



COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES POLICY P4.0333.1

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES POLICY

DIVISION: Sport, Community and Activation

BRANCH: Community Outcomes - Family Day Care

CATEGORY: 3

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 *The National Quality Standard Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities* reinforces the importance of community partnerships that are based on active communication, consultation, and collaboration.
- 1.2 The *Children (Education and Care) Services National Law (NSW)* objectives and guiding principles includes at section 3(3) that the role of parents and families is respected and supported.
- 1.3 Camden Council Family Day Care (FDC) recognise that when educators and staff work collaboratively with families, children are much more likely to reach their full potential.

2. OBJECTIVE

- 2.1 We will ensure educators and staff understand how to communicate effectively and have strategies in place for meaningful ways to communicate with families to establish and maintain positive relationships.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to:
 - Camden Council FDC Service
 - Staff
 - Educators
 - Children enrolled in an FDC Service and their families
 - Residents
 - Students.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Approved Provider** means a person who holds a provider approval (*Education and Care Services National Law*). A provider approval authorises a person to apply for one or more education and care service approvals and is valid in all jurisdictions. The Approved Provider for the purposes of this policy is Camden Council.

- 4.2 **Code of Conduct** means Camden Council's principles and standards for behaviour including moral and ethical expectations, which guides Council officials to fulfill their statutory duty to act honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence and is relevant to Council officials as defined in the Code of Conduct.
- 4.3 **Code of Ethics** means a set of statements about appropriate and expected behaviour of early childhood professionals set by Early Childhood Australia, a not for profit organisation that advocates for what is best for children and the early childhood education and care sector.
- 4.4 **Collaboration** means working together cooperatively towards common goals. Collaboration is achieved through information sharing, joint planning and the development of common understandings and objectives.
- 4.5 **Collaborative Partnership** means a partnership between the educators, families, children, and community of an education and care service that is based on active communication, consultation and collaboration and aims to build respectful relationships, support families, and promote children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
- 4.6 **Co-ordination Unit** means the Camden FDC principal office and main faculty for running the Service from which Camden FDC employees work.
- 4.7 **Co-ordinator** means a member of the Co-ordination Unit employed by the Approved Provider to monitor and support the FDC educators registered with the service.
- 4.8 **Educator** means an individual suitably qualified and registered by Camden Council FDC to provide education and care, and refers to the educator as the business owner, educator assistant or relief educator.
- 4.9 **Family Day Care (FDC)** means a type of education and care service that is run from the educator's own residence or an approved venue for the purpose of educating and caring for small groups of children aged 0-12 years.
- 4.10 **FDC Service** means the FDC education and care business of each individual educator or refers to Camden Council FDC Service.
- 4.11 **Family Member** means in relation to a child is a relative, whole blood or half; or arising by marriage (including a de facto relationship); or by adoption; or a relative of the child according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition; or a person with whom the child resides in a family-like relationship; or a person who is recognised in the child's community as having a familial role in respect of the child.
- 4.12 **Nominated Supervisor** means a person appointed by the Approved Provider and who has given consent to be appointed to be in day to day charge of a service and must be contactable during the hours educators are providing education and care.
- 4.13 **Resident** means any person aged 18 years or over who resides, or intends to reside permanently, or temporarily resides for more than three weeks, at the educator's FDC Residence.

4.14 **Routines** means regular, everyday events in an education and care service such as meal times, sleep/rest times, groups times, nappy change/toileting, hygiene, arriving and departing. Routines are a key component of the curriculum/program. Effective routines provide children with a sense of predictability and consistency that help children to feel safe, secure, and supported.

4.15 **Staff** means employees of Camden Council FDC.

PART 2 - POLICY STATEMENT

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1 The service philosophy guides our relationships and interactions, effective communication is at the heart of what we do.

5.2 Collaborative partnerships with families are built on effective and respectful communication.

5.3 All staff and educators are expected to behave ethically and communicate with families in a professional manner reflective of the Code of Ethics.

5.4 Educators will communicate with families on a regular and consistent basis to build trust, strengthen relationships and develop a sense of community.

5.5 Educators will engage in collaborative conversations with families at pick up and drop off times, communicating not only about what their child did, but ways to support children's learning.

5.6 Educators will adopt a range of communication methods to reflect the diversity of their families and what is important to them.

5.7 Communications will be inclusive and show respect for the background, cultural identity, and strengths of each family to inform educator practices.

5.8 Listening is a vital component to effective communication and will be practiced by staff and educators.

5.9 Communications between staff, educators and families will maintain privacy and confidentiality.

5.10 Educators and staff will be supported with approaches to having difficult conversations and how to protect themselves and deal appropriately with difficult customers.

6. CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The service will consider a variety of approaches to communication with families such as:

- In person; phone calls, face to face meetings.
- Online; Zoom, Teams, through web-based software or apps such as Harmony or those used to document the educational program.
- In print; letters to families, newsletters, posters.

- Emails; notices to all families, communication to individual families.
- Text messages, social media, or Council's website.

6.2 Dealing with sensitive issues

6.2.1 Educators will be mindful of appropriate times to engage in lengthy or sensitive discussions and the impact of these on their ability to adequately supervise children. Children's health and safety will always be prioritised and discussions will be scheduled for more appropriate times when needed.

6.2.2 When communicating to raise concerns with a parent, educators will work with parents to decide on supports and solutions. Follow-up communications will always be planned to evaluate actions.

6.2.3 Educators should refer families to other professionals in circumstances where they feel the family may need more support with dealing with an issue such as a family with a child with additional needs who appear to not be coping.

6.3 Dealing with difficult conversations

6.3.1 Everyone has the right to feel safe. Staff and educators will have training and/or support in handling difficult conversations.

