simply indicate diversity. Requests may also be opportunities for you to reconsider service philosophies, policies and procedures.

When you have developed open and clear relationships with all families, you can use their feedback as a guide to indicate which requests are important or need to be offered more widely and how this may be done. A request that is important to most families should be addressed throughout the service as a priority.

## Strategies for making decisions

Some decisions you make during the day need to be discussed with parents. When you need to make a decision, your focus should be on how to involve the family or how to make a decision that they would agree with.

You may find that taking time to sit down with the family and talking without interruption is the best way to ensure you share information and make decisions in appropriate ways.

### Other things that may assist are:

- ▶ using a positive tone of voice
- ▶ sharing positive information, strengths and interests as well as any issues
- ▶ demonstrating you have an attitude of success
- ▶ asking for suggestions, ideas and how the family feels about a situation
- ▶ providing some suggested strategies for discussion
- ▶ presenting an attitude of partnership rather than of being an expert
- ▶ using one-on-one meetings to share general information, rather than only meeting when there are problems
- ▶ always speak positively when children are in hearing distance.

Some parents may be aware that their child's behaviour is difficult or inappropriate at times. They may even tell you about incidents that happen at home. There are some things to be aware of:

- ▶ Never speak negatively about incidents or issues while the child can hear your comments. Instead, ask the parent to speak to you privately. When you speak negatively about children in their presence, it can cause flow-on effects that may increase the negative behaviour and/or decrease the child's self-esteem.
- ▶ Avoid becoming involved in discussions about what the child did wrong. Even if the parent discusses their negative behaviour experiences with their child, always be positive and demonstrate an attitude of success. Turn the conversation around to discuss the positives of the day and provide guidance ideas.

## Considering and negotiating requests

Successful decision-making or negotiation relies on a variety of conditions. Both parties must:

- ▶ have a desire to solve the issue
- ▶ have knowledge of one another's situation
- ▶ be interested in achieving an outcome
- ▶ have adequate mutual recognition and respect
- ▶ have the ability to deliver on any commitment.

Have a discussion with the parent to ensure you understand their request and exactly what they require. Once you understand the parent’s request, you may need to negotiate to reach an agreement if the request is going to be difficult to accommodate. Always communicate in a polite and respectful manner, as the parent is making the request to meet the needs of their child, which is also your priority.

When considering requests, you should do one or all of the following as part of your negotiation.

<b>Be open to the request</b>	At first you may think the request is strange or impossible, but by being open, you can look more broadly at the possibilities and keep your relationship with the family positive.
<b>Identify how the request could be met</b>	You may be able to do this by discussing the situation with the parent or you may brainstorm by yourself or with your colleagues; either way, think of some possible options and ensure you involve everyone concerned.
<b>Consider the impact of the request</b>	<p>Assess how possible each of the options for resolution may be, remembering to consider the impact on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ the environment (through waste, chemicals, consumables, etc.)</li> <li>▶ the costs to the service (both immediate and ongoing costs)</li> <li>▶ the staff (burnout, stress and negative feelings)</li> <li>▶ social sustainability (how change will affect the service and how human rights will be met).</li> </ul>
<b>Weigh up alternatives or compromises</b>	You may be able to do this by discussing the options with the parent or by consulting with your colleagues. You must identify the modification that best meets the child’s and family’s needs, and is also safe and possible in the service environment.
<b>Encourage compromise</b>	When the alternatives cannot exactly meet the request, you may need to compromise to find what best meets the family’s needs; remain positive during this stage and ensure you work with the family rather than being an adversary.
<b>Communicate the final decision clearly</b>	<p>You, as well as parents, children and other educators, need to be very clear about what is going to happen and when – you may document the decision so that it remains clear.</p> <p>This should occur at the time of the discussion or negotiation, but you may need to follow up later by speaking to the parent when they are in the service, phoning the parent or writing them a letter to explain the situation.</p>
<b>Review regularly</b>	Check with the family that the final decision is working for them. If the family is not pleased by the outcome, you may need to rethink alternatives and come to a more appropriate outcome.

In successful decision-making and negotiation, both parties should feel positive about the outcome of the discussion. A win-win situation relies on both parties thinking about the needs of others, yet still standing up for their own needs.

## Example

### Considering and negotiating a request

Geraldine, a parent at the service, approaches an educator, Portia, and asks if they can include some aspects of Muslim religion in her daughter's program. Portia explains that children from a range of religions attend the service and that it really is a family responsibility to include religion in a child's life. Geraldine and Portia talk about the sorts of things Geraldine would like included and together they come to a win-win solution.

