



Latest news

Welcome to the first edition of the Regulation and Quality Assessment Update for 2016, and my first as the Acting Executive Director.

Important changes for early childhood services commenced in 2016 including the new educator-to-child ratios for centre-based education and care services for children 36 months to preschool age and the introduction of the 'no job no play' requirements and the child safe standards. Information sessions will be delivered across the state to provide further information and a range of resources have been developed to assist services meet these requirements.

I am pleased to see that 85 per cent of Victorian education and care services have been assessed and rated as compared to 74 per cent of services nationally. In Victoria, 79 per cent of services have achieved a meeting or exceeding rating compared to 68 per cent nationally.

It is great news that another Victorian service, the Harbour Family and Children's Centre operated by Gowrie Victoria has received an excellent rating from Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). If your service has received an exceeding rating you may consider applying for an excellent rating.

Many services will be receiving their next assessment and rating visit this year. Reviewing your quality improvement plans will assist you in your services' ongoing quality improvement and to prepare for your next assessment and rating visit. Rhonda Livingstone's article in this newsletter provides valuable insights into the self-assessment and quality improvement process and also recommends useful resources.

As the regulator of early childhood services, the Department takes action when providers of early childhood services place children's safety, health and wellbeing at risk and more information about recent action is included on page 2.

In making Victoria the Education State, we are enhancing early childhood education and care services. To meet the demands of Victoria's growing population and deliver more integrated services for families, we are providing \$50 million to build and upgrade kindergartens and children's hubs. We are delivering up to \$83.7 million to support kindergarten services' improved educator-to-child ratios in 2016, which will allow for more effective and meaningful relationships with children. Two more years of funding has been secured from the Commonwealth Government for 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten per week. We are continuing our commitment to the National Quality Framework (NQF) as a driver for improving quality and outcomes for children, and will be supporting the NQF review in 2016. Further information on grants and programs to support quality education and care is provided.

I hope you find this edition useful, and would encourage you to share it with educators and staff members at your service. I look forward to working with you in 2016.

Karen Weston
Acting Executive Director
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Excellent rating – Gowrie Victoria Docklands

The Harbour Family and Children's Centre (The Harbour) operated by Gowrie Victoria was awarded the Excellent rating, the eighth service in Victoria to receive the highest rating possible. It is a long day care service located on the top floor of a multi-level building in the Docklands precinct. Despite its high-rise location the service successfully manages to provide outdoor space and to incorporate an engaging indoor/outdoor program.

ACECQA recognised The Harbour's outstanding community connections and partnerships such as its ongoing collaboration with a range of organisations including the Melbourne Museum. The service has an extensive 'community connections excursion program' which assists building meaningful ongoing links with the local community. Children of all ages from non-walkers to preschool age are involved in the excursions.



Excursions included children taking their 'Number book', a numeracy resource, to interview members of the local community including the cobbler and the staff of the café near the service on how they used numbers in their work. Other examples were visits to the post office to purchase stamps to send a card to the UK, and to the Yarra River to see Dragon Boat teams training. The Harbour acknowledged that the free tram zone also made the excursions easier as there was no additional expense.

Reflecting on the application process Gowrie Victoria commented that: 'Overall Gowrie Victoria found the Excellent Rating process to be a fabulous, collaborative process between the service and ACECQA. The guidelines to prepare the application were very clear and provided a great foundation for us to collate information required whilst not restricting the service in the amount of information and/or examples that we wanted to share.'

If your service has received an overall rating of 'Exceeding National Quality Standard' you are eligible to apply to ACECQA for the Excellent rating. Further information is available at: www.acecqa.gov.au/excellent-rating

What's new in 2016?

	Services operating under the National Quality Framework	Services operating under the <i>Children's Services Act 1996</i>
Child Safe Standards	✔	✔
No Jab, No Play immunisation requirements	<p>✔ Applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long day care services • Family day care service • Preschool/Kindergarten services <p>✘ Does not apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside school hours care services (after school care, before school care, vacation care) • School children enrolled in any service 	<p>✔ Applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard licence services • Occasional care services with a limited hours type 2 licence • Short term type 1 services <p>✘ Does not apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School holiday care services • Occasional care services with a limited hours type 1 licence • Short term type 2 services • School children enrolled in any service
Changes to educator to child ratios (1:11)	<p>✔ Applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services with children 36 months to preschool age 	<p>✘ No change to current ratios.</p>

Quality Assessment and Regulation Information Forums

Quality Assessment and Regulation Division will run information forums across the State in 2016. The forums will provide information on No Jab No Play, Child Safe Standards, and the 1:11 educator to child ratios and will give you the opportunity to discuss how these initiatives apply to your service. The forums will also provide an opportunity to discuss updating Quality Improvement Plans for your next assessment and rating visits.

