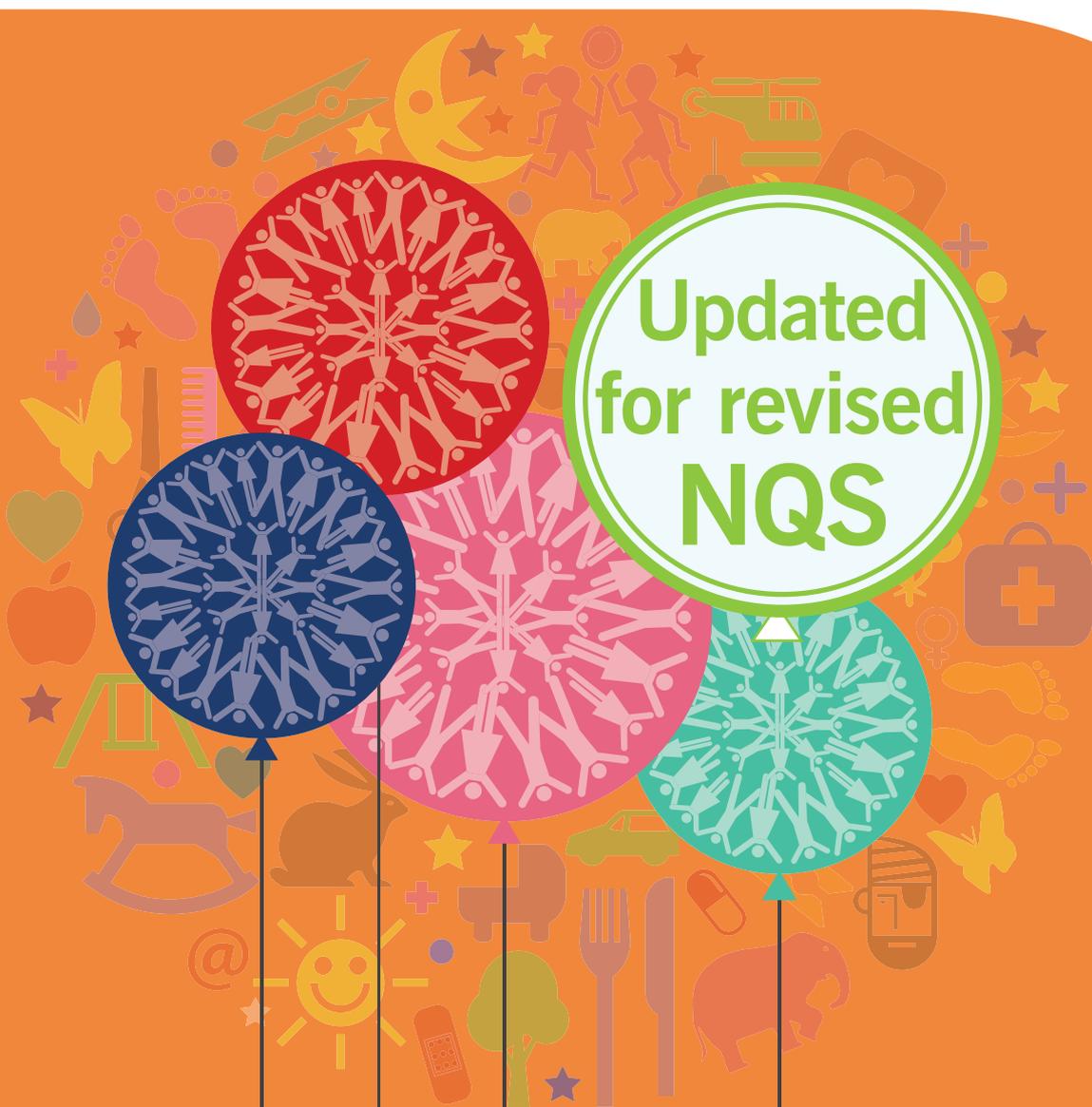


CHCPRP003

Reflect on and improve own professional practice



Updated
for revised
NQS

Learner guide



aspire
learning resources

CHCPRP003

Reflect on and improve own professional practice

Release 1

Learner guide

Aspire Version 2.1



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CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice, Release 1



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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice*, Release 1. 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

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 |
|------------------------------|---|
| Learning content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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. |
| Examples | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations. |
| Practice tasks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into practice. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete. |
| Video clips | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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: www.aspirelr.com.au/help  |
| Summaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic. |
| Learning checkpoints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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. |



Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Undertake self-evaluation**
- 1B Reflect on the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour**
- 1C Share feedback**
- 1D Actively seek and reflect on feedback**

Reflect on own practice

Part of professional skill maintenance within the education and care industry is reflective practice. It allows you to look at what you do and think about how you can improve.

You will have specific areas of your current skills, knowledge and practices in which further training or professional development may be needed. Identifying both your strengths and weaknesses can assist with working towards such goals and objectives, setting time frames and using various evaluation processes to document and analyse your improvements.

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

| National Quality Standard | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| | 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 |
| Early Years Learning Framework | My Time, Our Place |
| Principles | |
| | Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships |
| | Partnerships |
| | High expectations and equity |
| | Respect for diversity |
| ✓ | Ongoing learning and reflective practice |
| Practice | |
| | Holistic approaches |
| | Responsiveness to children |
| | Learning through play |
| | Intentional teaching |
| | Learning environments |
| | Cultural competence |
| | Continuity of learning and transitions |
| | Assessment for learning |
| | Holistic approaches |
| | Collaboration with children |
| | Learning through play |
| | Intentionality |
| | Environments |
| | Cultural competence |
| | Continuity and transitions |
| | Evaluation for wellbeing and learning |
| Outcomes | |
| | 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 Undertake self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is a process that involves looking at yourself and rating the quality of your own work. This helps you to identify your strengths and weaknesses and where you may be able to improve or extend your knowledge, skills and experience.

Self-evaluation is an expected process of quality provision and is supported by a range of different tools and guidelines.

Accepting feedback on your performance, quality of work and interactions from others is also a key component to enabling honest and unbiased opinions in relation to your current practices. Supervisors, leaders and others you work with play a very important role in assisting with this.



Self-improvement

You may feel that there are specific work practices, routines or other aspects of your job role that you are less knowledgeable and confident about. When you add the opinions of others to your own thoughts and perceptions, you can gain additional ideas and strategies that you may not have considered.

The way in which you gain feedback from others may vary in regards to time, place, setting and method. It may occur immediately when you are doing a specific activity, or at other times in the day when you have an opportunity to participate in private discussion. Regardless of how this information is relayed to you, it is important to reflect, evaluate and work towards improving on specific areas.

Models of professional reflection

Self-evaluation can occur in a number of different ways. Some models for self-evaluation will be required as part of your work practices. You may discover others that are useful for your own personal reflection.

Some models for self-evaluation and information about how you may implement them are outlined in the following.

Journal documentation, diaries or reflection logs

Journals and logs record your thoughts and feelings, and allow you to look back and evaluate your ideas and actions. They also demonstrate your progress. You can use critical reflection questions or write about your thoughts on the techniques you use, materials you need, the context of your work or the ideas you have.

A journal may include research, personal comments, notes from professional development seminars, conferences or workshops, quotes, photos or sketches. The main thing is that the content is meaningful to you.

Structured discussion

Performance review is a structured discussion that occurs as part of the quality process in your service. Structured discussions may also occur in meetings and during professional development activities.

Unstructured discussion

Unstructured discussions occur every day at work – whether you are talking to other educators, parents or community members – and all provide opportunities for self-reflection.

Checklists

A checklist may be a useful tool for self-reflection. A checklist may be part of your service practice or something you develop yourself. The checklist may include various actions you can undertake to review your skills and abilities, or it might be a list of skills you want to achieve that you can check off when completed.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning system. It encourages you to look at your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Here are some points you may reflect on:

- ▶ Strengths or weaknesses: capabilities, resources, management, processes, innovation, location, reliability
- ▶ Opportunities or threats: industry developments/trends, other educators' practice/ pedagogy, contacts/partners, demand, new technology, new staff, lifestyle trends, finance, legislation

Questioning

Before and after questions are useful for self-evaluation.

Think about what you feel and think before you start something, implement an idea or make a decision for change. Be clear about your plans and intentions.

You should then reflect after the implementation. Think about:

- ▶ how you feel and think now
- ▶ what you understand after this experience
- ▶ how this affects your future practice
- ▶ what you need in order to move forward; for instance, research, skills, support or cooperation
- ▶ what you want to achieve next.

Self-reflection and critical reflection

Self-evaluation often includes the process of critical reflection. Critical reflection occurs when you analyse and challenge the validity of the ideas or common sense beliefs that underlie your thoughts and actions. It allows you to assess the appropriateness of your thinking according to real experiences, and use this to inform your future actions and practices.

Critical reflection is an ongoing process of reflection and change.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ▶ What happened? | ▶ What have you learnt from this? |
| ▶ How and why did it happen? | ▶ What is the significance of this? |
| ▶ How do you feel about it? | ▶ What will you do next? |
| ▶ How will this alter your future actions and values? | |

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation involves looking at what you are doing, analysing its effectiveness, and changing to create a more suitable outcome or practice.

The practice of self-evaluation sharpens your self-awareness. Regular and varied self-evaluation keeps you in touch with your personal values. It also helps to develop stronger skills in working with others and performing your professional role.

Self-evaluation can occur in a number of ways; some of these are outlined here.

Informally

Self-evaluation is part of the everyday practice of your service as you communicate with others, make decisions and gain an increasing understanding of theory, research, principles, practices and pedagogy.

Formally

Self-evaluation occurs as part of your performance review. This review looks at your personal abilities and skills. It highlights your strengths and identifies your weaknesses, allowing you to plan strategies for support and improvement.

Meetings and discussions

Self-evaluation can also occur at staff meetings or through educator discussion, and in any situation that challenges you to take in new information and think about its relevance.

Supervisor evaluation

Self-evaluation may be prompted by your supervisor. Through their supervision, they may encourage you to reflect on your practices in different ways. To gain the most from your supervisor, regularly ask them if they can give you feedback.

Supervisors also offer the following kinds of support and guidance:

- ▶ Educational supervision: stretching your skills so you can reach your full potential.
- ▶ Administrative supervision: promoting best practice and quality work.
- ▶ Supportive supervision: encouraging you to develop strong professional relationships.

Develop relationships with supervisors

Find opportunities to ask questions and gain feedback from your supervisor about your performance. Ask them to support your personal development plan, either by helping you create one or by helping you to achieve your goals.

Ask your supervisor or educational leader to help you evaluate your progression towards set goals, areas for improvement or tasks that you may commence. Their feedback can enable suitable changes or extensions on your current skills and knowledge. This also helps to develop and form positive working relationships with others.



Peer supervision

Sometimes self-reflection can be limited and another person's ideas can help you start a new train of thought, or to consider an area of practice that you hadn't considered before.

Ask other people for their opinions. Peers are able to provide feedback on aspects of your work based on the time they spend working directly with you. They have the unique opportunity to understand you from a close working viewpoint.

Peers can provide feedback relating to your:

- ▶ personal characteristics
- ▶ alliance to others in the workplace
- ▶ ability to take responsibility and share tasks
- ▶ overall professional attitude.

Identify areas of personal development

If you are unable to self-reflect, you will not be able to understand feedback from other people, or improve your personal or professional attitudes or actions.

Here are some of the areas you may evaluate in order to improve your self-reflection.

Self-awareness

Awareness of:

- ▶ personal behaviour
- ▶ personality traits
- ▶ learning styles
- ▶ professional standards.

Self-management

Ability to:

- ▶ apply knowledge, skills and ethics relevant to current industry and professional standards, and codes of ethics and practice
- ▶ understand and implement relevant organisational policies, plans and procedures
- ▶ set personal goals
- ▶ measure own performance
- ▶ manage time effectively
- ▶ identify work methods and practices that can improve personal performance
- ▶ monitor trends related to roles and responsibilities
- ▶ establish a personal development and/or work plan
- ▶ solicit, analyse and interpret feedback
- ▶ research personal development opportunities and options
- ▶ use information systems to help establish professional development and/or work plans
- ▶ develop and maintain professional networks
- ▶ interpret written and oral information about workplace requirements
- ▶ communicate effectively, including receiving and analysing feedback and reporting.

Social awareness

Ability to:

- ▶ work with an awareness and sensitivity to conflict, culture and context
- ▶ work to increase social justice issues and respond to inequality and discrimination
- ▶ analyse culturally different viewpoints and take them into account in personal development and professional practice.

Relationship management

Ability to:

- ▶ relate to people from a range of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and physical and mental abilities
- ▶ manage or seek support to manage complex ethical issues or dilemmas
- ▶ apply skills of negotiation, communication and decision-making.

Recognise limitations

We all have strengths and weaknesses. Understanding your limitations is not about admitting defeat; it is about highlighting the areas you can improve on and, as a result, becoming more successful.

Effective self-evaluation takes some practice. For most people it is not an automatic or simple skill. Overall, being organised is most vital.

The following information outlines what you may do to work through limitations you might experience.

Requirements for effective self-evaluation



Allow enough time

To think clearly, you need time to yourself so you are not rushed or pressured.



Seek somewhere quiet

Find a quiet place to think; this will help you think clearly. Constant interruptions will stop the flow of your thoughts.



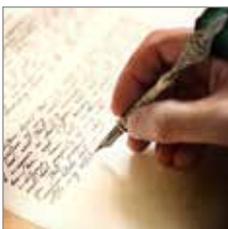
Relax and reflect

Take some deep breaths and relax. Make the most of the opportunity. At first you may feel like you have a million other things to do. However, as you get better at self-reflection, you will find that it helps to solve problems and improves the way you do things. It's important to be in a state where you can reflect on issues without being consumed by negativity.



Highlight your achievements

Be proud of your achievements. Particularly, think about the successes you have had since last practising self-reflection. Reflection is not just about your weaknesses; it is a time to celebrate your strengths too.