Geraldine's daughter's room will celebrate Muslim events because they already celebrate many Christian events such as Christmas and Easter. However, Portia explains that the service will not include discussion of the religious aspects behind these events; rather they will focus on the family and community meanings, as they do with the Christian events.

## Inability to meet requests

There may be times when a parent's request cannot be accommodated due to a variety of reasons. These reasons usually relate to the limitations of your service; for example:

- ▶ educator-child ratios
- ▶ funding
- ▶ the physical environment and layout
- ▶ resources at the service
- ▶ the time available
- ▶ peak or slow times of the day
- ▶ the number of children in the service.

Safety is a major limitation when trying to accommodate parents' requests. As an educator, you have a duty of care to the children, which means you are obligated to provide them with a safe and secure environment and appropriate care.

Whenever you are faced with a limitation, ensure that you:

- ▶ remain positive
- ▶ communicate the limitation in a way that demonstrates you are taking the request seriously
- ▶ provide some suitable alternatives or strategies.

As parents are not generally aware of all curriculum aspects, any limitations need to come with an explanation that makes sense to them. Explain the issue clearly, and leave time for discussion, both to ensure the parent understands the limitation, and so that the parent supports you to solve the situation. This is especially important when the limitations being explained relate to a child's needs or development, as this type of situation can create a great deal of concern for families and may also link to breaches of organisational standards, policies and procedures and/or legal requirements such as disability legislation.

**If negotiation or discussions become negative, you must:**

- ▶ not take things personally
- ▶ maintain your composure and keep your voice at the same level
- ▶ avoid statements that directly disagree with the other person's point of view
- ▶ acknowledge that you have heard the message
- ▶ agree with parts of the message that you accept
- ▶ seek clarification or modification of the parts of the message that you do not accept.

Whatever the outcome, it is suggested that any final decision is written down and clearly communicated to all those involved.

**Example****Inability to meet a request**

A parent asks you to call them every half hour so they know their child is settled. Limitations that may apply to this request include the following:

- ▶ Educator-child ratios: You would be leaving the child and moving from supervision if you did this.
- ▶ Funding: You might not have funds available to provide additional staff to cover you while you do this.
- ▶ The physical environment and layout: You may not be able to access a phone without leaving the children.
- ▶ Time available: You will be limiting the time you have with children.
- ▶ Peak times of the day: You will be busy and less focused.
- ▶ The number of children in the service: You may not be able to do this for all children, or you may be alone with the children and unable to make a call.

**Communicating final decisions**

To ensure that your negotiated solutions are understood by everyone involved, you should communicate the final decision clearly and in detail. There are a number of ways to do this:

- ▶ Finish a discussion or negotiation by outlining the result.
- ▶ Write down what has been agreed on.
- ▶ Involve others affected by the situation.

Ensure that all people involved are clear about what has been decided on and what their roles will be.

There are benefits to this continued checking:

- ▶ The results of the decision-making are constantly clarified.
- ▶ The decision makers are able to express their continued understanding and commitment to the results.
- ▶ All parties are able to demonstrate their preparedness to continue discussions and identify additional issues or needs as necessary.
- ▶ No one is confused or unclear about what will happen.

**Example**

**Communicating a final decision**

Geraldine and Portia were able to negotiate a solution to Geraldine’s request to include some aspects of Muslim religion into her daughter’s program. At the end of this discussion, the final decision is clarified in the following ways:

- ▶ Portia thanks Geraldine for her input into the program and summarises the discussion by saying that they will incorporate Muslim celebrations into the curriculum, focusing on their link with the family and the community. She asks Geraldine if she can write down the celebrations she feels will be important to the children and how they might include these.
- ▶ Portia and Geraldine agree to meet prior to the next celebration to ensure that the event is celebrated respectfully, and in line with the service’s standards and procedures.
- ▶ Portia writes a note to Geraldine saying that she is pleased that they have come to an agreement.
- ▶ Geraldine provides a flier outlining the Muslim celebrations for the year and how parents can find out more.

## Practice task 4

1. Describe one situation in which a family’s specific request could be catered for in a program.

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2. Element 6.1.2 of the NQS states, ‘The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child’s learning and wellbeing’.

What are **three** things that you can observe in your service that demonstrate this element?

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3. A family requests that you buy a two-wheel bike for the children and spend time with their child teaching them to ride.

a. What limitations to this request can you identify?

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b. How would you express these to the family during your decision-making?

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c. What options would you suggest?

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d. What could you learn from the family through this request? List **two** questions you could ask.

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4. Describe a service's policies and procedures for dealing with requests by answering the following questions.

a. What would you do if a parent made a request to you about modifying the care practices to better suit their child?