Details about date and locations of the metropolitan and regional information forums are available at: www.eventbrite.com.au/o/quality-assessment-and-regulation-division-department-of-education-and-training-3795796877



New educator to child ratios

For services operating under the National Quality Framework new educator to child ratios for children 36 months to preschool age of 1 educator to 11 children (from 1 educator to 15 children) were introduced on 1 January 2016. These changes to the ratios bring Victoria into alignment with most other states and territories.

Improving educator to child ratios will allow educators to strengthen interactions and give more individual care and attention to children. Research shows that higher numbers of educators to children is associated with important social and learning outcomes, including increased literacy skills and general knowledge.

Further information about the improved educator to child ratios is available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/improvedchildratioinkindergarten.aspx

The following fact sheets are also available:

- Educator to child ratios
- Educator to child ratios for funded kindergarten programs
- Mixed ages ratios
- Educator to child ratio calculator (NQF)
- Educator to child ratio calculator - Mixed ages (NQF)

If your service cannot meet the educator to child ratios you may need to apply for a waiver. A Waiver fact sheet is also available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/nqffactsheets.aspx

Enforcement actions

Recently the Department has prosecuted the provider of a service operating without a licence, the provider of a service operating without an approval and a former family day care educator. Enforcement actions have also included suspension of a service approval, suspension and cancellation of provider approvals and prohibiting some individuals from being involved in education and care services.

In December, the Department assisted in a taskforce led by the Australian Federal Police, codenamed Operation Caulis that investigated fraudulent practices in family day care operators and educators. The Quality Assessment and Regulation Division will continue to partner with the Commonwealth and other regulatory authorities to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children in early childhood services remains a top priority.

The Department may publish details of enforcement actions taken under the National Law and the Children's Services Act. Where this occurs, it is published on the Department's website at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/enforcement.aspx

Emergency contact details

Approved providers and licensees must ensure that the most up-to-date contact details of their service(s) are available to the Department.

These include:

- the name of primary contact person
- an after-hours emergency mobile number
- an after-hours emergency email
- the operating hours.

Education and care services can view and update their contact details by logging into the National Quality Agenda IT System portal online at: www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-agenda-it-system

Children's Services Act services can update their details by emailing: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

It is important that the contact information and operating hours of the services are up to date in case the Department needs to make contact with services after hours or during school holidays, especially during the bushfire season.

'No Jab No Play' – now in effect

The 'No Jab No Play' requirements apply to children whose enrolment was confirmed after 1 January 2016 in preschools, long day care, family day care, standard licence, limited hours type 2 and short term type 1 services.

- 'No Jab No Play' applies to children whose enrolment was confirmed after 1 January 2016. It does not apply to enrolments confirmed before 1 January 2016.
- When obtaining immunisation documentation, encourage parents/carers to provide you with an Immunisation History Statement issued by the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register as proof of immunisation. This is the most convenient document for your service to use. On this document, you need only review the date of the next due immunisation. If the date of the next due immunisation is AFTER the date the child will start at your service OR within the two months prior to their start date, enrolment can proceed.
- Children who are not up-to-date with their immunisations but who had their enrolment confirmed prior to 1 January 2016 are able to attend an early childhood service.

The immunisation enrolment toolkit and frequently asked questions are available at: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children-adolescents/no-jab-no-play

Details of the Department of Health and Human Services information sessions available at: healthprotection.director@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Requirement to record immunisation details

Changes to the National Regulations and CSA Regulations has commenced on 1 March 2016 to complement the recent introduction of 'No Jab No Play' legislation.

For every child whose enrolment was confirmed on or after 1 January 2016, evidence of their immunisation status or their exemption under the 16 week grace period provisions will need to be kept on the enrolment record.

This means:

- an Immunisation Status Certificate which shows that the child is fully vaccinated for their age, is on a recognised vaccination catch up schedule or has a medical reason not to be vaccinated; or
- details of any exemption under which a child who is not fully vaccinated can enrol and attend the service during the grace period, such as a grace period eligibility assessment form provided in the Immunisation Enrolment toolkit.