Write in a conversational style

Document your thoughts about what you do well and what you need to work on so that you can analyse your progress. This allows you to note your current thoughts and reconsider certain areas as you develop greater skills and knowledge.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is a conscious knowledge of your own character, feelings, motives and desires, and how these influence your actions.

On a daily basis, self-awareness allows you to:

- ▶ objectively question your work practice, curriculum, pedagogy and relationships
- ▶ consider your opinions and perceptions and how realistic they are
- ▶ analyse your perceptions in relation to the perceptions of others.



Outcomes of self-awareness

Self-awareness helps you to measure your behaviour, personality, learning style, standards, motivations and emotions. Every individual has limitations in some of these areas. Some examples are presented in the following information.

Personal behaviour

You may find it difficult to:

- ▶ wait
- ▶ remain calm when in conflict.

Personality traits

You may find it difficult to:

- ▶ adapt to change
- ▶ understand the ideas of others
- ▶ develop extended relationships
- ▶ trust others
- ▶ understand the perception of others.

Learning styles

You may prefer one learning style over another. One of the most common categorisations of learning styles is Fleming's VARK model, which identifies:

- ▶ visual learners
- ▶ auditory learners
- ▶ reading-writing preference learners
- ▶ kinaesthetic learners or tactile learners.

Professional standards

You may find it difficult to:

- ▶ actively seek professional development opportunities
- ▶ seek, analyse and reflect on feedback
- ▶ seek opportunities for supervision and mentoring
- ▶ identify and participate in personal development
- ▶ integrate learning into improved practice.

Motivations

You may need:

- ▶ extrinsic motivation
- ▶ praise
- ▶ a particular type of reward
- ▶ constant recognition.

Emotions

You may find it difficult to:

- ▶ remain impartial
- ▶ maintain professional boundaries
- ▶ understand all of your feelings.

Example

Critical reflection

In the following example, Gaye, an educator, uses the process of critical reflection to think about communication with her colleagues.

What happened?

In the sandpit today, Betty was directing other children as she built a sandcastle with a moat. She was telling the other children what to do: some to help dig and others to help carry water from the water container to the moat. As the children were all younger than Betty, they were unable to turn on the tap for the water container. I started to talk to Betty and ask her how she might solve this problem. During the discussion, Monica (another educator) came and turned the tap on for the children. My goal for Betty to plan and organise the group of children failed.

How and why did it happen?

I did not communicate my goal to Monica and just expected that we all had the same ideas. Monica did not ask me what was happening in the sandpit.

How do I feel about it?

I was annoyed with Monica at first, then I realised I did not communicate with her.

What have I learnt?

I need to communicate with Monica when spontaneous goals arise. Maybe I need to talk with her now and tell her that sometimes we do have different goals for the children and we need to talk about these if we plan them spontaneously. We might also need to ask each other about our goals prior to going ahead and implementing something, as this might interfere with the plans of others. We could just say something like, 'What is happening in the sandpit?' and then the other person can clarify any goals; for example, 'We are digging and putting water in the moat' or 'Betty is the project manager and she is directing the other children'.

What will I do next?

I must speak to Monica and tell her my ideas, and also ask for her opinion.

How will this alter my future actions and values?

When I have specific goals, I will make them clear to Monica, particularly when the goals change. I will make time to provide feedback to all staff and ask them about how they can also share their spontaneous goals. I would want the team to feel that their contributions are important, and that we work in an environment where we can grow and learn from one another.

Practice task 1

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

Case study

Amanda is a full-time, Certificate III-qualified educator. She is the parent of three children and lives on a farm where many animals rely on her attention. Amanda works with Christian, a diploma-level team leader and Becky, an educator training at Certificate III level.

1. What are **three** limitations Amanda will need to overcome in order to self-reflect appropriately?

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2. If Amanda wants to reflect on her ability to complete learning stories, who would she best gain feedback from?

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3. What are the **six** methods for reflection that Amanda might use?

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4. List **four** areas of personal development that Amanda could reflect on.

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1B Reflect on the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour

When you are being objective, you see things honestly and clearly. Objective opinions are ones based on facts and reality, not on ideals or biases. By viewing your skills and knowledge objectively, you will be able to identify where your weaknesses and strengths are, and clarify what is important to you.

Think of specific ways you can implement self-improvement, change a process or the way you do things, or work towards a higher quality outcome.



Values, beliefs and behaviours

How you conduct your work is based on values and beliefs. These need to fit with appropriate practice, comply with legislation and respond to the individual requirements requested of you.

Self-management refers to your ability to take responsibility for your own behaviour. It involves decision-making, planning, scheduling, managing your time and completing tasks. When you take responsibility for your behaviour, you are reviewing your values and beliefs.

The following outlines some personal areas that you might be able to reflect on.

Personal goals

Do you have:

- ▶ a career path?
- ▶ consistent expectations of yourself?

Performance

Do you have:

- ▶ adequate self-evaluation skills?
- ▶ clear perceptions?
- ▶ limited or no bias?

Time management

Do you:

- ▶ set priorities, tasks and goals?
- ▶ organise your daily schedule?
- ▶ complete tasks and projects on time?

Personal development and/or work plan

Do you:

- ▶ assess the effectiveness of your own skills development?
- ▶ research information to develop a personal development and work plan?
- ▶ use information systems to help establish work plans?

Avoid negative impacts

Social awareness refers to your ability to understand the needs and feelings of others.

When you are socially aware, you appreciate that people are different and how these differences provide learning and enjoyment. You will be able to contribute to the service and community in positive ways. You also understand how relationships work and how you can support and develop relationships with your colleagues, families and those within the service community.

The following information identifies some questions to consider that impact several areas of a person's behaviour.

Questions to consider

Are you:

- ▶ culturally aware?
- ▶ confident?
- ▶ feeling understood?
- ▶ interested in other people's perceptions?
- ▶ able to involve yourself in a support group or reference group, or take on an advocacy role?

Areas of impact

- ▶ Have an awareness and sensitivity to conflict, culture and context.
- ▶ Be able to respond to social justice issues; for example, inequality and discrimination.
- ▶ Have an awareness of culturally different viewpoints and the ability to take them into account.

Work role boundaries

Reflective practice is embedded in the National Quality Framework (NQF) and forms the basis for many of the outcomes you are required to achieve while working to provide high-quality education and care to children. Educators should continually reflect on their work.

When it comes to reflection on your work role, there are a number of areas to consider.

Applying knowledge

Apply knowledge, skills and ethics relevant to current industry and professional standards, codes of ethics and codes of practice.

Do you have:

- ▶ knowledge of the relevant legislation?
- ▶ skills in implementing the frameworks?
- ▶ an understanding of the assessment and rating system?

Understanding and implementing

Understand and implement relevant policies, plans and procedures.

Do you:

- ▶ understand and follow the relevant organisational policies, plans and procedures?
- ▶ understand what the current service philosophy means to you?
- ▶ agree with a procedure that is in place?

Identifying work methods

Identify work methods and practices that can improve personal performance.

Do you:

- ▶ have knowledge of best practice?
- ▶ have good professional models?

Monitoring trends

Monitor trends related to roles and responsibilities.

Do you have:

- ▶ experience in work settings other than your own?
- ▶ the ability to adapt to change?

Developing and maintaining professional networks

Develop and maintain professional networks.

Do you have:

- ▶ time available?
- ▶ funding to participate?
- ▶ ready access to networks?

Information

Interpret written and oral information about workplace requirements.

Do you:

- ▶ understand the quality improvement plan?
- ▶ know how to report health and safety issues?

Communicating

Communicate effectively, including receiving and analysing feedback and reporting.

Do you feel confident asking for:

- ▶ support when others are busy with their own issues?
- ▶ training to deal with a particular area of weakness?

Work with diversity

Most Australian workplaces employ people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Some workers or clients may have specific cultural needs or requirements that should be taken into account.

Some types of culturally diverse needs are explained here.

Dress

Appearance and dress varies between ethnic and cultural groups. Some individuals and groups wear traditional clothing, some cover their hair or face, and others wear symbols in relation to religious beliefs. Some clothing or appearances relate to socioeconomic backgrounds and financial circumstances.

Religious practices

Religion is often an important aspect of a person's life and has a strong influence on the norms, beliefs, values and customs that determine culture. Many individuals and communities frame their desires and imaginings in religious or spiritual terms. Your respect for their beliefs is essential if you wish to provide quality outcomes for children and families.

Customs

Many customs relate to food, which are influenced by different beliefs about lifestyle, religion, traditions or health. Some cultures do not allow certain types of meat, and a substitute should be given. For example:

- ▶ many Muslims and Orthodox Jews do not eat pork
- ▶ many Hindus do not eat beef
- ▶ many Seventh-day Adventists abstain from eating animal flesh.

Remember that each person is different, so don't just assume that people of a particular racial or religious background will share the same preferences. Many people follow dietary practices that are not related to religious beliefs or cultural practice.

Social values

Every person has their own values based on their beliefs. For example, some people may believe leisure time is the most important thing in their life, some may highly value sport and focus life around this, and some people may have busy schedules and purchase takeaway foods often. Others may value the importance of museums and art galleries and some may place a high value on money, wealth and material possessions.

Family obligations

Some people have high levels of responsibility towards their family, while others have minimal responsibilities. A colleague who cares for others after work will have greater difficulty coming to meetings or social events due to these commitments. Someone who has few responsibilities may be glad to participate more than others.

Nonverbal behaviour

If you are aware of the communication style and the languages spoken by others, you will be able to respond appropriately.

Some people may not speak fluent English. You may need to interpret eye contact, physical movement, facial expressions and personal space as part of your communication with them.

Analyse culturally diverse viewpoints

As an educator, you are managing relationships from the moment you greet the first colleague or parent at your service, to the time you farewell the last person you see. Relationship management is all about facilitating great partnerships, providing clear communication, seeking to gain understanding and having a professional attitude.

To be able to manage your relationships, you must consider your views, attitudes and beliefs. The following information relates to aspects that reduce your ability to understand culturally diverse viewpoints and deter relationship building.

Your ability to relate to people

You must be able to relate to people from a range of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, with a range of physical and mental abilities.

You may:

- ▶ be biased
- ▶ feel misunderstood
- ▶ have inappropriate expectations
- ▶ feel you will do or say the wrong thing.

When you feel these things you will close yourself off to the needs of others.

Your ability to seek support

Seek support to manage complex ethical issues and dilemmas.

You may:

- ▶ lack decision-making skills
- ▶ lack confidence in your leadership skills
- ▶ be in a service structure that has removed this responsibility from your role.

When you experience these things you may be in danger of making inappropriate decisions.

Be sensitive to other views

Eliminating bias in your own values and attitudes will assist you to make decisions as situations arise. Always ask yourself what the best outcome is for the people involved and how you can reach this outcome. Don't apply your personal values and attitudes when dealing with a situation, as you must remain impartial and respond to issues or events according to your service policies and procedures.

The following information outlines some strategies to help you deal with these types of situations, and to help people in the workplace act with more awareness and sensitivity.

Educate employees

- ▶ Share differences and create a team culture that is respectful of differences and supports each member's strengths and weaknesses.
- ▶ Provide training or information to help team members understand complex issues.

Encourage open discussions about assumptions and preconceived notions

- ▶ Develop and support an environment where people can share information.
- ▶ Prepare new staff and give them the opportunity to talk about their needs and concerns.
- ▶ Encourage team members to ask questions in non-judgmental ways. For example, instead of saying, 'Why do you do that?' or 'Why don't you eat meat?', ask, 'Can you tell me why that is important to you?'

Treat everybody as an individual

- ▶ Research cultural issues to help you gain a better understanding of the people you interact with.
- ▶ Ask people about themselves – this is the only way to understand each person as an individual. Basing your knowledge on assumptions demonstrates ignorance and disrespect.

Introduce people to the cultural traditions of others

- ▶ Become a visitor to another person's culture by asking them about it. Some traditions will be similar to your own, while others will be specific to the person or their cultural background.
- ▶ When traditions are shared, find out about how each person celebrates and incorporate them into your team celebrations.
- ▶ When the tradition is special to one person, ask if they can share it with the team in some way.

Address obvious issues openly

- ▶ Address any obvious issues before they become a real problem.
- ▶ Make sure that each team member knows they are important.
- ▶ Use honest and open discussion, along with ongoing feedback and trialling of ideas, to cater for everybody's needs.

Resolving conflict

In many workplaces, social and cultural differences between colleagues or clients can create tension and misunderstanding.

If you recognise a potential conflict, always turn to your supervisor, manager or senior educator for support. Be guided by their advice and the appropriate documentation, such as your service's grievance procedure, as they will describe the actions you should take.

Example

Personal values, beliefs and behaviours

Erin reviewed her own values, beliefs and behaviours.

Personal goals

Erin has a career path and goals she will use to follow this path. In the short term she wants to take the role of educational leader when the current leader goes on maternity leave.

Performance

Erin has spoken to her director and explained her goals. She asked for feedback on her career path and on the areas she should develop.

While Erin disagrees with some of her current educational leader's philosophy, she does respect her and has worked with her conscientiously to ensure she learns as much as possible from her. Erin wants to understand the current educational leader's perspective so that, if she does take on the maternity leave role, she can understand why all the educators in the service work in the way they do.

Time management

Erin has set aside some of her own time to speak to her director and gain more feedback and support.

Erin takes on any additional work and completes it promptly.

Personal development and/or work plan

Erin has two areas she wants to develop most:

- ▶ her understanding of programming theories
- ▶ her competence on the iPad.

Practice task 2

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

Case study

Sezen is a diploma-qualified educator from Turkey who has just commenced in her first working position since coming to Australia. She speaks English well, but this is not her first language. Sezen's values, beliefs and behaviours include the following:

- ▶ She shakes hands with others at any time that she says hello or goodbye.
- ▶ She does not require a large personal space and sometimes stands very close to others she is communicating with.
- ▶ She greets the eldest person in the room or entering the room first, prior to greeting others.
- ▶ During break times, Sezen makes a point of asking other staff members lots of personal questions. She believes that by developing a personal relationship she will also be fostering a professional relationship.