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b. Would you refer the request to someone else? If so, who?

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c. Would you have any involvement in reaching agreement about this request?

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d. Who could negotiate alternatives or compromises with parents if necessary?

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e. Who would communicate the final decision to the parent?

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# 2C Responding to incidents

When a child is involved in an incident, it is likely that their family will react in some way. Sometimes shock and concern cause people to react in a way that is different to their usual behaviour. Consider how you disclose information about an incident to ensure the family is supported and that their reactions are respected.



The following table provides reactions you may experience from parents.

<p><b>Positive feelings</b></p>	<p>Thanking you for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ supporting their child</li> <li>▶ dealing with the incident capably</li> <li>▶ contacting them immediately</li> <li>▶ being calm and in control.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Negative feelings</b></p>	<p>Being defensive or accusing about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ how you handled the situation</li> <li>▶ how their child was cared for</li> <li>▶ whether your reactions met their expectations</li> <li>▶ whether policies or procedures were adequate.</li> </ul>

## Responding to families

Taking time to sit down with the family and talk without interruption is the best way to ensure you and the parents share information in appropriate ways.

The following table provides some other strategies that may assist you.

<p><b>Ensure you use a calm tone of voice</b></p>	<p>If you sound agitated, you may give the parent a feeling that they should also panic.</p> <p>If you cannot control your panic, you are probably not in a state where you should be working. Someone else may be available to inform the parent, and you can follow up when you are better able to.</p>
<p><b>Give the parent time to listen and react to the situation</b></p>	<p>The parent may express anger, fear, uncertainty of what to do, or feelings of being overwhelmed or relieved in this time, but it is better that they do so with you than for them to go home and express this in a situation where they have no support and no additional information.</p>
<p><b>Show empathy for the family</b></p>	<p>Empathy means trying to identify with and understand the other person's situation.</p> <p>However, try to avoid saying things such as, 'I know how you feel', as you do not know how they feel unless you have experienced the same situation.</p>

## Discussing incidents

Each family will respond differently to different types of incidents. Some families may be devastated by an event, while others may feel comfortably supported and cope well in the same situation. Never assume you know how the family will react.

You may observe the impact of an incident on involved families and others. You need to be prepared to use different management strategies to support these families. Remember that each family's reaction and the extent of the impact may change over time.

Follow-up action after an incident is also important.

The impact of any incident may result in a loss of confidence in you or your service. This is an essential area to address. To do so, and to ensure your relationship with a family is ongoing and successful, you must continue communication after an incident. You should:

- ▶ listen actively
- ▶ give enough information
- ▶ ensure your information or message is consistent
- ▶ have realistic expectations.

### Remember to consider:

- ▶ whether your communication requires an interpreter for a family who speaks a different language
- ▶ privacy and/or confidentiality
- ▶ decreasing your formality
- ▶ timing
- ▶ who the right person is to share information with
- ▶ how messages can be relayed.

Regardless of the time it takes for parents to be prepared to discuss an incident, you should be working within the service to identify ways to avoid the incident from happening again.

Each family requires a different amount of time before they are ready to discuss an incident and share their thoughts. Mostly this occurs once their child has recovered from any effect of the incident, but some families will not feel comfortable until steps have been taken to rectify a service concern relating to the incident.



**Example****Different reactions to the same incident**

Helga, an educator, is in charge when an incident involving three children occurs. When she relates the situation to the three families, they respond in the following ways:

- ▶ Parent 1 starts yelling, saying, 'You are meant to be looking after my child!' He wants to know who the other children are and how to contact their parents. He says he will report the service.
- ▶ Parent 2 becomes distraught and needs some time to talk through her feelings. She asks for a counselling service and feels that she can't have her child in an education and care setting until she knows everything is safe in the service.
- ▶ Parent 3 thanks Helga for how she has dealt with the situation and asks what will be done to stop it from happening again.

The next day, Helga observes the families and discusses the situation with each parent. She uses a simple question, 'Is there anything you need from us today?' to open up discussion between the parents and herself about the incident and its impact.

- ▶ Parent 1 apologises for his reaction and says he was just shocked at the time. He says that he has not reported the service, but wants to be reassured that a policy change will occur.
- ▶ Parent 2 brings her child into the service and stays for a while before leaving. She has taken her child to see their family doctor, who said the child is fine.
- ▶ Parent 3 does not come into the service today. Helga gives her a call to check if everything is okay, but she says she feels more upset than she did initially. She says that she really needs to have a one-on-one meeting and be clear about what happened.