Children meeting the grace period criteria	
Evacuated children	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
Children in emergency care	Children from a multiple birth of triplets or more
Children in the care of an adult who is not their parent due to exceptional circumstances	Children who hold or whose parents hold a health care card, pension concession card, Veterans Affairs Gold or White card
Children who are refugees or asylum seekers	Children known to child protection
"Conscientious objection" to vaccination is not an exemption	



VaxOnTime App

The VaxOnTime app has been developed to remind parents and carers in Victoria when immunisations for their children are due. It can send you reminders leading up to when your child is due for their vaccinations, help you to locate a health service and even make an appointment.

The app was developed by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and is available to download in a variety of formats. More information is available at: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Emergency management

In Victoria, there is a significant focus on the management of bushfire risks. However emergency situations take many forms, such as floods, intruders, bomb or shooting threats. Each type of emergency requires a different response.

Services are required to have in place an emergency and evacuation policy and procedures, including an emergency management plan setting out what must be done in an emergency. The policy and procedures must be rehearsed every three months and rehearsals are a good opportunity to review and update the plan. Services are encouraged to consult relevant authorities in the development of their emergency management plans and identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the service and the local area.

It is also important that children's enrolment details including contact details of parents or the person who is authorised to collect a child and emergency contact information is accurate and up to date.

In light of recent hoax threats received by some schools and early childhood services, it is timely for services to ensure a comprehensive communication plan is in place. This will assist in identifying relevant people to notify in the event of an emergency, including parents and families, immediately following an incident.

Services are required to notify the [Quality Assessment and Regulation Division](#) of an incident or circumstance that poses a risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service, for example a service closure due to a fire, hoax, bomb or shooting threat.

Services listed on the Bushfire-At-Risk Register – new policy information

Code Red Days

All Victorian early childhood services and schools listed on the Bushfire-At-Risk Register (BARR) are required to pre-emptively close if they are located in a Bureau of Meteorology district where a Code Red Fire Danger Rating day has been determined.

Extreme Fire Danger Rating Days

In consultation with Emergency Management Victoria the Department's Emergency Management Division has developed a new policy for government schools - [Pre-emptive school relocation or closure on forecast Extreme Fire Danger Rating days](#).

The policy outlines that in exceptional circumstances, some government schools may pre-emptively close or relocate on a forecast Extreme Fire Danger Rating day. This will affect early childhood services located on government school sites or within close proximity to a government school in a high designated bushfire risk area. In light of this new school policy education and care services that are co-located with a government school may wish to review their emergency management policies and procedures.

The decision by a school to pre-emptively close or relocate must be specifically related to a forecast Extreme Fire Danger Rating day. The decision must be made in advance (no later than 3.00 pm the day prior) and communicated and well understood by other site users such as the local early childhood services.

Where there is a forecast Extreme Fire Danger Rating day services should consider the risk to children attending their service, advice from local authorities and the actions taken by schools and ensure every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

Services that are co-located or in close proximity to government schools are encouraged to discuss this new school policy as part of their network meetings.

The Department's Emergency Management Requirements for early childhood services are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/emergencymanagementrequirements.aspx

Focus on Quality Area 7 - Leadership and service management

Quality area 7: Effective leadership contributes to sustained quality relationships and environments that facilitate children's learning and development. Well documented policies and practices that are developed and regularly evaluated in partnership with educators, co-ordinators, staff members and families contribute to the ethical management of the service. There is a focus on continuous improvement.

Effective leaders are able to set direction and establish values for the service that reflect the service's context. This creates a positive organisational culture that values openness and trust and drives continuous improvement by empowering others.

Effective leadership and governance will support the implementation of the child safe standards, providing an opportunity to lead cultural change through the review of their service's practices, policies and procedures to ensure the safety and protection of children.

Changes required to implement the child safe standards should be reflected in the service's quality improvement plan.

As your service begins to implement the child safe standards during 2016 you are encouraged to:

- review your philosophy (element 7.2.1)
- update your quality improvement plan (element 7.2.3)
- ensure staff recruitment, induction and performance management processes address the child safe standards and are documented in your staffing policy and procedures (regulation 168(2)(i))
- ensure there are clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children, processes for responding to and reporting suspected harm to children and strategies to reduce or remove risks of child abuse (section 167 and element 2.3.4)
- include a commitment to child safety and to the child safe standards in your child safe environment policy and procedures (regulation 168(2)(h))
- ensure that you are dealing with complaints policy and procedures reflect the child safe standards and includes procedures for outlining the way in which grievances and complaints will be addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner (regulation 168(2)(o) and element 7.3.4)
- ensure strategies are in place to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Resources:

- Good leadership and governance in child safe organisations - [Child safe standards resources](#)
- What does leadership look like in [early childhood settings?](#)
- Building a Winning Team [self-guided learning package](#)
- Creating Positive Workplace Relations [self-guided learning package](#)

Child Safe Standards

All early childhood services are required from 1 January 2016 to comply with new child safe standards designed to ensure that organisations that work with children take steps to create a culture of child safety and protect children from all forms of abuse.