1. How are Sezen’s values, beliefs and behaviours different to yours?

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2. Relationships between Sezen and all educators should occur with awareness and sensitivity. What is one strategy you could use to ensure both Sezen and other educators are aware of each other’s values, beliefs and behaviours?

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3. The points below are work role boundaries, beliefs and values that are embedded in the NQF. For each point, identify whether Sezen’s cultural beliefs, values and behaviours would influence her ability to manage the NQF work role expectations, and briefly explain why.

a. Applying knowledge

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b. Understanding and implementing

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c. Identifying work methods

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d. Monitoring trends

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e. Developing and maintaining professional networks

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f. Information interpretation

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g. Communication

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1C Share feedback

When you are part of a well-functioning team, feedback is a normal occurrence, and allows you to develop and learn each day. A reflective culture relies on open conversations. These discussions can help you to identify the qualities others see in you and give you the opportunity to connect with your colleagues, ask questions, learn and grow.



Giving and receiving feedback

Feedback relates to information given after an event. It helps people to develop their understanding and improve their performance in relation to the standards, policies and practices of the workplace.

Whether formal or informal feedback is being given, there are a number of basic principles to keep in mind.

1

Make it a positive process and experience

Be positive. If you are giving feedback, deliver it in a pleasant way that enables others to learn. If you are receiving feedback, accept it as a positive way for you to learn.

2

Be timely

Feedback works best if it is given soon after an event. Follow up as soon as possible following an event and make sure the feedback discussion occurs when it is convenient for you both.

3

Make it regular

Set periods of time for revisiting the feedback and any goals. Goals can get lost in the day-to-day work you do, so make specific times to discuss and review them.

4

Prepare your comments

Think about what you want to say or talk about. Be reflective and clear. Make notes if needed so you remember the important parts.

5

Consider the location

Use a space that is comfortable and private, especially if the feedback is personal and important.

If the feedback is informal or simple, you may deliver it in a public workspace. Always make sure you have the other person's full attention. Interruptions should be avoided.

6

Be specific

Longwinded feedback can lose its value. Try to be concise and let the other person know exactly what you want to say.

7

Criticise in private

If your feedback is critical, show respect and acknowledge the need for privacy.

8

Avoid blaming and shaming

'You' statements take the form of finger-pointing, so provide feedback with 'I' statements. For example, instead of saying, 'You don't seem to see the importance of greeting all parents' try saying, 'I think it is important to greet all parents'.

9

Limit your focus

Do not bombard the other person with too much feedback. This can become confusing. Work on one thing at a time and when this is achieved, move on to the next thing.

10

Allow input

Encourage the other person to give their comments and ideas or explain their understandings.

11

Include the positives

Include praise and encouragement. Mention the things the person has done, not just what they have not done. Look at feedback as something that identifies where things can be improved, rather than where things are wrong. Everyone and every service can improve in some way.

12

Provide suggestions and follow up

Everyone needs support and suggestions at some point. Suggestions may range from ideas on what to do next to professional development ideas.

Set clear times and dates for follow-up. If goals are set and then forgotten, the process is of little value.

Communication skills

To achieve the best results, it is wise to think about and plan the feedback you provide. You need to:

- ▶ think about the person you are addressing and the type of communication and learning they will receive best
- ▶ prepare your thoughts and ensure you are clear about what you want to talk about
- ▶ ensure you are empowering the person to move forward in areas that are realistic; for example, it is no use giving feedback to an educator on how they might better implement a procedure if the policy does not support this action
- ▶ know what you want to achieve by providing this feedback.



Useful communication skills

Here are some communication skills vital to successfully giving, receiving and implementing feedback.

Listening and speaking skills

Do you:

- ▶ listen carefully and actively see other people's perspectives?
- ▶ get your point across but still consider the points of others?
- ▶ have knowledge of professional jargon?
- ▶ have language skills?
- ▶ have diverse cultural expectations?

Negotiation skills

Do you:

- ▶ face conflict?
- ▶ always try to gain feedback or follow up?
- ▶ take on responsibility?

Decision-making skills

Do you:

- ▶ voice your decisions?
- ▶ feel you are able to commit to a point of view?
- ▶ have the ability to develop a strategy?
- ▶ feel you are able to take in the perception of others?
- ▶ make mistakes, then learn from them?

Give constructive feedback

Knowing how to give constructive feedback is one of the most valuable skills you can have. There are a number of techniques you might choose from. This means that you can experiment and find out which are best suited to your style of communication. You might also consider using a different technique for different people or situations.

The following information outlines some simple techniques to help you clearly send your feedback message.

Reframing

Step back from the situation and consider it from a different angle.

For example, 'Yes we do only have a week to finish the display. On the other hand, we have finished the program early, so we should have time.'

Reframing can turn a problem into an opportunity, a weakness into a strength, a possibility into a certainty and an unkindness into an understanding.

Facilitative questioning

These questions are designed to help the other person to understand and think more widely about the topic. Here are some questions you may ask:

- ▶ So what does that mean?
- ▶ Could you give me an example?
- ▶ What have you learnt from this?

Overcoming resistance to change

Sometimes your feedback will be about introducing change. Change is necessary for improvement and to keep your service up to date with current legislation and client needs. When preparing for change, you need to do the following:

- ▶ Encourage a 'you can do it' attitude. Start with small changes and increase your ideas as people see that change is positive.
- ▶ Provide detailed information so everyone is aware of what is going on. Discuss the effects and benefits for both the service and the staff.
- ▶ Be prepared for resistance, fear and misunderstanding. Do not disregard other people's feelings.
- ▶ Be enthusiastic about the change. Show your enthusiasm and others will be enthusiastic too.

Sandwich method

Use the sandwich method. Start and end with positive information, and include your constructive feedback in the middle. You may:

- ▶ comment on what is going well
- ▶ comment on areas that need improvement
- ▶ set goals based on positives.

Shared method

Use the shared method. You may:

- ▶ ask the other person what went well
- ▶ list the things you thought went well
- ▶ ask the other person what could be improved
- ▶ add any other things you think could be improved
- ▶ end on a positive – set goals, congratulate the person on their progress or thank them for the contribution they make to the team.

Stop, start, continue

Discuss:

- ▶ what they feel they should stop doing
- ▶ what they feel they should start doing
- ▶ what they wish to continue doing.

Steps for giving feedback

A more structured technique is the eight-step model. This model provides steps that prepare all parties for the discussion and help them communicate as clearly and positively as possible.

Eight-step model

1

Set the scene

To provide positive or constructive feedback, set the scene by doing the following:

- ▶ Ensure you have set aside enough time.
- ▶ Have clear goals and objectives.
- ▶ Ensure you have observed or investigated the issue adequately.
- ▶ Take the situation seriously.
- ▶ Approach the discussion in a positive and respectful manner.

2

State the purpose of your feedback

Explain why you wish to talk to them and why it is important. Remember to be clear and get straight to the point.

3

Consider whether the person or group is aware of the issue

If so, make the most of their enthusiasm, and collaborate in a feedback sharing exercise.

If not, describe specifically what you have observed. Be clear about the details. State what happened, who was involved and the end result. Stick to what you have seen firsthand – don't try to speak for others.

4

Describe your reaction

Give examples of how you and others are affected or feel about the behaviour or issue being addressed.

5

Give the other person an opportunity to respond

Don't forget to listen to what the other person has to say. If a person hesitates to respond, ask an open-ended question. Consider also that sometimes people need to think about information before responding.

6

Offer specific suggestions

Wherever possible, make helpful suggestions. Include practical, feasible examples. Show the person how to improve the situation. Don't forget to also listen to their thoughts and ideas.

7

Summarise and express your support

Review the major points that have been discussed. Always end on a positive note to express confidence in the person's ability to improve the situation.

8

Document the resolution

Document the resolution so the details are clear to all of the people involved.

Example

Critical reflection and shared feedback

Circles of change (COC) is a way for educators to critically reflect and share feedback. People at the same or a similar level of development are usually grouped in the same circle of change. This gives them the opportunity to have conversations and give each other feedback in a safe environment, thus developing their self-awareness and self-confidence.



Practice task 3

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

Case study

Rainelle, an educator, has been supervising Igor, a trainee educator, for two weeks. She has noticed that he lacks skills in completing written documentation, particularly illness records and incident reports. She decides to provide feedback to help Igor work toward completing records effectively.

Rainelle: 'Hi Igor. Your interactions with the infants are lovely. You must enjoy working with them.'

Igor: 'Yes, I think the infant age group is so interesting. They're learning so much, so quickly.'

Rainelle: 'Fantastic, I agree. I have noticed that you have been writing some of the incident records too. I think maybe some could be a little clearer, particularly when you are describing what happened. Do you find these challenging?'

Igor: 'Yes, I do find them hard. Sometimes I don't know how to describe all the details.'

Rainelle: 'Well, why don't we work together on improving those skills during the next week? I think working together helps, don't you? We could come together at the end of the week and see how you have progressed.'

Igor: 'That would be great.'

Rainelle: 'Excellent. By the way, good job on completing the assignment yesterday.'

1. Outline the method that Rainelle followed to give constructive feedback to Igor.

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2. Do you think Rainelle could use a 'shared method' for giving constructive feedback about this situation with Igor? Explain your answer.

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3. What are **five** of the principles that Rainelle should take into account when giving Igor constructive feedback?

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4. Provide **two** questions Rainelle could use to reflect on and evaluate her own communication skills in providing feedback.

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1D Actively seek and reflect on feedback

Feedback is part of the communication process. It lets you know that what you are doing is correct and adequate, and provides opportunities for you to gain others' opinions. This type of feedback may be positive, and it may also provide ideas about how you can develop in the future.

Feedback helps you to see if what you are doing is meaningful. It helps you to move forward, set goals and see that you are developing and achieving these.

To benefit from feedback, you need to:

- ▶ have the right mindset
- ▶ ask for feedback
- ▶ use feedback appropriately.



Levels of feedback

When you ask for feedback, think about what you really want to find out. Develop specific questions so you are clear and gain the information you want from the answers. When you are certain about what you want, you are more likely to receive useful information from the other person. If needed, offer to give them time to think about their response or to observe your practice before replying.

There are three levels of feedback that you can request. Each level places you under a more intense observation and opens the discussion to be deeper and more meaningful.

1. Feedback about process

When you ask for feedback about a process, you are asking for factual information. This type of feedback should be impersonal.

You would receive this type of feedback if you asked about how the infectious disease policy worked with children who were not immunised.

2. Feedback about your interaction with processes

When you ask about your interaction regarding a process, you are starting to request personal information.

You would receive this type of feedback if you asked how well you follow the sun-smart procedure, or if displaying your own personal philosophy in the play space caused concern.

3. Feedback about relationships, leadership, communication and sensitive issues

When you ask for this type of feedback, you are requesting constructive and useful information that might help you develop, but that is also personal. You are requesting a personal opinion, which is open to perception, and links closely to your personal abilities and goals.

You would receive this type of feedback if you asked your supervisor to comment on how well you develop a rapport with the parents you work with.

Feedback from clients and organisations

All services benefit from the feedback they receive from clients. By giving clients opportunities to express their ideas, opinions, requests or proposed areas of improvement, you are meeting both their needs and the needs of the service. The feedback they give may be positive or negative.

Here is some information on the role of industry organisations in providing feedback and support.

| Support provided by organisations | Examples of professional organisations |
|---|---|
| ▶ Providing opportunities for people to meet and discuss issues | ▶ Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) |
| ▶ Providing up-to-date information and findings | ▶ Community Child Care Association (CCC) |
| ▶ Providing advice and guidance | ▶ Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) |
| ▶ Acting as a lobby group or public voice for children, families and the industry | ▶ Lady Gowrie Child Centres |
| ▶ Promoting standards of acceptable practice | ▶ Early Childhood Australia (ECA). |

Feedback from other sources

There is a variety of useful Facebook pages for educators where the focus is on reflection, questioning and gaining opinions.

Online support and networking groups are growing in popularity. Most people find these easy to participate in, as they are easy to access and provide an immediate response. You can also hear ideas from people who are geographically distant from you.

There are also face-to-face opportunities to network with others. Visiting other services as a group or an individual is always useful. Another way to gain feedback is to ask professionals that enter your service their opinions on your practices.

Accept feedback non-defensively

When you receive feedback that is negative or leaves you feeling hurt, turn this around and think about what the person is really trying to say. Their ability to give feedback might be clumsy, or you might feel as though you are being criticised. However, think about their message and what you can gain from the information. There might be something in your job that you can be doing better.

You might not have been really listening to what they had to say because you were thinking about how you felt or whether they were right or wrong.

If the discussion has upset you, take your time. Go away and think about it before taking the discussion further. Avoid getting involved in a negative disagreement or losing sight of your professional behaviour and the meaning of the feedback. If you become defensive or aggressive, you will alienate yourself and miss out on a great opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Sometimes you might not realise you are being defensive until later on. Remember to listen carefully at all times, ask questions, and respond in a way that demonstrates you understand the feedback and are taking it in the way it was intended.

Defensive behaviour involves:

- ▶ tuning out and not listening
- ▶ interrupting
- ▶ being sarcastic
- ▶ criticising the person on a personal level
- ▶ arguing over the facts.

Strong relationships

Giving and receiving feedback is more effective when there is a good working relationship between you and your co-workers. Good relationships are built on collaboration, trust and mutual respect.

As you gather information about your actions, you are accepting ideas from others who are usually more experienced than you, have different needs to you or have an alternative understanding.