**Involving parents in resolution strategies**

Parents can be involved in developing these resolution strategies, or they can assist to decide which strategy they feel happiest with. Involving parents at this level is not just about 'doing the right thing'; parents who are involved in developing a solution will see that you consider their child's and their own interests a priority, and that you wish to resolve situations in ways that are responsive to all needs. These feelings assist to create security and respect.

You may involve parents through:

- ▶ an individual meeting to review the situation and share information and ideas for improvement
- ▶ an open meeting where interested parents can share their ideas
- ▶ a survey providing sections for suggestions and comments
- ▶ asking them directly which solution they feel is most appropriate
- ▶ asking them if the solution you decide on suits their needs.

The strategies that you choose to implement should be influenced greatly by what the parents feel are appropriate.

## Providing feedback

After any incident occurs, you must consider ways to prevent it from recurring.

This may be a simple procedure change (for example, asking every educator to sweep sand off the footpath before their group plays outside), or there may be an ongoing or major change required. Parents are excellent resources when working on these improvements. The added benefit to drawing on their skills and knowledge is that they will see you are considering their child's needs and presenting an attitude of partnership rather than authority.

### Parents may be able to assist with the following:

- ▶ The possible impact of an incident: Parental input widens your personal and professional view of the situation.
- ▶ Suggested responses: Find out what parents want to know about and when, and how they want to be informed and by whom.
- ▶ New ideas for resolving issues: Parents may come up with very useful ideas for avoiding incidents; for example, they may have dealt with a similar situation in a different industry or environment.
- ▶ Previous experience: Parents may have solved this situation in their home or they may have strong ideas about what they feel is acceptable or unacceptable for their child.

When a resolution has been determined, the details of any change need to be communicated to everyone who may be affected.

## Practice task 5

Read the case study, then complete the questions that follow.

### Case study

Geraldine, the educator, witnesses Daisy (four years) falling from an A-frame while she is trying to hang upside down from a cross bar. Daisy has bruised her arm badly. At the time of the incident, Geraldine is supervising a water play activity, another educator is assisting a child who has dropped crayons on the ground and the third educator is inside setting up for lunch.

When Geraldine relates the incident to Daisy's parents, they are angry and accuse her of not supervising properly.

Following the incident, Geraldine and the other educators discuss some ways to prevent this type of incident occurring again.

They come up with three possible solutions:

1. There should be no changes as the educators are just too busy to watch everything.
2. The A-frame should be considered a medium-to-high risk activity as the children are starting to extend their skills into more challenging areas, and an educator should be nearby at all times.
3. If an educator goes inside, then the water play should be stopped as there are not enough educators to supervise all the outdoor activities adequately.

1. How would you inform Daisy’s parents about the incident?

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2. Which of the solutions should be implemented by the service (there can be more than one)? Explain your response.

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## Summary

- ▶ The information you share with parents about a child’s progress, relationships, interests and experiences helps you to build a comprehensive picture of the child and their family, and develop appropriate education and care strategies.
- ▶ Shared communication allows you to understand the family and their community.
- ▶ Being in a partnership with parents means that all decisions are shared. When there is a decision to be made, your focus should be on how to involve the family, or how to make a decision that they would agree with. Your service should have a range of strategies that you can implement to facilitate this to ensure all parties are satisfied with the outcome.
- ▶ When incidents occur, you must inform parents promptly using respectful and responsive communication.

# Learning checkpoint 2

## Providing information to families about their child

### Part A

1. The EYLF and MTOP include 'partnerships' as one of the principles. Using dot points, describe the different partnerships that occur between parents and educators in a service you are familiar with, particularly in relation to sharing information and making decisions.

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2. Provide a dot-point list of strategies that educators can use to share information and decision-making with families in the following situations:
  - a. A family who does not speak English as a primary language

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- b. A family with poor reading skills

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3. Read the following case study, then complete the question that follows.

**Case study**

Jeff and Alice have come into the after school care service in response to an incident involving their son Jason (nine years). Jason was found stealing money from another child's bag, but denies that he was going to keep the money. It is the third time you have found Jason looking in the bags of other children. You want to discuss this problem with his parents so a response can be formulated and a decision can be made that both parties agree to.

What would you say to open up the discussion about this situation?

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**Part B**

Collect a copy of a service policy or procedure that relates to interacting with parents.

1. Outline how you would discuss the following things:

a. A child's progress

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b. Finding out about a family's interests

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**c. An incident involving the child**

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**d. A decision to change a policy or procedure following an incident**

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## Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

**3A** Sharing information about the service

**3B** Sharing information about the community

## Providing information to families about the service and the community

When a family is looking for an education and care service, they may already understand how this type of environment works, or may have no idea of the function and operation of this type of environment.