The child safe standards have been introduced in response to the recommendations of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations, which found that more must be done to prevent and respond to child abuse. The standards apply to all organisations that provide services for children, including early childhood services.

The aim of the child safe standards is to drive continuous improvement so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. The focus of the standards for 2016 is on raising awareness and helping organisations to create and maintain child safe environments through education and training.

Creating a child safe organisation

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an early childhood service must have in place:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

In complying with the child safe standards, the early childhood service must include the following principles as part of each standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

The National Quality Framework already requires early childhood services to meet many aspects of the child safe standards. Services are encouraged to review their policies, procedures and practices including their current child safe environment and staffing policies and procedures to ensure they meet the child safe standards. Further information on the standards, including a toolkit, is available at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards-resources

A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation is available at: <http://ccyp.vic.gov.au/downloads/creating-a-childsafe-organisation-guide.pdf>



Supporting quality in early childhood

The Victorian Government acknowledges that early childhood development is at the heart of its vision for the Education State. The government is committed to boosting educational quality by upskilling the current early childhood workforce and providing new professional learning programs designated to ensure support and inclusion of all Victorian children and families.

The Department of Education and Training will offer scholarship programs and professional learning in 2016 to assist early childhood professionals to upgrade qualifications and to enhance their practice to better support children and families.

Effective Mentoring Program

The Effective Mentoring Program is offered free to qualified and experienced early childhood teachers to help them build the skills to work with recent graduates (beginning teachers). The program will assist mentors to support a beginning teacher's entry into the profession and help them prepare evidence to support their application for full teacher registration. Further information and registration is available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/mentoring.aspx

**It is expected that trained mentors will be available to mentor beginning teachers from 2016, and services and clusters will make every effort to ensure beginning teachers have a mentor.

Stress and Trauma in Young Children

The Stress and Trauma in Young Children program will be provided for up to 900 early childhood education and care professionals including teachers, educators, supported playgroup leaders, family day care providers, cluster managers and educational leaders. The program will equip participants with a framework and tools to identify and address the needs of children and families experiencing vulnerability and will be available for registration from March 2016. Registration for the program will cost \$55. Soon to be advertised on the DET website.

Scholarships and Incentives to upgrade a qualification

A scholarship round is currently open for applicants wanting to complete a Diploma qualification or an early childhood teaching degree. Early childhood professionals from centre-based services are eligible to apply for the scholarships even if they have already commenced a program.

Early Childhood Scholarships for Aboriginal People are available at any time.

Eligibility criteria and the application process details for both scholarship programs are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/careers/Pages/fund.aspx



Update from Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)

Review and update of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) 2016

The rewrite of the VEYLDF based on state-wide consultations in 2015 is currently underway. A report on the consultation findings is informing the rewrite of the VEYLDF. Further information is available at: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au

Becoming a Writer – A Digital Story

The VCAA, in partnership with Dr Noella Mackenzie (Charles Sturt University), has developed this resource which focuses on early writing. It is intended for early childhood professionals and families with young children.

Drawing teaches children a lot of the skills they will need when they begin to write. It is a powerful way of exploring ideas as well as being a substantive mental activity, a socially meaningful activity, and a constructive process of thinking in action that allows access to real and imaginary worlds.

The digital story is in DVD format, narrated by Dr Mackenzie with examples of children's drawing and early development of writing skills. It includes an information brochure to support families as strong partners in their children's education.

Understanding and Supporting Young Writers: Research Report

Drawings act as an anchor for children's emergent writing, helping them remember ideas as they learn the rules of conventional writing (Mackenzie, 2011). Fifteen early childhood professionals and teachers from the Marysville Cluster and the Darebin Early Years Network participated in an inquiry-based professional learning project from April to July 2015. This project sought to address four research questions:

- What happens when early childhood educators work with teachers in the early years of school in order to support early writers?
- What would a shared approach to the support of young writers look like (across early childhood and school settings)?
- What professional learning for teachers comes from this approach?
- What difference does this approach make for children, their families and the early childhood professionals involved?