6.3.2 Serious incidents of abuse and/or physical harm must be reported to the Police (000) and the Nominated Supervisor.

6.3.3 When dealing with an upset or agitated customer, educators should try to stay calm and focused and protect themselves and the children.

6.3.4 Tips for dealing with difficult conversations include:

- Listen to the customer.
- Keep the focus on the problem, reserve judgment.
- Be clear about how you feel and what you want.
- Look at the issue from their perspective.
- Take a break or arrange a time to meet.
- Agree to disagree.
- Look after yourself, seek support from the co-ordination unit, or professional organisation where required.

6.4 Beneficial communication may include:

6.4.1 Communicating to better understand beliefs and values.

6.4.2 Communicating to discover a child's interests, strengths and behaviour.

6.4.3 Sharing supports outside of the service, such as referrals to relevant professionals.

- 6.4.4 Highlighting milestones and expected behaviour.
- 6.4.5 Developing shared expectations for practices.
- 6.4.6 Involving families in decision making about the service and their children's learning and wellbeing.
- 6.4.7 Inviting families to participate in events.
- 6.4.8 Collaborating to plan for quality outcomes for children, including making appropriate referrals.
- 6.4.9 Supporting families in their parenting role.
- 6.4.10 Explaining practices and changes and the impact on children's learning.
- 6.4.11 Seeking advice from families about their children.
- 6.5 Non-beneficial communication may include
 - 6.5.1 Breaching confidentiality, such as sharing pictures without consent.
 - 6.5.2 Giving advice beyond the scope of the educator's role and expertise.
 - 6.5.3 Disclosing information, such as sharing personal problems with parents.
 - 6.5.4 Advocating for religious or political beliefs.
 - 6.5.5 Seeking favours.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Approved Provider

- Ensure that obligations under the *National Quality Framework* are met.
- Ensure this policy and its related procedures are in place.
- Ensure all educators and staff are made aware of their obligation to engage in professional and ethical communications.
- Ensure the nominated supervisor and co-ordination unit have access to appropriate resources for the development, implementation, training and ongoing management of this policy and its related procedures.
- Involve families in decision making where possible.
- Notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will affect the fees and charges and/or significantly impact the service's education and care of children or the family's ability to utilise the service.

7.2 Nominated Supervisor

- Complete responsibilities as delegated by the approved provider.

- Ensure this policy and its related procedures are implemented.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and educators follow the policy and procedures.
- Provide training and induction to educators and staff that includes information on effective communication, the code of conduct or code of ethics.
- Ensure all educators and staff are made aware of their obligation to engage in professional and ethical communications.
- Support educators with a diverse range of ways to communicate with families.
- Communicate with families and provide support as appropriate to the situation.

7.3 Coordination Unit Staff

- Ensure they follow Camden FDC policy and procedures and implement and maintain all requirements under these and as directed by the nominated supervisor.
- Implement this policy and procedures.
- Monitor and ensure educators practices align with this policy and procedures.
- Engage in discussions with educators that facilitate critical reflection on communications with families.

7.4 Educators

- Implement this policy and procedures.
- Welcome families and ensure their attitude, manner and approach convey a sense of belonging to families and children.
- Find genuine ways to listen to and communicate with families.
- Communicate respectfully at all times with families.
- Ensure residents respectfully communicate with families.
- Invite families to participate in the service.
- Ensure that conversations with families are professional and ethical and conducted at a suitable time to ensure confidentiality is maintained.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and family regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background, or religion.
- Organise appropriate times to have conversations so as they do not impact adequate supervision and engagement with children.

- Find the best way to communicate with individual families and the type of information that is important to them.
- Embed communication with families about routines, the environment, curriculum, and everyday practices.
- Inform families of their child's development and progress through the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and My Time Our Place (MYTOP) learning outcomes.
- Engage in informal discussions as well as at planned meetings.
- Learn about and show respect for the background, cultural identity, and strengths of each family to inform the way you communicate.
- Regularly reflect on how trust is established and maintained with families.
- Be familiar with the Code of Ethics and service philosophy.

7.5 Families

- Engage in open and respectful communication with their child's educator.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every staff member, educator, child, and family regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background, or religion.
- Communicate positively with educators, other families, and children.
- Advise the service of areas of potential conflict, such as parenting and family court orders in accordance with relevant laws.
- Refrain from abusive language or expletives, raising your voice or insulting or engaging in violent behaviour to anyone at the residence.
- Do not disclose personal details of a child or parent to another person without consent.

8. INDUCTION AND ONGOING TRAINING

- 8.1 Induction and ongoing professional development will be implemented for all educators and FDC staff, focusing on this policy and related procedures.

9. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

- 9.1 This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this policy every three years.
- 9.2 Families, educators and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

- 9.3 In accordance with Regulation 172 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

10. SOURCES AND RESOURCES

- [ACECQA Building partnerships with families](#)
- [ACECQA Communicating with families about children's learning](#)
- [ACECQA Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)
- [Kids Matter - Building partnerships between families and early childhood staff](#)
- [Raising Children - Communicating with parents](#)

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RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE INSTRUMENTS: *Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW)*
Education and Care Services National Regulations
National Quality Standard | Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
Privacy Act 1988

RELATED POLICIES, PLANS AND PROCEDURES: Code of Conduct
Code of Ethics
Enrolment and orientation policy
Monitoring support and supervision of FDC educator's policy
Providing a child safe environment policy

RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR: Director Sport, Community and Activation

APPROVAL: General Manager through the Executive Leadership Group.

HISTORY:

Version	Approved by	Changes made	Date	EDMS Number
1	ELG	New	19/05/2022	22/220662