Despite their level of understanding, most parents have similar questions and concerns. It is with this in mind that most service staff are able to develop a procedure for introducing new families.

Part of your responsibility is also to provide information to parents about services and resources in the wider community that are available to help and support families. You need to be aware of the various support networks and the type of information they can provide that will meet the needs of the families who use your service.

Your role may include identifying appropriate services, providing information, making contact with the family and/or supporting them during a process.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

<b>National Quality Standard</b>	
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
✓	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership
<b>Early Years Learning Framework</b>	<b>My Time, Our Place</b>
<b>Principles</b>	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
✓	Partnerships
	High expectations and equity
	Respect for diversity
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice
<b>Practice</b>	
	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children
	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching
	Learning environments
✓	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions
	Assessment for learning
<b>Outcomes</b>	
	Children have a strong sense of identity
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
	Children are confident and involved learners
	Children are effective communicators

# 3A Sharing information about the service

As discussed in the previous topics, one of your key responsibilities as an educator is to provide information to families about the service. Parents new to the service need to be aware of:

- ▶ the service’s values
- ▶ how an education and care program is developed
- ▶ the type of activities provided
- ▶ the role of the educators
- ▶ the role of parents
- ▶ communication strategies and decision-making.



They also need to know basic information such as the age and number of children catered for, hours, policies and procedures, timetabling, meals and safety issues.

The following table highlights what families may wish to know about your service, including more information about you as an educator.

<b>Questions about the service</b>	<b>Questions about the children</b>	<b>Questions about the educator</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How much will education and care cost?</li> <li>▶ What are the facilities like? (They may want to be shown through the service.)</li> <li>▶ What safety and security precautions are in place?</li> <li>▶ What days is the service closed?</li> <li>▶ Can I come into the service at any time to see or pick up my child?</li> <li>▶ How long can I stay at the service when I drop off my child?</li> <li>▶ How can I be more involved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Will my child’s values and specific needs be met?</li> <li>▶ How are emerging skills identified and catered for?</li> <li>▶ How are play and learning catered for?</li> <li>▶ How are the goals and objectives of each child met?</li> <li>▶ What is the policy on caring for sick children?</li> <li>▶ How do you adequately supervise children?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ What are your qualifications and experience?</li> <li>▶ How long have you been at the service?</li> <li>▶ Do you enjoy your job?</li> <li>▶ How can you manage so many children?</li> <li>▶ How nurturing and caring are the educators?</li> <li>▶ What is the ratio of staff to children?</li> </ul>

## Providing a positive impression of the service

Always be aware of what impression you and your service are making on prospective and existing families. The process through which you influence the impressions that families form of the service is known as ‘impression management’.

Impression management is important at all times; however, it is most important when families are shown through your service for the first time. As discussed in section 1A, families collect verbal and nonverbal information during an initial visit and begin to form an impression of the environment and how well it is suited to their child and family.

Parents should be shown the space where their children will be cared for and the noticeboard area where important information is communicated. Depending on your service, they may also be shown a variety of indoor and outdoor areas that their child may use and that they may be given access to. Parents may also benefit from viewing kitchen and utility areas to gain confidence in how health and safety is managed in these areas.



Watch this video about conducting orientation with families.

## Behaviours and actions of staff

The following table outlines some common behaviours, actions and other aspects that families may look for when developing their impressions of the service. This information may influence a family’s feeling about whether your service can meet their needs.

Behaviour and actions of staff	Aspects of the service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Greeting and farewelling families and children</li> <li>▶ Smiling</li> <li>▶ Managing behaviour positively</li> <li>▶ Clearly talking to children</li> <li>▶ Showing a positive attitude</li> <li>▶ Reacting to children’s emotions</li> <li>▶ Answering children’s questions</li> <li>▶ Helping children with activities and routines</li> <li>▶ Being warm and caring, and showing interest in their child as an individual</li> <li>▶ Listening to the families and respecting their wishes</li> <li>▶ Being enthusiastic and lively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A bright and interesting environment</li> <li>▶ Close to home/work/public transport</li> <li>▶ A positive and happy atmosphere</li> <li>▶ Family involvement is encouraged</li> <li>▶ Lots of interesting equipment and activities</li> <li>▶ Already has many children enrolled from the family’s cultural or language background</li> <li>▶ Has a multicultural and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus</li> <li>▶ Operating hours that meet the family’s needs</li> </ul>

## Providing ongoing information

Depending on your organisation’s management type, parents may be involved in different levels and aspects of the service. They may ask for or personally access information, or be responsible for developing and approving information.