This report by Dr Noella Mackenzie (Charles Sturt University) provides details of the findings of the research project. These resources are available on the VCAA website at: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/index.aspx

Resources in development:

Wellbeing Practice Guide

The Wellbeing Practice Guide is designed to support wellbeing assessment practice for all early childhood professionals working with families and children from birth to eight years. It includes a specific emphasis on wellbeing in the birth to three period, and wellbeing in terms of social, emotional and spiritual aspects. There will be a focus on wellbeing as holistic and including attachment, involvement and engagement in learning.

Professional Inquiry in the Early Years

This resource focuses on professional inquiry to support multidisciplinary practitioners in the implementation of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

The objectives of this resource are:

- to describe professional inquiry as a learning strategy for effective, collaborative and reflective practice
- to highlight the process of inquiry-based learning as a way of improving and strengthening practice
- to create a culture of professional inquiry within early childhood settings and services.

To receive information on review and update of the VEYLDF, release of new VCAA and DET publications, resources and professional learning, subscribe to the Early Year Alert at: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/subscribe.aspx

All qualified early childhood teachers who are employed or engaged as an early childhood teacher in a Victorian education and care service or a Victorian children's service need to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

Provisional to (full) registration

Early childhood teachers who are new to the profession are first registered as provisionally registered early childhood teachers. This provides them with a period of two years to meet the Proficient Teacher level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. When the standards are met, the VIT formally recognises this through a change of status to (full) early childhood teacher registration.

To apply for early childhood teacher registration, provisionally registered early childhood teachers must have:

- completed at least 80 days of teaching, and
- demonstrated to a workplace panel they have met the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) at the Proficient Teacher level through an evidence-based process undertaken in the setting where they teach.

The panel then completes a recommendation report for VIT that comprises a requirement of the application for early childhood teacher registration.

The VIT is committed to supporting the registration of new teachers to the profession. Information seminars are held across Victoria to help all provisionally registered teachers understand their professional obligations and the process to meet the standards. This is a great opportunity for newly registered early childhood teachers to meet VIT staff who can assist them and to share their teaching experiences with other provisionally registered teachers. To register for the information seminar visit: www.vit.vic.edu.au/registered-teacher/moving-to-full-registration/inquiry-approach/prt-seminars-2016

In the majority of circumstances, provisionally registered early childhood teachers will be mentored by experienced registered early childhood teachers who have undertaken VIT mentor training. Information about mentor training for registered early childhood teachers is available at: www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/for-teacher/how-to-train-as-a-teacher-mentor

If you are unable to find the information you need about moving to (full) registration on the Institute website, please call the Institute on 1300 977 263.



Update from Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership High quality learning opportunities for early childhood professionals now open

The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership is offering fully subsidised professional development courses to the early childhood sector in the first half of 2016. Applications are now open for all four early childhood courses.

While the courses each contain different focus areas and outcome goals, they share an emphasis on leadership and content that is grounded in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Bastow courses have been rigorously evaluated and streamlined to offer participants the opportunity to not only develop their own professional skill set but also to actively implement positive change in their service/organisation.

Leading Learning in Early Childhood Settings: This course provides you with the tools and knowledge to develop, implement and evaluate educational programs for children.

This course is open to the nominated Educational Leader of a service/organisation. Other early childhood educators are also welcome to apply. Applications can be made at: www.bastow.vic.edu.au/courses/leading-learning-in-early-childhood-settings

Leading People in Early Childhood Settings: This course will enhance your ability to act effectively and influence change in your setting, with a focus on change management and maintaining healthy and productive workplace relationships.

This course is open to all early childhood professionals, including early childhood intervention professionals and maternal health staff.

Find out more from a participant's point of view by watching Petrina Boles, an Early Childhood teacher, talk about [her experience](#).

Applications can be made at: www.bastow.vic.edu.au/courses/leading-people-in-early-childhood-settings

Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities: This course will develop your knowledge, understanding and skills to establish and strengthen positive partnerships with families and communities. There is a specific focus on working with families and children who are experiencing vulnerability.

This course is open to all early childhood professionals, including early childhood intervention professionals and maternal health staff. Applications can be made at: www.bastow.vic.edu.au/courses/collaborative-partnerships-with-families-and-communities

Leading Continuity of Early Learning: This course seeks to forge strong links between the early learning sector and the school system by acknowledging that a child's educational outcomes benefit from a smooth and meaningful transition from early childhood settings to the school environment.

This course is open to schools and early childhood. Priority will be given to teams containing both early childhood and school members. Find out more from a participant's point of view by reading the [Impact Case Study](#) on Justine Mackey (Principal, Canterbury Primary School) and Susie Rosback (Director, St Pauls Kindergarten).