Practise the following principles daily:

- ▶ Get to know others in your team individually.
- ▶ Be reliable; do what you say you will do.
- ▶ Be consistent in what you say and what you do. Actions speak louder than words.
- ▶ Allow other educators to speak without fear. Listen, acknowledge and explore differing points of view.
- ▶ Communicate clearly, regularly and in different ways about your vision, the direction for the work area and the performance expectations.

Analyse and interpret feedback

Receiving feedback is only useful if you do something with it. Sometimes this will be as simple as working toward a goal or changing an aspect of your behaviour. Other times, you may need to sift through the feedback and attempt to identify what information is meaningful and factual. At times you may even need to think about whether the other person's opinions are of value to you.

Sometimes the best thing to do in response to feedback is to make a suggestion or a change and see how it goes. Most people feel concerned when feedback brings up foreign ideas or actions. However, as long as you are still meeting your responsibilities and are not breaching any legislation, guidelines or service codes, trying something out can be a learning experience and may even be enjoyable.

Example

Reflect on feedback

Lillian receives constructive feedback from her supervisor, Ivan, about her performance when undertaking group times. She uses the feedback constructively and writes herself goals on ways to improve on this area of her job in the future.

When giving feedback, Ivan said, ‘Lillian, it’s fantastic to see you have built the confidence to implement group times with the children; it can be quite a challenge when some of the children aren’t listening and choose to be loud and talk over you! It’s best to have a plan in place before commencing a group time to ensure it captures their attention, keeps them interested, and has both visual and auditory components.’

Lillian takes some notes after the discussion, writing down some questions. She approaches Ivan later to discuss the questions, then writes herself some goals.



Practice task 4

1. List **two** indicators that show a person is being defensive.

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2. Describe how receiving feedback from others can be effective in improving your skills and knowledge.

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3. What are the **three** levels of feedback that can be requested?

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Summary

- ▶ Supervisors, team leaders and other co-workers or peers can provide feedback on your performance, quality of work and interactions with others.
- ▶ If you are able to self-reflect, you will be able to understand the opinions of others and improve your personal or professional attitudes and actions.
- ▶ By viewing your skills and knowledge objectively, you will be able to identify where your weaknesses and strengths are, and clarify what is important to you.
- ▶ Reflective practice is embedded in the NQF and forms the basis for many of the outcomes that you are required to achieve while working to provide high-quality education and care to children.
- ▶ When you are part of a well-functioning team, feedback is a normal occurrence, and allows you to develop and learn each day.
- ▶ Knowing how to give constructive feedback is one of the most valuable skills you can have.
- ▶ It is only useful to receive feedback if you do something with it.

4. Choose **two** work role boundaries, beliefs and values that need to be considered when reviewing and improving your own practices. For each boundary you have chosen, write down how your personal behaviours, beliefs and values influence this.

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Part B

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

Case study

Lidia is an educator under your supervision. You have noticed that she is approaching parents when they arrive to pick up their children and telling them about any difficult behaviour that has occurred throughout the day using descriptions that are quite exaggerated. You have seen that, on many occasions, the children can hear the discussion. You can also see that some of the parents are becoming concerned about their children. Today a parent spoke to you when they arrived and asked immediately if their child had been bad today.

1. Explain how to provide feedback to Lidia using the sandwich method.

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2. If Lidia responded by telling you she thought your behaviour guidance techniques for children were poor, how would you receive this feedback non-defensively and what would you say next?

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3. Following Lidia’s feedback about your behaviour guidance techniques, you might seek further feedback. Answer the following.

a. Who might you approach for further feedback?

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b. What is one question you could ask this person?

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Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Determine necessary improvements**
- 2B Identify potential support networks**
- 2C Seek specialist advice or further training**
- 2D Practise self-care and ask for support**
- 2E Implement a personal development plan**

Enhance own practice

Evaluating your professional practice is an essential part of career development. It helps you to identify the gaps in your skills and knowledge, seek new information and improve your understanding and skills. The mechanism that is commonly used to do this is a regulated quality improvement plan (QIP).

To keep abreast with current developments and trends, you also need a good understanding of the education and care industry. This is the only way to effectively address your current and future professional needs.

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

| National Quality Standard | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| | 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 |
| Early Years Learning Framework | My Time, Our Place |
| Principles | |
| | Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships |
| | Partnerships |
| | High expectations and equity |
| | Respect for diversity |
| ✓ | Ongoing learning and reflective practice |
| Practice | |
| | Holistic approaches |
| | Responsiveness to children |
| | Learning through play |
| | Intentional teaching |
| | Learning environments |
| | Cultural competence |
| | Continuity of learning and transitions |
| | Assessment for learning |
| Outcomes | |
| | 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 Determine necessary improvements

You may have the best programs, materials and activities but, as times change, so do the needs of children and families. Assessing your own practice will improve your day-to-day performance, maintain compliance with laws and regulations, and keep you abreast of current industry practices and trends.

The ability to assess your own practice relies on the skill of self-reflection. It also involves:

- ▶ identifying agency objectives
- ▶ measuring your own performance
- ▶ using valid evidence.



Improvements based on self-evaluation

If you reflect on your practice regularly, you will be able to think about whether you have the required knowledge. You will also notice your improvements and be able to extend your knowledge.

Each time you ask yourself the following questions, you may identify a new goal to work on.

Questions you might ask yourself

- ▶ Do I know what the regulations and standards expect of me?
- ▶ Do I respond ethically and deal with difficult situations appropriately?
- ▶ Am I implementing best practice?
- ▶ Do I have the skills and knowledge required to carry out my role to the highest level?
- ▶ Do I advocate for children and their families?
- ▶ Am I knowledgeable enough to cater for all child and family needs within the service and to deliver a vibrant program that is responsive to children?

Improvements based on feedback

When you do implement changes following feedback, it is wise to review the outcome. You need to assess whether things are improved or if new issues have arisen. This review is a good opportunity to ask for more feedback. This allows you to keep the cycle of feedback, implementation and review constant.

Problem-solving

There will be times when you are presented with situations or issues that require you to undertake specific problem-solving techniques within your role and responsibilities. Whatever the situation you are dealing with, you must ensure you enable the best possible practice as an outcome.

You will be confronted with a wide variety of problems in your work. To deal with these problems positively, you need to consider:

- ▶ what the problem is
- ▶ who the problem relates to
- ▶ how the problem affects your job role
- ▶ whether you can fix the problem yourself
- ▶ who else needs to be involved.

Once you are able to evaluate the key elements of a problem, you will then be able to move forward in the attempt to resolve it. Remember you cannot fix all problems or issues you are confronted with, and often may need assistance from others.

Example

Evaluation of skills

Irina and Samira work together in the same service. They both feel they have a good knowledge of curriculum development. Irina has been working in the industry for 10 years and she continually updates her professional knowledge. Samira is new to the industry. She has trained to diploma level, but is in her first year of practice. To prove their abilities, each educator must produce a range of 'valid' evidence, and here they differ.



Although both educators could probably obtain anecdotal third-party evidence of their skills from colleagues and supervisors, this type of evidence is not considered valid, as it does not demonstrate that they have a good knowledge of curriculum development. The following evidence is produced instead.

Irina's evidence:

- ▶ Real-life examples of existing programs and curriculum that she has developed
- ▶ A verbal explanation of how current practices and workplace procedures have been applied
- ▶ Documented evidence of industry training or personal development in this area

Samira's evidence:

- ▶ Her diploma-level qualification, which shows that she has completed the competency relating to this area
- ▶ Real-life examples of programs she has been involved in or helped to develop
- ▶ A verbal explanation of how current practices might be applied
- ▶ A portfolio of work or samples she has produced to provide evidence of her capabilities

Irina and Samira analysed their own skills and knowledge, and provided valid experience in different ways. Looking at a person's experience, skills and knowledge from a range of perspectives creates a more complete picture of their capabilities.

Practice task 5

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

Case study

Dalia is new to the service and has been having some difficulties adjusting, as her last workplace was very different. Lee has been working with her throughout her first week, giving her extensive amounts of information relating to service policies and procedures, practices, routines and transitions. Dalia is overwhelmed and overloaded with all the new information she is trying to process. At times she forgets what she is doing and during her afternoon break she bursts into tears.

1. Dalia is faced with a problem: she is overwhelmed and receiving massive amounts of information from Lee. Answer the following questions to evaluate Dalia’s problem.

a. What is the problem?

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b. Who does the problem relate to?

.....

c. How does the problem affect her job role?

.....

.....

d. Can she fix the problem herself? If so, how?

.....

.....

e. Who else needs to be involved?

.....

2. List **four** questions Dalia could ask herself and reflect on to help her identify improvements she might make in her work.

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2B Identify potential support networks

A career in education and care is nurtured by the use of professional networks, both within your organisation and outside of the service. The more people you come into contact with, the greater your access to knowledge, opinions and experiences that can complement your own. As you grow and develop, your networks will expand with you, or link you to further networking possibilities.



The education and care industry has many different support networks and professional services. Since the implementation of the NQF, various programs have been funded to help services and their educators understand and put into place the regulations, frameworks and standards that apply. There are many ways to access information and support, and many different ideas on how to apply the NQF and make it meaningful to your particular values.

Due to the professional nature of education and care, and the number of different methods that can be used to interact, networks should be part of the everyday culture of communication and development.

There is a variety of networks to choose from, and you will find options both within and outside the organisation.

Professional networks

Networking outside of the organisation allows you to gain ideas from people who may have completely different views. This provides you with new information to consider and implement where appropriate.

Some of the external networks in Australia you may like to become involved in are outlined in the following table. Particular states/territories are represented here, but with research you will find similar networks in your location.

| Network | Focus | Eligibility | Access | Website |
|---|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network (QECSN) | Sustainability | Queensland practitioners | Membership | Website: http://aspirelr.link/qecsn Facebook: http://aspirelr.link/qecsn-facebook |
| Family Day Care Australia | FDC issues | FDC educators and schemes | Open; membership available | Website: http://aspirelr.link/family-day-care Facebook: http://aspirelr.link/family-day-care-facebook |

| Network | Focus | Eligibility | Access | Website |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| LinkedIn | Developing a professional status and networking | Anyone | Membership | http://aspirelr.link/linkedin |
| Educators engaging with educators | Support and networking for all educators | Educators | Closed Facebook group (ask to join) | http://aspirelr.link/educators-engage-facebook |
| ECE Facilitated Learning | Trainers answer study questions (learners can be from any training organisation) | Anyone | Closed Facebook group (ask to join) | http://aspirelr.link/ece-facilitated-learning-facebook |

Identify networks

You may wish to develop your own support network. First, you must identify the areas where you need support or the areas you wish to develop.

Many external networks are found by talking to others. You might hear about a network from a colleague, at a meeting or professional development session, or during a conference. Other networks are online.

You can find out about local networks by talking to the local government or community services in your area. You will often find director networks, outside school hours care (OSHC) networks, educator networks and student networks.

At times, your involvement with an external network will allow you to pull resources into your service and create a new network inside your organisation.

Networks can be established by:

- ▶ joining a professional organisation or association to take advantage of training and development
- ▶ attending conventions and conferences
- ▶ participating in blogging and social media groups
- ▶ joining professional networking sites; for example, LinkedIn.

Join formal networks

Networking requires time and effort, but the result is ultimately worthwhile.

When you join a formal networking group, it can provide:

- ▶ a source of fresh and creative ideas
- ▶ a sense of comradeship
- ▶ partners to help you troubleshoot or brainstorm
- ▶ colleagues to collaborate with on big and small projects
- ▶ a huge supply of wisdom, expertise, experience and resources
- ▶ a shared mission (something bigger than just yourself)
- ▶ a feeling of pride and positivity about your profession.

Develop informal networks

Within your organisation, networking will depend on the type of service you participate in, the size of your organisation and its structure. The networks may not be obvious, or they may be a clearly adopted strategy for staff development. In either case they should provide a positive culture and a way for participants to learn and grow.

Informally, you will network by asking and answering questions, and through observing and discussing what happens each day. Formally, you may be involved in meetings, shared planning times, professional development and training.

Within the organisation, you may have access to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ▶ colleagues | ▶ supervisors |
| ▶ educational leaders | ▶ directors |
| ▶ owners or management committee members | ▶ support staff, such as casual workers and specialists |
| ▶ community members | ▶ parents. |

Cultural groups

You may want to find a cultural group that can help you increase your knowledge and understanding of the children and families in your service. Through research you will be able to find many different cultural groups that may meet regularly or share information online about their background and planned activities.



Children in your service are all individuals and come from different backgrounds, cultures and family units. Their families are usually able to assist you to understand them and their culture. As you incorporate their specific cultural traditions into the curriculum, you are demonstrating that you are willing to join in with both formal and informal groups with diverse backgrounds. Understanding and working with these groups will ensure that you gain insightful knowledge, and assist both the child and their family to integrate into your service.

Maintain networks

You need to maintain the relationships you have built with your networks. Group membership may require you to attend networking sessions. Other relationships may only require that contact is made on a regular basis.

Everybody has different views about networking. The following outlines tips for maintaining a network in your industry.

Acknowledge meetings

Attending meetings allows you to maintain relationships within the networking group. If possible, make contact before the meeting and add items for the agenda. This provides you with another opportunity to talk to a group member or contribute to the group discussion.

If you cannot attend a meeting, provide your apology. Without an apology, your networking colleagues will think you find them unimportant. After the meeting, request the minutes. This can be another opportunity to converse with a group member and shows you are interested in what is happening.

Engage in social media

Facebook, LinkedIn and online forums all require your regular participation. The more you are involved, the more you will gain from others. Remember that you don't always have to be an expert and answer other people's questions. You may have your own questions. You can also reflect or add new posts.

Think about your posts prior to posting them. Write professionally. Check that your content states what you mean. Always respect confidentiality.

Attend professional development sessions

Make your presence known at as many training sessions and conferences as you can. It is likely that the same people will attend the same professional development sessions as you. Acknowledge these people, and take the opportunity to make new acquaintances and catch up where possible.