Service details in relation to the following should be available to all parents:

- ▶ Organisational guidelines (policies and procedures)
- ▶ Legislation/regulations
- ▶ Menus
- ▶ Educators on duty
- ▶ Responsible people
- ▶ Curriculum and routines
- ▶ Activities planned for the child
- ▶ Documentation about children’s learning and development
- ▶ Standards, including the service’s quality improvement plan

Parents may also be interested in how the service operates from a practical point of view, and may want a great amount of detail, as outlined in the following table.

Information	Details	Some ways these might be shared
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Utilisation/places</li> <li>▶ Room ages</li> <li>▶ Staff numbers and qualifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Noticeboard</li> <li>▶ Poster</li> <li>▶ Newsletter</li> </ul>
Staff overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Roles</li> <li>▶ Strengths</li> <li>▶ Background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Noticeboard</li> <li>▶ Newsletter</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Legislation</li> <li>▶ Organisational structure</li> <li>▶ Service level structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Meetings</li> <li>▶ Poster</li> <li>▶ Newsletter</li> </ul>
Mission, vision, theories and philosophies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How they were developed</li> <li>▶ What they mean</li> <li>▶ Why they exist</li> <li>▶ How to contribute to them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Displays</li> </ul>
Government programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Fee assistance</li> <li>▶ Utilisation programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Brochures</li> <li>▶ Fliers</li> <li>▶ Newsletters</li> </ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recent government changes influencing opportunities</li> <li>▶ Finances</li> <li>▶ Fees</li> <li>▶ Funding bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Newsletters</li> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Meetings</li> </ul>

Information	Details	Some ways these might be shared
Industrial relations involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Membership of unions or other worker support bodies</li> <li>▶ Which award your wages are paid under</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Meetings</li> </ul>
Memberships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Providing research</li> <li>▶ Linking to best practice</li> <li>▶ Advising on specific situations or information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Resource library</li> <li>▶ Display</li> <li>▶ Newsletters</li> </ul>
Training, education and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Who is training</li> <li>▶ Why they are training</li> <li>▶ What the training levels mean</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Newsletters</li> <li>▶ Meetings</li> <li>▶ Displays</li> </ul>

## Communication strategies

Clear communication occurs when the strategies you use to send messages from one person to another meet each person's needs. When you first meet a family, your ability to assess and address their communication needs helps you to develop a clear and open relationship from the beginning. If you neglect to do this, you will find it much more difficult to alter the communication relationship later on.

You may need to consider the communication areas described in the following table.

<b>Interpretation or translation</b>	The family may need assistance from an interpreter so they are clear about the information you wish to share.
<b>Being approachable</b>	When you act like an expert and never share information, you build a wall that stops effective communication. Parents may feel they are being belittled or that their role is not valued. However, families want to know that you are capable and knowledgeable in your role. Develop a professional, friendly and approachable manner.
<b>Timing</b>	<p>You may find it challenging to coordinate communication with families at a convenient time. Your daily curriculum does not usually allow specific time for parent discussion even though this is important and should be a priority.</p> <p>It may not always be possible to arrange individual or private time to talk to parents. Create a contingency plan that includes ways you may be able to organise your time and others' so that this can happen when needed.</p>

<p><b>Information to share</b></p>	<p>Identify what information is appropriate to share with parents and what information is confidential to the service. If you are unsure, ask for clarification when you commence employment or seek advice from a supervisor before you share information with parents.</p>
<p><b>How messages can be relayed</b></p>	<p>There are many methods of sharing information (for example, discussion, newsletters, noticeboards and emails), but no single method will meet the needs of every family.</p> <p>Individuals learn and take in information in different ways, so you must provide a range of communication methods to ensure your messages are received, especially when parents have language difficulties.</p>

Communication issues are likely to emerge if information is not shared regularly between educators and parents, is not updated regularly, or does not cover all aspects of the day-to-day routine and curriculum of activities. Always consider the parents and their ability to understand the information you provide.

**Example** **Taking account of parents' abilities**

Sven is an educator who wants to tell families about an upcoming fundraiser. He knows that some families welcome a handout and any email information that comes through, but there are also families who have little understanding of English and other families whose reading skills are poor.

Eliab, a parent, has reasonably good English skills and is happy to translate and interpret information into Arabic if needed. Sven asks Eliab to help translate some simple information about the fundraiser into Arabic.

Sven knows that there are three Indonesian families who will not be able to understand the newsletter. Sven approaches the father of one of the families, who agrees that his oldest son Bisma can translate the information from English into Bahasa Indonesian.