Answer promptly

If people in your network make contact with you, respond to them promptly. If you cannot complete the task or collect the information they want immediately, let them know. Send an email or call to tell them when you can follow through with their request.

Ask for help

Contact relevant people in your network that can assist you. Be professional about how you request information and respect confidentiality.

Avoid speaking negatively about people or organisations, as people in your network will remember this and suspect that you will talk in this way about them. Ask about the problem or decision you need to make, rather than placing blame. For example, 'I want to develop my conflict resolution skills', rather than, 'The boss at work is nasty and picks on me all the time'.

Thank people

When you receive good advice or help from people in your network, thank them. Contact the people responsible and let them know how much they have contributed to your professional development. This will strengthen the connection.

Share information

When you find interesting information, share it with others. Sometimes you will remember that a person in your network has asked about this information, or you may just think something would be useful to a particular group or person. Adding your own value and providing expert advice, opinions and support helps you to become invaluable to others.

Introduce someone

Link your networks. Introduce someone to a network you have established. This might be someone who will benefit from the network or who can provide value to the network. While you are introducing the person, it allows you to interact with others and create discussion.

It can be a great opportunity for you to introduce each person currently in your network and demonstrate how you value them; for example, you could say, 'Gina, this is Ben. Ben works with me and he is interested in our network activities. Gina has been a strong force in helping us achieve our goals. She is passionate about sustainability and if you ever need ideas for environmentally safe cleaning, she has endless knowledge.'

Get a business card

Make your own business card, or take advantage of the inexpensive offers available from print shops. People tend to hold onto business cards and it is an easy way for them to remember you and contact you if they are nurturing their own networks.

Announce changes

If you change your job, name, role or goals or have experienced a personal milestone (such as completing a qualification, having a baby or getting married), you can use the event to make a contact. Send a letter, card or email as a catch-up.

Develop and maintain professional networks

Professional networks assist you to stay updated with current trends and knowledge. They are also useful for providing support when required. Professional networks may consist of other educators, peers from different service types, inclusion support workers, or other people you have met through work. Some examples are staff from FKA Children's Services, individuals you see regularly when attending professional development sessions or forum managers.



Regardless of how or why you have formed a network with the individual or group, you must keep and maintain open lines of communication. This may be a simple greeting, a short conversation when you see them in person, an email, a forum posting, or sitting with them at a professional development seminar. Regardless of the social or work-based event you are attending, there are many opportunities to widen and add to your network.

Formal professional networks

When you meet other people from the education and care industry in a formal setting, it's a good idea to listen and ask questions, as this enhances the possibility of you gaining skills and knowledge. This encourages others to listen and ask questions too. At first this may seem challenging, but with practice you will find it less intimidating and be rewarded with new information. You will find that like-minded people will want to participate in conversations with you to share their ideas and find out more about you.

Likewise, when another educator you meet shares information you find interesting, introduce yourself. This may open further discussion and sharing of ideas, and may also lead to additional contacts in your network.

Online professional networks

Online workshops are another good way to hear the ideas of others and to share experiences. Given that there are no geographical boundaries for participants in online workshops, information and examples from professionals in other states, territories and countries can provide diverse ideas. In this forum you can learn useful strategies and ask questions about how, why or what others are implementing.

Remember that networks can be established within many contexts, situations and events that you attend both formally and informally. How you present yourself, participate, communicate and use the information you receive will undoubtedly influence those around you.

Example

Professional networks

Elsa has been working as a diploma-level educator for seven years. In that time she has been very successful in achieving goals, developing a stimulating curriculum for children and forming responsive relationships with parents and the community. Elsa would like to set herself a career goal: to take on the role of second in charge (2IC) and educational leader of a service. To do this, Elsa chooses some networks to participate in.

Professional membership

Elsa joins Early Childhood Australia, reads their newsletters and attends meetings when she can to gain updated and best practice information.

Conference attendance

She attends a conference organised by Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) that highlights the NQF, where she meets and has discussions with other educators already working in the role of educational leader or 2IC.

Online forum

She begins reading and posting on the Educators Engaging with Educators online forum, particularly in relation to the goals she is working towards.

Online network

She creates a LinkedIn account, hoping to improve her professional standing and develop professional relationships with people who could support her or offer her future employment.

Practice task 6

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

Case study

Lua attends a professional development workshop that runs for two full days in the city. She is from a small country service with limited resources and support available to her. She feels quite lost when she enters the workshop, as everyone seems to know each other and they are standing around in small groups talking. Once the presenter of the session arrives and asks everyone to take a seat, Lua shuffles quietly to the back row and sits to the side, leaving a space between herself and the next person. Throughout the morning, the moderator asks many questions to allow the participants to provide examples of ways they currently implement practices within their services. Lua feels she may say the wrong thing or ask a silly question, so she says nothing and keeps her attention on the moderator. During the morning break, Lua uses the bathroom and takes time making a coffee. She pretends to be busy writing some notes until the group returns. At the end of the session, Lua leaves hurriedly.

1. What are **three** things Lua could have done differently to help establish her professional network?

.....

.....

.....

2. Provide the name and contact details of one professional network in the education and care sector that you could become involved in.

.....

.....

3. Explain how an informal network can support your professional practice.

.....

.....

.....

2C Seek specialist advice or further training

It is unrealistic to expect you will know everything about all facets of child and family needs, program implementation, care and education. At times you will need either the support of a specialist or to participate in further training. Acknowledging this and taking prompt action is a demonstration of your professional attitude, respect for people's needs and responsive practice.



Here are some reasons why specialist advice or further training may be required:

- ▶ A child or family demonstrates needs, such as health issues, developmental delays, behaviour problems, or housing or financial concerns.
- ▶ The service has needs, such as requiring knowledge and skills in a particular area to meet a quality improvement plan (QIP), National Quality Standard (NQS) or regulation expectation.
- ▶ Industry trends arise that necessitate the use and understanding of new information.

Seek additional support

Whenever you are faced with an issue above your level of experience, outside your area of understanding or linked to needs that demand concentrated skills, you must seek additional support.

It is natural to try to meet all needs from within the service, but this is not always possible. There may be:

- ▶ time constraints
- ▶ a lack of suitable knowledge and skills
- ▶ experience gaps
- ▶ a lack of required qualifications
- ▶ a lack of funding.

When issues arise, seek and accept help. Use the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills, and to take away as much learning and experience as you can.

Professional development

When you plan professional development, you are demonstrating a commitment to lifelong learning, and modelling this to others. The requirements of the education and care industry expect you to continually improve your knowledge and skills by attending training and professional development.

Sometimes professional development leads you to a higher position but, more often than not, professional development will lead you to become a more experienced and valued member of your team.

Mentoring

It is the role of the educational leader or the early childhood teacher to mentor you through the educational program. Each service may have slightly different expectations, but national regulations require that people in these roles carry out mentoring, coaching or supporting actions in relation to other educators.

A colleague can be an informal source of mentoring. They may have skills, knowledge and experience that you admire and respect. On-the-job mentoring should be a positive experience with the aim of supporting you to develop greater knowledge and skills.

Professional supervision

Professional supervision will be provided by your educational leader or early childhood teacher. A service director, coordinator or owner may also provide this supervision.

Professional supervision works best if your relationship with the supervisor is trusting, genuine, ethical, confidential and respectful.

Professional supervisors should be people that provide you with constructive feedback and opportunities to further your current skills and knowledge. They should have your best interests in mind and be focused on how you can help the service as a whole to provide the best quality education and care possible.



Peer support

Peers are your colleagues. Depending on their experience, skills and knowledge, they can be very useful support people. A peer who is passionate about a particular area of their work, including day-to-day education and care, can have a lot to offer. A peer may have similar interests and share and link you to information or services that they have found useful.

Nationally accredited training

Nationally accredited courses in education and care are linked to a range of requirements within the NQF. Regulations and standards state the qualifications required by certain staff, and the ratios and responsibilities that people of each qualification level can be involved in. It is most common for people to take part in accredited training when they are planning a career move.

Presently, training is offered in a variety of different ways. You can participate in the following types of training.

Traineeships

Work while you study – your service supports your training.

Funded/self-funded training

Studying independently and completing practical placement within a service (such as your workplace) at various points during your study.

Methods of training

One or more of the following methods may assist you when learning skills necessary for your role.

Class-based learning

Attend face-to-face classes.

Online learning

Learn through online materials. This may include webinars (online classes where you interact as you would in a face-to-face class).

Off-campus learning

Receive resources for learning in the mail, or through a trainer who comes to visit you.

Flexible or blended learning

Use a range of the methods previously mentioned.

Specialist training

You will also need further training if you wish to move in a new direction or specialist area. Some specialist areas and their relevant qualifications are outlined in the following information.

Health and safety

- ▶ Certificate in Work Health and Safety
- ▶ Diploma in Work Health and Safety

Nutrition

- ▶ Food-handling certificate

Business management

- ▶ Certificate in Leadership and Management
- ▶ Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management

Additional needs/culture

- ▶ Certificate in Education Support

Training

- ▶ Certificate in Training and Assessment

Professional development opportunities

There is a range of professional development opportunities to be found outside your organisation. These opportunities help you meet your development needs, attain professional goals or learn about topics that are important to your current and future success.

Each opportunity has its own strengths and weaknesses; however, the range of options allows you to try different methods and discover which one suit you best.

Some current professional development opportunities are outlined here.

| Opportunity | Description | How to find out more |
|---|---|---|
| ECA Learning Hub | Free online professional development opportunity that consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ online forums ▶ videos ▶ written materials. | http://aspirelr.link/eca-learning-hub |
| One World for Children | Offers funded and unfunded workshops and in-services. They can provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ on-request training ▶ customised training ▶ group training ▶ online training ▶ consultancy ▶ guest speakers ▶ webinars ▶ special events ▶ face-to-face training. | http://aspirelr.link/owfc |
| Community Child Care Co-operative Ltd (NSW) | Provides professional development and support. They offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ on-request training ▶ customised training ▶ group training ▶ webinar training ▶ consultancy ▶ guest speakers ▶ podcasts ▶ videos. | http://aspirelr.link/cccc-nsw |
| FKA Children's Services Inc. | Offers professional development focused on culturally competent practices. | http://aspirelr.link/fka-childrens-services |

Seek advice and support

Relevant training courses in education and care include nationally accredited training and higher education courses.

For more information about these courses, go to: <http://training.gov.au> or the ACECQA website at: <http://aspirelr.link/acecqa>. Qualifications higher than an advanced diploma are delivered at university. For more information about this, contact your local university or search online.

Example

Specialist help

Mei asks for specialist help when a child begins demonstrating developmental delay. She accesses the Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) with the parents' permission and support commences. Mei ensures that she reads all information that comes through from the PSC, asks the PSC for relevant materials to help her provide more for the child and family, and participates in some professional development training that is relevant to the child's individual needs.



Practice task 7

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

Case study

Bindi has recently taken on the role of team leader and wants to find out more about planning strategies.

1. Who might provide professional development, mentoring or professional supervision to Bindi within her service?
.....
.....
2. Research and find a professional development session that would be useful for Bindi to attend. Include contact details, venue, time and any other information relating to the session.
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2D Practise self-care and ask for support

Self-care is about recognising your needs and ensuring these are met. For many people, the balance between different needs is very difficult to maintain, and at times you may need additional help to stay healthy.

It is essential that you ask for help when any aspect of your personal care is being negatively affected. This is particularly important if you are not coping with the demands of your job role, or your personal life is influencing your ability to manage your daily work practices. A combination of such factors can cause stress and uncertainty, and this can impact your work performance.

This may impact on the children, families and educators you are working with, as well as your own personal network and family members.

| Self-care relates to the balance you have between your: | |
|---|------------------|
| ▶ sleep | ▶ nutrition |
| ▶ exercise | ▶ social life |
| ▶ interests | ▶ mental health. |
| ▶ spirituality | |

Self-care

Anything that contributes to your emotional, spiritual, physical or social wellbeing is related to your self-care. Self-care occurs when you are able to create a balance between work and personal life. Looking after yourself by doing things like brushing your teeth, exercising, taking medicine when you are unwell, or taking time out to pray or meditate is considered to be self-care.

Take responsibility for your own health and wellbeing. This includes taking actions to stay fit and healthy, meet your social and mental needs, and prevent illness or accidents.

Self-care also means staying active by doing things that are important to you, such as gardening, shopping, exercising, playing sport, attending social functions, seeing friends and family, going on a holiday or going to work. It involves looking at what you can do and want to do, rather than what you can't do or have to do.

Living a healthy lifestyle is part of self-care for everyone.



Additional support

Working with children in any regulated setting demands a high degree of personal investment to provide quality education and care. It is no easy task to master the numerous and complex skills required of you in this type of work; however, it is not possible to learn all of these skills in an academic setting. As a result, many educators must acquire additional skills by working directly with children, and by observing fellow educators and other professionals in the field. With this in mind, mistakes are often made by those new to the industry. Not even the most experienced educator can avoid making the occasional mistake – this is where teamwork is vital.

You will be able to obtain additional support in a variety of ways depending on your service type. Asking for help shows that you:

- ▶ need assistance
- ▶ are taking ownership of your responsibilities
- ▶ are willing to move forward to help both yourself and others around you.

You should also ask for help if you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, or if personal problems are affecting your ability to do work.

By discussing, reflecting on and communicating any areas of your work or self-care that you are having difficulties with, you will ensure that the best possible outcomes can occur.

Example

Self-care

Nina is experiencing a lot of difficulties at home. She is caring for her sick father full-time, with the help of a carer during working hours. She has two preschool-age children at home, and her husband is currently away working interstate. Nina works part-time as a team leader, where she job-shares with another team leader.

It is the start of the year and many new families have commenced. Nina is trying to get to know each parent and their children. Nina is getting headaches, becoming easily upset and is unable to provide her full attention to the children when she is working.

When Nina is at home she worries about work and thinks about how she is going to get all of the children's portfolios together. She wants to organise the service's new vegetable patch and attend the staff meeting next week. She is unable to sleep and has abandoned her regular exercise regimen and the parent group that she attends with her own children on the weekends.