Sven knows there are some parents whose reading skills are poor, so he adds to his communication by setting up a simple video to play in the foyer. He records a staff member explaining the fundraiser and demonstrating what the plans are. Then he adds Eliab speaking in Arabic about the fundraiser. Finally, he asks Bisma to record the information in Bahasa Indonesian.

## Practice task 6

1. If the main language in your community was Italian, how would you access a translator or interpreter?

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2. If you want to let the families know that your service is closed over the Christmas holidays, how could you best communicate this to them?

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# 3B Sharing information about the community

As part of your role as an educator, you need to share community information with families so they know what support is available and how to access it. Information may relate to a variety of issues, particularly parenting issues, advocacy services, family planning, financial assistance, housing support, medical services, specialist care, and education and care outside of your service.

Watch this video about providing support to families with additional needs.

Some community services and resources that are available are outlined in the following table.



<p><b>Parent education and support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Family education workshops on topics suggested by parents (such as toilet learning and family planning), and held at times and places easily accessible to all parents</li> <li>▶ Resources such as books and websites on parenting</li> <li>▶ Toy resources</li> <li>▶ Support groups for families with special interests and needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advocacy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Meetings</li> <li>▶ Specialists to help parents address concerns or complaints</li> <li>▶ Parent groups</li> <li>▶ Family partnerships</li> <li>▶ Reference groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community outreach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Information and referral</li> <li>▶ Strategies to reach out to adults, families and children of all ages and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in the community</li> <li>▶ Local civic and service groups involved in ways such as mentoring, volunteering and helping with fundraising events</li> </ul>
<p><b>Specific services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Financial assistance</li> <li>▶ Medical support</li> <li>▶ Housing support</li> </ul>

## Providing information

A service has a responsibility to pass on information about agencies, resources, community meetings and support groups that are available in the community to support families. Typical ways to communicate information include noticeboards, newsletters, brochures and resource folders. Technology is increasingly used for sending emails, advertising programs and special occasions, and developing databases of information.

Many services provide a library for staff and parents with books, videos, pamphlets, posters and brochures on a range of relevant subjects. These types of libraries may be the first step for some parents in finding out how the community can assist them, as many parents find it difficult at first to share their hardships, confusions or personal issues with an educator.

## Ensuring information is current

It is essential that information and resources are current. The resources you provide for families are only useful if they are maintained, so you need to continually review and update the content, and ensure materials represent appropriate practice, service beliefs and current contacts.

### Steps to ensure the information is relevant and up to date:

- ▶ Add new items (such as books, brochures and DVDs) regularly and let families know they are available.
- ▶ Focus your additions on current issues.
- ▶ Vary the resources to include a range of family issues, interests and needs.
- ▶ Ensure brochures or other resources that can be handed out are kept neat and tidy, are easy to find and are regularly topped up with current copies.
- ▶ Check for issue dates and ensure your materials are the most current; throw away out-of-date publications.
- ▶ Use resources that are less than 10 years old unless you feel they are particularly valuable.
- ▶ Create a system that includes rules for borrowing and care of each resource.
- ▶ Ensure all contact details are current in databases.

## Accessing new information

To ensure you can continually access new information, consider the following actions:

- ▶ Have informal or formal arrangements with government or non-government departments. Most government agencies or legislative bodies automatically send out information about changes. They may also have updating services that you can subscribe to.
- ▶ Attend meetings with your networks to update information or access materials for families. Meetings can also support you if you need to understand a new requirement or if you need advice based on experience. To ensure you gain a wide range of different information, participate in groups with a wide focus across the education and care services sectors.
- ▶ Arrange subscriptions to publications such as journals, newsletters and emails.
- ▶ Arrange to collect materials provided by and about other organisations and services, such as brochures, posters and fliers.
- ▶ Regularly check newspapers and radio for appropriate stories or announcements.
- ▶ Use online networking to participate in forums, discussion boards and online professional development training.

## Supporting families with information

To assist families to identify, locate and access the support and resources they need, you should first establish what they require. Ask questions and make suggestions to ensure you have sufficient information to help you choose the right support or resources for the parent.

When you have a more accurate idea of what is needed, you can put into place some actions to find the best resource.

### Ways to find the most suitable resources:

- ▶ Look back on support and resources you have used successfully in the past.
- ▶ Check on support and resources you already have details of.
- ▶ Use online sites for research; for example, try sites that link you to resources or support such as:
  - <http://aspirelr.link/parent-easy-guides>
  - <http://aspirelr.link/child-and-family-relationship-services>
- ▶ Use online sites that provide relevant and current information; for example:
  - Children of Parents with a Mental Illness at: <http://aspirelr.link/copmi>
  - Raising Children Network, the Australian parenting website at: <http://aspirelr.link/raising-children-network>
- ▶ Ask others internal or external to your service for resources that may be relevant and useful.

Remember, you may have a number of families looking for the same support/resources, so it may be appropriate to provide information to the whole group at once; for example, during a parent group education session.

When you locate the support/resource you believe is appropriate, it is wise to make the first contact if the families agree. This way you can check if this is the correct support/resource and gain all details that the parents may require.

### Example

#### Maintaining information about community resources and support

Caitlin develops a resource library that she sets up at the entry of her service. It mainly contains brochures about services in the community, but she also adds new information regularly. She includes one or two posters and signs she feels are relevant to parents.

To keep everything up to date, Caitlin does the following:

- ▶ She neatens the resources whenever she walks past as a routine task. She feels parents will find it more useful if they can easily find what they need. At the start and middle of each year, she checks that the services, contact details and offerings are still current.
- ▶ She changes the posters in the middle of each month, saving any new ones until then, or requesting new posters from services that she thinks are appropriate for the families in the service.
- ▶ If she hears any issues being discussed in the service, she approaches relevant services and gains any information they can provide.
- ▶ She redevelops the sign at the end of the each month showing what is happening in the community during the coming month. She accesses this information from the local government calendar.

## Practice task 7

1. How would you welcome a new family into the service for an initial visit, such as an initial introduction for parents prior to orientation?

a. Provide general information about the service.

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b. Explain the different spaces in the service that a parent would need to know about. Include information about how the spaces are used.

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c. Briefly explain the daily routine.

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d. Briefly describe how your service provides quality education and care to children.

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2. Select a language other than English. Preferably this should be a language that is spoken in a local service or your community.

Using Google Translate or a similar method, write **two** sentences in the language you have chosen that provides information about the service quality. Provide the English meaning as well.

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## Summary

- ▶ Families are interested in initial information at enrolment, such as the type of care provided, cost, facilities available, hours, policies and procedures, safety and the service’s values and beliefs.
- ▶ As families get to know your service, they may be interested in different aspects, such as different programs/services available, standards, accountability, government programs, funding, staff training and the service’s role in the community.
- ▶ Each family will have different questions about how the service works and their child’s education and care.
- ▶ It is important to communicate clearly and to identify the communication needs of family members.
- ▶ Information must be provided in languages that are used by families so they are able to fully participate.
- ▶ Part of your role as an educator is to share community information with families so they know what support is available and how to access it.
- ▶ Information and resources that parents may need include community outreach services, parenting advice or education, advocacy services, family planning, financial assistance, housing support, medical services, specialist care, and education and care outside of your service.
- ▶ Typical methods of communicating information include using a noticeboard, newsletters, brochures, resource folders, emails and the service’s website.
- ▶ Use a range of strategies to ensure the information on services and resources remains current, such as checking dates of publications and throwing away out-of-date information, and ensuring that materials represent appropriate practice, service beliefs and current contacts.
- ▶ Use a range of strategies to continually access new resources and information, such as subscribing to community services information, attending meetings and developing networks.
- ▶ Families may need assistance to make contact with those who are providing resources and services.

# Learning checkpoint 3

## Providing information to families about the service and the community

### Part A

Develop a brochure, display, poster or other suitable information-sharing method that provides details of a service to a new family. Include the following information about the service:

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Location
- ▶ Contact details
- ▶ Hours of operation
- ▶ Who manages the service; for example, an organisation and/or a director or coordinator
- ▶ The age range of the children
- ▶ The number of children at the service
- ▶ The qualifications of educators
- ▶ Information about the quality of service provided

### Part B

Read the case study, then complete the questions that follow.

#### Case study

The Robinson family has come into financial difficulty and expect to be homeless in the next three weeks. Mrs Robinson is upset and asks you for assistance to locate community services that could help them.

1. Prepare a one-page fact sheet suitable to give to the Robinsons that gives an overview of the relevant resources and information available in the community and how they can access them.
2. How did you check that this service and information is current and would be able to meet your expectations and the parents' needs? List all the actions you took and explain your reasons for doing so.

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3. Investigate **two** services that could provide resources or support for this family, and list them below. Provide materials and resources from these services (such as brochures and website printouts) that promote and explain the following:
- ▶ detailed description of the service
  - ▶ available resources
  - ▶ how they may support the family
  - ▶ contact details
  - ▶ current contact person for this specific issue
  - ▶ any referral methods that apply (for example, do they need a doctor to refer them?)

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4. Explain how you would assist the family to locate, contact or access the relevant community services.

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