She decides to speak to her supervisor to discuss her situation, as she thinks that maybe she should take some time off.



Practice task 8

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

Case study

Kim has been having difficulties at work. She hasn't been getting along with the two other educators in the room. She feels the other educators are continually ganging up on her and speaking to her inappropriately. She has tried on several occasions to speak to them both to find out why they are treating her this way. On these occasions both educators have ignored her, then snickered and whispered behind her back. Kim isn't enjoying going to work anymore and finds herself awake at night crying, as she is uncertain what the following day will bring.

1. What would you do in Kim's situation?

.....

.....

2. Why is it important that Kim does something about this situation, rather than leaving it be or blaming herself?

.....

.....

.....

3. What are some signs that may indicate that Kim has not been prioritising her personal self-care over a period of time?

.....

.....

.....

2E Implement a personal development plan

Goals help people work together to achieve particular outcomes, maintain consistent expectations and participate in ways that are appropriate and realistic.

Make sure that your personal goals are realistic. If they seem too large, break them down into smaller tasks or objectives. A simple and popular way to write realistic goals is to use the SMART method. By including each of the points shown in the following information, you can develop goals and objectives that are both measurable and meaningful.

S

Specific: Target and clearly define a specific area that you want to improve.

M

Measurable: Suggest an indicator of progress; quantify if possible. Determine how you will know the goal has been achieved.

A

Attainable: Agree on what the goals should be and keep them achievable in the time frame.

R

Realistic: Identify what results can realistically be achieved given the available resources, knowledge and time.

T

Time-framed: Specify when the result can be achieved; make sure there is enough time to achieve the goal, but not too much time.

Specific goals

Specific goals are well-defined and clear.

Personal goals are just as important as organisational goals. To set personal goals, you need to work out what you do well and what you want to do better. This might include the way you operate at work, or an area you want to learn more about. Other goals may link to your future career plans or personal needs.

Personal goals provide direction and focus, and mean you will be ready and better able to take advantage of any professional development opportunities that come your way.

You can gain ideas from:

- ▶ the NQF – NQS, EYLF and MTOP
- ▶ the ECA Code of Ethics
- ▶ other educators' skills and knowledge
- ▶ your performance review
- ▶ specialist areas you are interested in
- ▶ ideas you gather from others.

Measurable goals

Goals are much harder to achieve if they are not measurable. Measurable goals have a clear purpose and will give you more desire to work towards them.

Taking small steps towards goals makes you more likely to achieve the bigger picture you are working towards. Evaluating your achievements at each stage and documenting your progress shows steps you have already undertaken to reach your current stage of progression. It also provides a feeling of satisfaction that can encourage you to keep working hard. You can then identify what else needs to be done or practised to enable you to achieve your goal.

Attainable and realistic goals

When setting personal goals, whether short- or long-term, it is imperative that you ensure they are attainable and realistic. Unrealistic or unattainable goals may be impractical, show lack of purpose, or be easily forgotten about or pushed aside.

When setting your own individual goals for self-improvement, be realistic and take small steps. Use documentation to track your progress, as you can then see what stage or steps you have achieved. It also helps you to see what else is required to reach your anticipated outcome.



Realistic goals can often be established with the help and feedback of peers or supervisors. Having someone work with you to establish these often gives you more focus and perspective. The other person may also be able to help you progress, measure, evaluate and reflect on the steps you undertake.

Time-framed goals

Your personal development plan goals need deadlines to ensure that you make steady progress and feel successful. Time management skills are required, so this exercise will be a great opportunity to work on developing these as secondary skills.

Writing goals using the SMART method requires including time lines for your goals. If you think you are expecting too much, you should adjust the goals or objectives, taking into consideration your other responsibilities.

Achieving your deadlines ahead of time can be exciting, not only due to you having achieved so much, but also because you will have additional time to spend on another goal, or to take a break to recoup.

Tips for setting realistic time lines

Put time frames on each goal so that adequate time is available.

Set milestones so progress within the time frame is measurable.

Use time management skills to make effective use of the time allocated.

Adjust time lines if deadlines become unachievable.

Create a personal development plan

When you create an action plan based on your values, reflections, goal-setting and plans for personal development it is called a personal development plan (PDP). A PDP can be created within the context of your career, education, relationships or for your own self-improvement. A PDP usually includes critical reflection, evaluative feedback and research. It identifies your limitations and indicates how you plan to improve. It usually includes the following steps:

- ▶ Set personal goals.
- ▶ Make realistic goals and targets.
- ▶ Form achievable deadlines.

Your PDP may include the following techniques for learning:

- ▶ events that you plan to attend, such as seminars, conferences, meetings, workshops, webinars or other professional development
- ▶ books, educational material and resources that link to your goals and provide new information
- ▶ mentors and supporters you plan to contact.

Principles of a personal development plan

Having a PDP demonstrates your commitment to the service and the education and care industry, and increases your standing as a professional. Listed here are some ways that a personal development plan can help guide and direct you in growing your knowledge and skills.

A personal development plan:

- ▶ clarifies what you are trying to accomplish
- ▶ sets outcomes and shows you why you're doing what you're doing
- ▶ gives you direction
- ▶ includes short- and long-term goals, letting you measure your progress
- ▶ reflects your beliefs and values
- ▶ allows you to celebrate successes.

Organisational professional development guidelines

Whether you are seeking further accredited training or relevant professional development, the support of your service is important to your success.

Within your service, there will be position descriptions, policies and procedures that let you know what is acceptable or expected of each educator. However, timing and funding may be a real issue. Because of these limitations, you may need to access training or professional development outside of your workplace.

Your service should help you as much as possible, but its resources may be stretched across all of its staff and this can sometimes hinder opportunities. At times you may need to take on additional learning and development of your own initiative.

Goals help people work together to achieve particular outcomes. They help maintain consistent expectations and participate in ways that are appropriate and realistic. Goals in relation to education and care are strongly influenced by the standards and frameworks shown in the following table.

| Influence | Goals | Where to find information |
|---|--|--|
| Regulations and standards – as outlined in the NQF | <p>The quality improvement plan (QIP) of your organisation is required by legislation. It includes the goals that a service identifies as important to its current operation.</p> <p>Policies and procedures represent regulations and standards; these are developed as goals for the service to work toward.</p> <p>Vision, mission and philosophy statements demonstrate the service goals.</p> | http://aspirelr.link/nationalqualityframework |
| Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics | Your service will expect you to follow ethical practice based on the code of ethics. | http://aspirelr.link/early-childhood-australia |
| United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child | Your service will expect you to advocate for children and their families, as well as the education and care industry as a whole. | http://aspirelr.link/unicef-child-rights |
| <p>Learning frameworks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia</i> (EYLF) ▶ <i>My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia</i> (MTOP) | These principles and practices should guide your curriculum and pedagogy. | http://aspirelr.link/eylf http://aspirelr.link/mtop |

Example

A personal development plan

My personal development plan

| | |
|--|---|
| What are my strengths? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ I am good at researching. ▶ I communicate well with others. |
| What are my weaknesses? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ I am not very good at networking; I am shy. ▶ I have poor time management skills. |
| What feedback have I recently received? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ I have strong engagement skills with children. ▶ My recording skills are not strong and sometimes my learning stories are not meaningful. |
| What do I want to work on? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ I want to improve my recording skills. ▶ I want to strengthen my understanding of what meaningful recording is. |
| Who can help me to achieve this? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ My educational leader ▶ My supervisor ▶ Other educators who have developed this skill already |
| Where can I gain further support? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Online training webinars ▶ Reading the book <i>Educators' Guide to the EYLF</i> ▶ Research online |
| When will I do this? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ During my week off ▶ In my planning time |
| How will I know when I have achieved this? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ I will show my records to my supervisor and when she gives me feedback that I am doing the records in a meaningful way, I will know I have achieved the goal. |
| When will I complete this goal? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Before the end of the year |

Practice task 9

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

Case study

Mel is new to the industry and hasn't had much experience working with children. She has set herself a goal: to be able to confidently implement a 10-minute group time that engages children using a variety of activities. She has set a time frame of two weeks to achieve this goal. Mel is very shy and hasn't yet undertaken a group time of any form with any age group of children. She sometimes reads stories to one or two children, but apart from this she doesn't have the confidence to spontaneously sing songs, talk in front of the group or lead a group activity.

Summary

- ▶ Assessing your own practice will improve your day-to-day performance.
- ▶ The ability to assess your own practice relies on the skill of self-reflection.
- ▶ The more people you come into contact with, the greater your access to knowledge, opinions and experiences that can complement your own.
- ▶ Networks are an excellent way to communicate and develop.
- ▶ At times you will need either the support of a specialist or to participate in further training.
- ▶ Self-care is about recognising your needs and ensuring these are met.
- ▶ The best way to ensure that you build on your learning is to develop a personal development plan (PDP).
- ▶ A simple and popular way to write realistic goals is to use the SMART method.
- ▶ Whether you are seeking further accredited training or relevant professional development, the support of your service is important to your success.

Learning checkpoint 2

Enhance own practice

Part A

1. Provide **three** questions you could ask yourself to determine improvements needed in your own work.

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2. List a potential formal support network or professional association that you could use to gain external feedback. Explain how you might use this network.

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3. How do you determine the need to seek specialist advice or further training?

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4. Self-care requires you to balance your work and personal life. Who might help you if you find yourself overwhelmed at work?

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5. Research and identify one qualification provided through nationally accredited training or higher education that you would benefit from (other than the qualification you are currently studying). Explain why you would benefit from holding this qualification.

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Part B

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

Case study

Louise decides she is going to create a personal development plan to enable her to truly focus on specific aspects of her job. She would like to provide the children with more challenges and extend on their interests within the program.

1. Write a SMART goal that Louise could use to add to her personal development plan. Remember to include each of the SMART goal points.

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2. What are **five** questions Louise might ask herself to create a personal development plan?

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Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A Use industry developments to improve practice

3B Assess own practice against legal requirements

3C Understand learning styles and opportunities

3D Regularly participate in review processes

Facilitate ongoing professional development

As your industry evolves, it is useful to develop strategies for keeping up to date and finding out about new information early. Understanding and being aware of changes allows you time to think about what is happening, plan responses and work confidently with others in communicating best practices.

You can find information as it is released through:

- ▶ internal and external networks
- ▶ meetings with authorities
- ▶ professional development activities
- ▶ conferences
- ▶ professional discussions
- ▶ news reports
- ▶ subscriptions to associations and journals.

Each of these methods helps you to gather the information you need to assess your current and future needs.

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

| National Quality Standard | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| | 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 |
| Early Years Learning Framework | My Time, Our Place |
| Principles | |
| | Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships |
| | Partnerships |
| | High expectations and equity |
| | Respect for diversity |
| ✓ | Ongoing learning and reflective practice |
| Practice | |
| | Holistic approaches |
| | Responsiveness to children |
| | Learning through play |
| | Intentional teaching |
| | Learning environments |
| | Cultural competence |
| | Continuity of learning and transitions |
| | Assessment for learning |
| | Holistic approaches |
| | Collaboration with children |
| | Learning through play |
| | Intentionality |
| | Environments |
| | Cultural competence |
| | Continuity and transitions |
| | Evaluation for wellbeing and learning |
| Outcomes | |
| | 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 Use industry developments to improve practice

The education and care industry includes private, not-for-profit and government organisations across Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014) found that 48 per cent of all Australian children aged 0–12 years attended some type of childcare, and nearly one quarter of all children attended formal care. A description of formal and informal care types is outlined in the following information.

Formal care

Formal care is regulated and occurs away from the child's home. It includes all of the registered services; for instance:

- ▶ before and after school care
- ▶ vacation care
- ▶ long day care
- ▶ family day care
- ▶ preschool/kindergarten.

Occasional care is also regulated, but not registered; hence it is not required to follow the NQF at this point in time.

Informal care

Informal care is non-regulated and arranged by the parent or guardian. It may be paid or unpaid. It occurs inside or outside of the child's home and includes care by:

- ▶ siblings
- ▶ grandparents
- ▶ other relatives
- ▶ friends
- ▶ neighbours
- ▶ nannies or babysitters.

National Quality Framework

The education and care services that you provide and are training to deliver are linked to the National Quality Framework (NQF) by registration. The components of the NQF include:

- ▶ Education and Care Services National Law
- ▶ Education and Care Services National Regulations
- ▶ NQS
- ▶ EYLF and MTOP.



Each of these has been developed to guide services, their educators and organisational representatives to work toward implementing best practice education and care.

As at August 2017, there were:

- ▶ 15,546 regulated education and care services under the NQF
- ▶ 14,106 services with a quality rating

- ▶ 10,355 services meeting or above the NQS
- ▶ 52 services rated 'Excellent' by ACECQA.

To access updated statistics, check the latest ACECQA snapshots at: <http://aspirelr.link/nqf-snapshots>

Research using the internet

ACECQA has the most reliable and appropriate online information about current trends in the education and care industry.

At <http://aspirelr.link/acecqa>, you will find a 'Latest News' page, along with links, libraries, fact sheets, and details for educators, service providers and families.

Through online research you may find out about developments in the industry. You can search the term 'childcare industry developments' to see if there is any recent new information.

Remember that you must not trust everything you read on the internet, so use your networks to find out more about trends, gain opinions and see if you can find out more. The most reliable sources are organisations set up to provide trend information. Here are some organisations you might use.

| Organisation | Website |
|---|---|
| Australian Childcare Alliance (also has state branches) | http://aspirelr.link/australian-child-care-alliance |
| Care for Kids | http://aspirelr.link/care-for-kids-news |
| Community Child Care (CCC) | http://aspirelr.link/ccc-inc |

Apply professional practice

Element 4.2.2 of the NQS states: 'Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships'. This suggests that you are demonstrating professional practice as you demonstrate care, empathy and respect for children, colleagues and families. It also suggests that your professional practice should be guided not only by the NQF, but by your service's philosophy, policies and procedures.

The quality areas of the NQS have been thoroughly researched and provide strong guidelines for implementing a high level of education and care. By following the NQS and meeting its requirements, you will be aware of and cover all aspects of your professional role.

One advantage of the NQS, EYLF and MTOP is that, while they are detailed and expressive, they still allow your personal and professional values and beliefs to guide your practice.

To investigate current service expectations you need to know:

- ▶ the priorities and goals of your service
- ▶ current industry developments
- ▶ evolving trends.

Critical reflection

The NQF provides a range of areas that encourage educators to participate in ongoing critical reflection. Critical reflection is required because new trends across the Australian education and care industry occur frequently. Most of these trends work toward building a stronger and more professional industry and helping educators to gain a higher professional standing within the community.

With so many regulated changes occurring in such short time frames, the ability of the education and care industry to provide quality care and education is increasing at a rapid pace. Most of the trends related to these changes link to the quality areas of the NQS; some information about industry trends is outlined in this table.

| Quality area and related areas of change | How these affect you | Where to find more information |
|--|---|---|
| <p>1. Educational program and practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pedagogy ▶ Recording methods ▶ Theories and approaches ▶ Educational leader roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How you plan experiences for children ▶ How you view children and their educational needs ▶ How you record and assess children’s activities ▶ Career paths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Education and Care Services National Regulations ▶ Ailwood, Boyd & Theobald (2016), <i>Understanding early childhood education and care in Australia</i>, Allen & Unwin ▶ Hydon, ‘Making curriculum decisions: Exploring the planning process’ (Webinar), ECA ▶ <i>Educators’ guide to the early years learning framework for Australia</i>: http://aspirelr.link/educators-guide-eylf |
| <p>2. Children’s health and safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Varied, seasonal and culturally rich menus ▶ Routines that allow flexibility to meet children’s individual sleep, rest and hunger needs ▶ Awareness of asthma, allergy and anaphylaxis ▶ Availability of risk-taking activities ▶ Greater awareness of abuse and neglect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implementing healthy and varied cooking experiences for children ▶ Participating in adequate training and completing updates to ensure you can manage asthma, allergy, anaphylaxis, abuse and neglect ▶ Understanding risk-taking and your responsibility ▶ Responsiveness to children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services</i>: http://aspirelr.link/staying-healthy-pdf ▶ <i>Get up & grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood</i>: http://aspirelr.link/get-up-and-grow-book |

| Quality area and related areas of change | How these affect you | Where to find more information |
|--|--|---|
| <p>3. Physical environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Simultaneous indoor/outdoor play ▶ Environmentally sustainable practices ▶ Natural materials and learning in the environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How you plan experiences for children ▶ How you incorporate sustainability into experiences and activities ▶ How you expose children to a variety of indoor and outdoor activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ollie’s World: http://aspirelr.link/ollies-world ▶ Ollie Recycles Australia: http://aspirelr.link/ollies-world-recycle ▶ Natural environment photographs: http://aspirelr.link/dept-education-and-training-natural-environments ▶ Callaghan, White & McHugh (2016), <i>A walk in the park: Creating rich, irresistible environments for young children</i>, WriteLight |
| <p>4. Staffing arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Direct contact requirements/ratios ▶ Additional qualification requirements ▶ Greater respect for all roles ▶ Educational leader roles – registration in some states ▶ Inclusion of early childhood teachers in centre-based care services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The educator role becomes more sought after ▶ Increase in respect for all service roles ▶ Educational leader will change the dynamic of the service as the responsibilities become clearer ▶ Additional qualifications or training may be necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Education and Care Services National Regulations ▶ National Quality Standards |
| <p>5. Relationships with children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responsiveness to lifelong learning ▶ View of children as capable ▶ Belonging, being and becoming goals ▶ Development of agency ▶ Recognition of the importance of children’s mental health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How you connect with the children ▶ How you establish goals for children and encourage the children to work toward the goals on their own ▶ How you treat each child individually | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ KidsMatter: http://aspirelr.link/kids-matter-early-childhood ▶ Relevant frameworks at: http://aspirelr.link/nationalqualityframework ▶ Dombro, Stetson & Jablon (2011), <i>Powerful interactions: How to connect with children to extend their learning</i>, Stenhouse ▶ Bryce-Clegg (2012), <i>Get them talking – get them learning</i>, Featherstone |

| Quality area and related areas of change | How these affect you | Where to find more information |
|--|---|---|
| <p>6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recognition and implementation of programs that are responsive to Indigenous Australians ▶ Greater involvement of parents in decision-making ▶ Increased relationships with community and support services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How you interact with other educators and volunteers within the service ▶ How you include parents as often as possible in the education of their children ▶ How you employ services within the community (for example, a sustainability organisation) to provide information to the children ▶ How you acknowledge Indigenous Australians in your planning and programming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Belonging, being and becoming: Remote Indigenous professional development package for the early years learning framework for Australia:</i> http://aspirelr.link/bbb-indigenous-version ▶ Pascoe & AIATSIS (2012), <i>The little red yellow black book: An introduction to Indigenous Australia</i>, Aboriginal Studies Press ▶ Reconciliation Australia: http://aspirelr.link/reconciliation ▶ Keyser (2017), <i>From parents to partners: Building a family-centered early childhood program</i> (2nd ed.), Redleaf Press |
| <p>7. Governance and leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continuous improvement requirements within service and in relation to educators and other staff ▶ Efforts toward maintaining continuity of staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How you continue to implement change within your service ▶ How you make staff feel welcome and respected ▶ How you continue to encourage staff to improve their practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Rodd (2013), <i>Leadership in early childhood: The pathway to professionalism</i> (4th ed.), Allen & Unwin ▶ Quality Improvement Plans: http://aspirelr.link/acecqa-improvement-plans ▶ McCrea (2015), <i>Leading and managing early childhood settings: Inspiring people, places and practices</i>, Cambridge |

Adapt to new practices

Industry trends that affect your work with children, families, other educators and the service community should always be of interest, as these are the foundation of your role.

You will mainly need to be familiar with information that relates to the position you are currently holding. For instance, if you work with preschoolers, you will most likely be interested in the trends that concern this particular age range.

Trends can impact on future career opportunities; for example, qualification changes, the introduction of or adaptation of roles, and the required number of early childhood educator qualified positions. Changes like this will impact how you plan for the future.

Trends can influence your future needs by affecting:

- ▶ the way you work with children and their families
- ▶ what role/s you play
- ▶ your qualifications and responsibilities
- ▶ your career aspirations
- ▶ your pedagogy.

Professional associations

Professional associations maintain up-to-date information on industry trends and issues. As peak bodies, they often hear about, publicise and begin to respond to changes within their sector early, and support their members and others in relation to how these trends will affect the workplace, children and families.

The following are some peak body organisations.

ACT branch of Early Childhood Australia

- ▶ Early childhood professional network meetings
- ▶ ACT early childhood professionals
- ▶ By membership
- ▶ Email: ecaact@earlychildhood.org.au
- ▶ Website: <http://aspirelr.link/eca-act>

National Outside School Hours Services Association (NOSHS)

- ▶ Outside school hours care (OSHC) issues
- ▶ For OSHC educators
- ▶ By membership
- ▶ Email: noshsa@noshsa.org.au

Gowrie Victoria

- ▶ Early childhood education specialists
- ▶ For educators of all levels
- ▶ Email: gowrie@gowrievictoria.org.au

Example**Further studies**

Rosie has completed her diploma and is quite experienced in the education and care industry. She plans to work toward a 2IC (second in charge) role.

In her service, the 2IC role has recently been changed. The requirement is that the 2IC must now be the educational leader and simultaneously hold a bachelor's qualification in early childhood development (or equivalent). For Rosie, this means that, despite her experience, she will need to do further study before she is eligible for promotion.



Practice task 10

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

Case study

Ada loves researching. She often spends hours at home on the internet, reading and searching for new ideas, trends and experiences to use in her job role as an educator in a multi-age group environment. She often arrives at work and informs others of something she has read about, telling them that is what they must do.

Ada believes everything she reads and thinks that she and those within her service should be doing as she has read. This is causing lots of arguments and confusion amongst staff, as they were not aware of many changes to the practices Ada is telling them about.

1. What would you do if you were an educator working with Ada and she informed you about these changes?

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2. When researching online for changes to practices or emerging trends, what should Ada do to determine if the source contains reliable information?

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3. List **two** ways Ada might identify current trends or practices within the education and care industry.

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4. Which element of the NQS suggests that professional practice should be guided by the NQF and a service's philosophy, policies and procedures?

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3B Assess own practice against legal requirements

Your actions influence many people daily. Parents place their faith in you, and expect your full commitment and for you to value their children. Children listen to you and model what they see you do. The community values your ability to implement high-quality programs that support families and educate children.

Your role is linked to legal parameters and specific legislation that guide you to fulfil the expectations of others. Among many other directives, these identify the type of qualification you must hold, and any additional training you must undertake and maintain.



Legislative requirements at work

Regulations and standards prescribed by government authorities have been developed to establish uniform control over the operation of programs and services. Being familiar with the regulations of your state or territory enables you to put them into practice as part of your daily work.

There are important statutory and regulatory requirements you may come into contact with that aren't necessarily specific to education and care. These requirements may be federal (Commonwealth), state- or territory-specific. You don't have to know about all these areas; however, you should understand the requirements that become relevant to you in an education and care environment.

Legislative requirements include those related to:

| | |
|---|---|
| ▶ registration and practice of health professionals | ▶ child protection and guardianship legislation |
| ▶ criminal acts | ▶ disability standards |
| ▶ discrimination and harassment | ▶ equal employment opportunities |
| ▶ freedom of information | ▶ health records legislation |
| ▶ mental health legislation | ▶ pharmaceutical benefits |
| ▶ poisons and therapeutics | ▶ privacy legislation |
| ▶ building standards | ▶ work health and safety (WHS). |

Sector-specific legislation

Along with legislation that guides all workers within Australia, there are some specific legal and ethical considerations that are central to the education and care industry. This legislation can be used to help assess and confirm your practice.

The NQF is based on the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Each state and territory of Australia has adopted the national law and regulations into their own separate acts and regulations, as the education and care sector comes under state jurisdiction.

The following components are represented in the national law and regulations as directives, each contributing in some way to your personal professional development.

The NQS

The NQS guides you to conduct:

- ▶ professional reflection
- ▶ critical reflection on how you provide for children's learning and development
- ▶ ongoing reflection and self-review as a commitment to continuous improvement.

Particularly useful is Element 7.2.3: 'Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development'. This element encourages organisations to support educators to improve their skills through a performance appraisal system.

EYLF and MTOP

The EYLF and MTOP include reflective practice as an underlying principle. They consider critical reflection to be a contributing factor to professional knowledge and pedagogy. The *Educator's guide to the early years learning framework for Australia* encourages reflection through critical questions.

EYLF and MTOP goals

The EYLF/MTOP goals (belonging, being and becoming) are important to self-evaluation:

- ▶ Belonging occurs when you understand your role and see your identity as being an educator.
- ▶ Being is about making meaning of this role, and you can use self-reflection to do this.
- ▶ Becoming is the result of your self-evaluation, your achieved and evolving identity, and the change that occurs to you as a professional educator using self-evaluation as a tool for lifelong learning and development.

National Quality Framework initiatives

In addition to these documented directives, the NQF is supported by the following initiatives.

The quality improvement plan (QIP)

The QIP of your service is based on reflection that identifies where you are currently and where you want to be. It provides a step-by-step guide to where you want to be. The QIP can reflect the goals of your service in general, or identify growth and development aspects of specific educators.

An ACECQA national education leader

ACECQA has created an education leader role to support all education and care services. The role requires writing about topics of interest and putting forward best practice examples and ideas that support educators to develop high-quality skills.

Worker and employer responsibilities

Employees and employers have responsibilities regarding a range of issues in the workplace. Other parameters that link with education and care include custody arrangements, policies and procedures.

Many responsibilities are linked to regulatory requirements expressed in the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations.

Some important parameters include:

- ▶ the ratios of children to educators
- ▶ numbers of qualified educators
- ▶ the requirements to be 'fit and proper'
- ▶ the ability to implement an approved curriculum
- ▶ first aid, anaphylaxis and emergency asthma training
- ▶ continuous development planning (for example, QIPs)
- ▶ staff development planning.

Qualifications

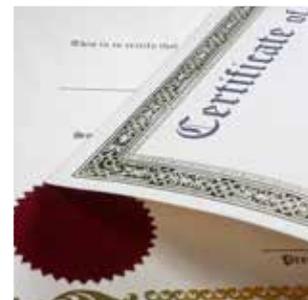
Qualification requirements are also evolving. All educators must hold, or be studying, a qualification. The industry now requires more diploma-level educators and early childhood teachers than in previous years.

These changes are reflected in service policies and procedures, as well as in your position description. They influence the service QIP and alter the way your role is used and what importance is placed on it.

These changes can impact your career pathway, and your personal thoughts about the industry and your place within it. Sometimes legislation encourages you to extend your skills in different directions based on the opportunities that arise.

If your service is non-compliant with education and care regulations, it can be forced to close, particularly if the non-compliance concerns the health and safety of children. It is therefore important to be aware of all of your legal responsibilities and carry them through.

As an educator, it is your responsibility to be aware of the regulations and standards. This may seem like a huge task, but it can mean the difference between compliance and non-compliance for your service.



Codes of ethics

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is an early childhood advocacy organisation that has been in operation since 1938. It has a national presence with state and territory membership.

ECA developed a code of ethics that is relevant to all people working with children and their families. The code lists the responsibilities that are expected of any person working within the education and care industry. Its aim is to support educators to make ethical decisions in their work.

Central to the code are the values of respect, courage, inclusivity, democracy, honesty, social responsiveness, integrity, cultural responsiveness, education and justice.

The ECA Code of Ethics guides you to protect the wellbeing of children. It requests that you speak out and take action when unethical practice occurs.

You can find more information on the ECA Code of Ethics at: <http://aspirelr.link/eca-code-of-ethics>

The ECA Code of Ethics outlines:

- ▶ core principles
- ▶ your responsibilities in relation to children
- ▶ your responsibilities in relation to families
- ▶ your responsibilities in relation to colleagues
- ▶ your responsibilities in relation to the profession
- ▶ your responsibilities in relation to community and society.

Organisation policies and procedures

Service policies are often based on legislation, and are used to guide and determine present and future decisions. They are developed to provide an overall plan with general goals; for example, all children must wear a hat when outdoors.

A procedure describes actions that need to be executed as a sequence of activities, tasks, steps and processes, that when undertaken produce the desired result or outcome.

You will need to apply your reading and writing skills to follow the policies, procedures and protocols that are common in an education and care environment. These include the following.

Health, hygiene and safety practices

These include:

- ▶ accidents and emergencies
- ▶ illness and infectious diseases
- ▶ medication
- ▶ immunisation
- ▶ sun care.

General practices

These include:

- ▶ acceptable behaviour and guidance
- ▶ clothing
- ▶ lost property
- ▶ excursions.

Routine practices

These include:

- ▶ meals and snacks
- ▶ dental care
- ▶ rest times
- ▶ toileting.

Administration

These include:

- ▶ absences
- ▶ accounts and receipts
- ▶ school holiday care
- ▶ fee payments
- ▶ outstanding accounts.

Enrolment and orientation

These include:

- ▶ arrivals and departures
- ▶ confidentiality
- ▶ lawful authority and contact
- ▶ daily communication
- ▶ record keeping
- ▶ signing in and out
- ▶ safety and security.

Codes of practice

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a code of practice that is followed in the education and care industry. It contains 42 articles that deal with broad-ranging issues, but many of the articles are relevant for day-to-day work in education and care. For example, Article 3 states: 'The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children'. Your service will expect you to advocate for children and their families, as well as the education and care industry as a whole.



You can access a summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at: <http://aspirelr.link/unicef-child-rights>. Take time to read the convention and think about how you could improve your own practice to meet the articles.

Duty of care

Health and safety legislation states that your employer has a duty of care to maintain a safe and healthy work environment. Your employer is legally obliged to ensure that you are able to carry out your work safely and without risk to your health.

This health and safety legislation also places responsibility on you as an employee. To help avoid incidents, read all service policies and ask questions if you are unsure of your role.

The following outlines the differences in duty of care between an employer and an employee.

| Employer's duty of care | Your duty of care |
|---|---|
| ▶ Provide a safe working environment | ▶ Ensure the health and safety of the children you care for |
| ▶ Ensure safe working practices | ▶ Ensure the health and safety of yourself |
| ▶ Ensure workers are adequately skilled | ▶ Ensure the health and safety of others in your workplace, including colleagues and the parents of the children you care for |

Example

Duty of care

Amaya understands her job role and her service's policies and procedures. She does her work to the best of her ability. She provides a safe and healthy environment for herself and others, and ensures reporting is undertaken with regard to hazards or unsafe resources, knowing that she has a duty of care, as does her employer.

Amaya's actions and general behaviour influence many people. Parents expect that she will demonstrate high-quality practice as she cares for and educates their children. The community also values her ability to implement programs that support families and educate their children. She is well aware that her role is linked to legal parameters and specific legislation, and she attempts to keep her training up to date, as guided by industry changes.



Practice task 11

Read the case study, and then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Shay is a student who is commencing placement. When he undertakes placement orientation, Mary gives him copies of all the policies and procedures to read. There is a handbook made specifically for students so that they have an understanding of what they must do to ensure their actions and practices are appropriate, and in line with legislative requirements. Once Shay has read through the handbook, he must sign and date the document to acknowledge he has read and understood what is required of him while on placement.

1. What are **two** policies that Shay should be made aware of to enable him to understand his responsibilities in the service?

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2. What is one ethical or legislative requirement that Shay should be made aware of?

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3. List **three** regulations from the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations that guide an early childhood educator in their everyday practice.

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4. List the key areas of the ECA Code of Ethics.

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5. Access the ECA Code of Ethics here: <http://aspirelr.link/eca-code-of-ethics>.
Choose one of the core principles and explain how it guides you professionally.

.....

.....

3C Understand learning styles and opportunities

When you observe others in the workplace, you may be able to find opportunities to extend and expand your own expertise. You might:

- ▶ watch
- ▶ listen
- ▶ be involved in conversations relating to the environment, program or children
- ▶ ask questions.



You might also participate in training, professional development, seminars or networking opportunities. Your inclusion in these learning opportunities helps build your own knowledge and skills, and enables you to offer suggestions and information to others in the workplace.

Learning styles

People have different learning styles that influence the way they process and make sense of information. If you wish to gain the most from the opportunities you are provided and ensure that you engage with this learning, it's important to understand your own learning style.

The three main learning styles you might encounter are presented in the following information.

Visual

- ▶ A person who prefers a visual learning style learns more effectively with pictures, images, reading, demonstrations, seeing and looking.
- ▶ A visual person likes to take notes rather than get involved in discussion, and will sit in the front so they can easily see.

Type of professional development most suited:

- ▶ Face-to-face
- ▶ Online
- ▶ Demonstrations
- ▶ Video

Auditory

- ▶ A person who prefers an auditory learning style learns more effectively by listening to verbal instructions and through discussions, role-play and talking out problems.
- ▶ An auditory person may also like to use recorded material and read out loud.

Type of professional development most suited:

- ▶ Face-to-face
- ▶ Webinars
- ▶ Podcasts
- ▶ Learning circles

Kinaesthetic

- ▶ A person who prefers a kinaesthetic learning style learns more effectively by hands-on experiences, touch, gestures and observing actions.
- ▶ A kinaesthetic person may need regular breaks.

Type of professional development most suited:

- ▶ Demonstrations
- ▶ Simulated experiences
- ▶ Face-to-face
- ▶ Video

Informal and formal learning

Informal learning can be undertaken simply by being present in your workplace. Each day you will encounter new ideas, questions, issues or problem-solving tasks. You can create learning opportunities from these new experiences by reflecting on them and then taking appropriate actions, if necessary.

Formal learning is more structured and will generally require your attendance in a meeting, training session or conference. There may be clear topics of interest and you may have opportunities to take notes, gather resources and speak to or hear from others about these topics.



Example

Learning styles

Mindy is a visual learner and enjoys participating in a range of professional development sessions. She struggles when these sessions consist of a facilitator standing up the front of a room talking the whole time. She has identified this issue with her supervisor, who suggested she should engage in a more visual learning environment to best suit her learning style. They do some research together and find numerous sessions available online that Mindy wants to take part in. Mindy participates in a session out of hours at home. She has the opportunity to read content as the moderator presents information relating to each slide. She is able to take notes, ask questions and print slides off later for further reading. She feels that she learnt and gained a lot from this type of session, as it met her learning style requirements.



Practice task 12

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

Case study

Leonie holds a Certificate III qualification and would like to increase her knowledge and skills. She is not sure how to go about this, but would like to eventually open her own education and care service.

1. If Leonie asks you about your qualifications and the professional development you have undertaken, what type of learning would you be providing to Leonie?

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2. If Leonie decides to study the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, what type of learning would this be?

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3. Describe the kinaesthetic learning style.

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3D Regularly participate in review processes

There is a range of models that can be used to review your skills and knowledge:

- ▶ journal documentation, diaries or reflection logs
- ▶ structured discussion
- ▶ unstructured discussion
- ▶ checklists
- ▶ SWOT analysis.



Using these models for self-reflection and engaging with other people’s feedback will often lead to you seeking professional development to upgrade your skills and knowledge.

It is a regulation requirement to have a quality improvement plan (QIP) as a whole service review mechanism within education and care services.

The QIP is based on self-assessment, which includes collaboration between your service, its staff and all other stakeholders. Your participation is vital to the development of the QIP, as is your involvement in working toward any goal that is set. This is a professional requirement, as well as a method for upgrading and continuously improving your own skills and knowledge.

Participate in review mechanisms

The QIP development and implementation process, apart from regulatory time lines and submissions, involves an assessment of needs, during which you identify gaps in service provision (usually based on current trends), then develop a plan to reach a goal. The service cannot reach its goals unless you participate in trying to achieve them.

The QIP review mechanism consists of the following steps.

| Step | What it means | Language used in the QIP | How you can participate |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Gap analysis | Finding out where your service is now and measuring this against where it needs to be | Identified issue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Share knowledge. ▶ Provide information. ▶ Ask questions. ▶ Bring up current trends you are aware of. ▶ Share your views, values and beliefs. ▶ Gather information or comparisons. ▶ Support others to provide their opinions. |

| Step | What it means | Language used in the QIP | How you can participate |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| 2. Goal-setting | Setting an overall goal for achievement | What outcome or goal do we seek? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check that it reflects the outcome clearly. ▶ Identify whether the goal is clear or if it needs to be broken into smaller goals. |
| 3. Prioritising | Identifying the importance of the goal | Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clarify linked areas that may increase or decrease a priority. ▶ Advocate for particular goals you feel are important. |
| 4. Planning | Developing steps to achieve the goals | How will we achieve this outcome? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop steps. ▶ Make suggestions. ▶ Take responsibility. |
| 5. Measurement or key performance indicators (KPIs) | Measurable outcomes; how do you know your goal is achieved, and when do you want it achieved by? | Success measure, by when? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure the measurement statements are clear. ▶ Support the development of realistic time lines. ▶ Encourage the most important aspects to be implemented as soon as possible. |
| 6. Implementation | Putting the QIP into action | Not mentioned | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Work toward the goals. ▶ Provide feedback. ▶ Support others. ▶ Develop materials if relevant. ▶ Access professional development and networking to gain the greatest outcome. ▶ Share information with stakeholders. |
| 7. Evaluation | Reflection on progress or completion | Progress notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Write evaluations. ▶ Provide feedback. ▶ Support others to provide their opinions. |

Upgrading skills and knowledge

As an educator, you must work within your job description roles and responsibilities. To maintain the relevance of these, you must be involved in continuous improvement, reflection, and keeping up to date with changes and evolving trends in the education and care sector. The way you communicate, respond and discuss these changes plays an important role in the way others respond to you, and in how they share information with you, both formally and informally.

When you ask questions, you show commitment. Involving yourself in discussions and raising your hand for learning opportunities such as seminars or professional development workshops is also a show of commitment.

Regardless of your chosen method, when you participate consistently in learning opportunities, you stay refreshed and updated.

Examples of ways to upgrade knowledge and skills

- ▶ Extend your current qualifications, such as undertaking your Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care when holding a Certificate III.
- ▶ Achieve a food-handling certificate.
- ▶ Train to increase your understanding of pedagogy, nutrition, planning strategies and/or teamwork.

Example

Work towards organisational goals

Rose shows commitment to her work and to helping improve her organisation through the following actions. She:

- ▶ reads all the information on the service QIP
- ▶ attends meetings and takes notes about organisational goals
- ▶ sets herself personal goals that enable her to achieve her professional career goals
- ▶ uses others within the working environment to gain feedback, providing her with another perspective when evaluating
- ▶ continually asks questions about practices and actions, and notices the communication strategies of others
- ▶ shows a constant commitment to increasing her knowledge.



Practice task 13

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

Case study

Sammy has been working in the service for five years and hasn't been involved in any formal training during this time. She has attended all compulsory staff meetings, but lacks the motivation and willingness to participate in development opportunities that others are attending. Her supervisor has suggested she choose two specific sessions from a professional development calendar. Sammy looks over the sessions available, but chooses not to commit to any.

1. Why should Sammy undertake continuous forms of training and skill development?

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2. What is the role of the quality improvement plan (QIP)?

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Summary

- ▶ Understanding and being aware of changes allows you time to think about what is happening, plan responses and work confidently with others in communicating best practices.
- ▶ The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has the most reliable and appropriate online information about current trends in the education and care industry.
- ▶ Industry trends that affect your work with children, families, other educators and the service community should always be of interest as these are the foundation of your role.
- ▶ Professional associations maintain up-to-date information on industry trends and issues.
- ▶ Your role is linked to legal parameters and specific legislation that guide you to fulfil the expectations of others.
- ▶ Regulations and standards prescribed by government authorities have been developed to establish uniform control over the operation of programs and services.
- ▶ Along with legislation that guides all workers in Australia, there are some specific legal and ethical considerations that are central to the education and care industry.
- ▶ Employees and employers have responsibilities when it comes to a range of issues in the workplace.
- ▶ When you observe others in the workplace you are able to identify and engage with specific opportunities to extend and expand your own expertise.
- ▶ People have different learning styles, and these influence the way they take in and make sense of information.
- ▶ As a regulation requirement, the most common review mechanism within education and care services is the quality improvement plan (QIP).
- ▶ As an educator you must be committed to your job description roles and responsibilities. To maintain these you must be involved in continuous improvement, reflection and in keeping up to date with constant changes and evolving trends within the education and care sector.

Learning checkpoint 3

Facilitate ongoing professional development

Part A

1. A professional educator will access and review information on current and emerging developments in the industry to improve their own practice. Describe how you will do this.

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2. List three legal and/or ethical guidelines that you can reflect on to review your work practices and procedures, and to be aware of your rights and responsibilities.

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3. Identify your own learning style and describe a time when you used it effectively.

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Part B

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

Case study

Jamila is working with a new group of children. The new group is challenging her behaviour guidance skills. She feels she lacks knowledge and experience with behaviour guidance techniques and needs to refresh her strategies.

1. What steps should Jamila take to refresh her strategies?

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2. Once Jamila has collected information and ideas through formal and informal methods of learning, what could she do to regularly review and upgrade her behaviour guidance skills?

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