Applications can be made at: www.bastow.vic.edu.au/courses/leading-continuity-of-early-learning



Annual review and self-assessment

The start of the year is a great time to set the scene for quality improvement. It creates a climate of possibilities and opportunities for educators, children and families who attend your service.

The *Guide to the National Quality Standard* identifies "Effective evaluation and self-review enables a service to continuously improve their policies, procedures and practices. This approach enables the nominated supervisor, educators and coordinators to improve their practice, which contributes directly to improved learning outcomes for children." (p 174). Let's explore ideas for supporting services to engage in the quality improvement and self-assessment process (Standard 7.2).

Update your service philosophy

An essential part of a service's self-assessment is to focus on the overarching philosophy that underpins and informs outcomes. The key here is setting a statement of philosophy that represents the core values of the service and guides service delivery. If a service's philosophy was developed by a group of people involved at an earlier time, the core values may change with new children, families and educators joining. In collaboration with your current stakeholders, reflect on the following questions:

- Does our current philosophy still reflect our core values?
- How have our service's values changed since the original philosophy was written?

Discussing these questions at a team meeting early in the year encourages reflection and focuses educators on the process of quality improvement for the year ahead. To encourage this, take an in-depth look at how the philosophy informs your work with children and families, discuss possible changes, enable educators to take ownership of the process and be more engaged in setting and meeting quality improvement goals.

Review your Quality Improvement Plan

The evaluation and self-review of your service's quality improvement plan (QIP) represents high-level self-assessment against the National Quality Standard (NQS). It provides a starting point for determining how self-assessment informs service practice and QIP updates. Legislation requires that your QIP is updated annually, is available at the service and is submitted to the regulatory authority on request (see regulation 55-56 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*).

Make sure you're open, honest and critically reflective when undertaking the self-assessment process. The reflective questions for each of the Quality Areas in the Guide to the National Quality Standard are a great starting point for updating your QIP and are useful discussion prompts to encourage self-assessment during team and parent meetings.

Self-assessment enables you to explore what the service is doing well and where improvements can be made. The self-assessment process is made up of evidence gathering about the service's practices against the NQS and reflection to identify areas for improvement. Decision making is then linked to actions identified in the QIP.

The most effective improvements are initiated from within the service, so the engagement of all stakeholders strengthens the process. Self-assessment drives the development of new goals to sustain the cycle of quality improvement and should consider feedback from educators, children, families, and the community.

Your QIP should be a dynamic, living document that evolves as goals are achieved and new priorities are identified. The service's key priorities should be identified and the strategies and goals set should be achievable. Consider identifying short, medium and longer-term priorities.

Celebrate successes and keep momentum going

The purpose of the QIP is to guide quality improvements within the service, as well as identifying and acknowledging successes. If your service is doing particularly well in one quality area you may choose to include statements about how this will be maintained. Taking the time to celebrate your successes and including them in your QIP can be an effective strategy to motivate educators. When you have updated your QIP, it is important to keep the momentum going by reviewing progress regularly. A good way to achieve this is to add the QIP to your regular team meeting agenda.

Quality improvement is a journey and wherever you are on this journey you can use the NQS compass to promote quality outcomes for children and their families at your service.

Resources

The [Guide to Developing a Quality Improvement Plan](#), on the ACECQA website, is a useful resource to assist in the planning and documenting stages.

The Early Childhood Australia Talking about Practice e-Learning Videos have been designed for educators to use when discussing particular practices. In [The quality improvement process video](#), Luke Touhill visits two services to talk about their approaches to quality improvement, and how these have developed and changed since they first completed a QIP in early 2012.

Another video in this series looks at [Self-assessment, reflective practice and quality improvement processes](#). The supporting [PDF](#) might also be useful.

The ACECQA Newsletter [Issue 12, 2015](#) includes an article about the continuous improvement journey. Consider the reflective questions in this article to see if they're helpful as you undertake your self-assessment and quality improvement process.

The [National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating Instrument](#) is available to download.

Resources

New or updated resources are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/nqfactsheets.aspx

- Early childhood services - centre-based services - updated
- Family day care services - staffing arrangements - new
- Waivers for outdoor space for centre-based services - updated
- Criminal history requirements - family day care - updated
- Excursions and regular outings - updated
- Serious incidents and complaints - updated

Fact sheets for services operating under the *Children's Services Act 1996* are available at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/vcsresources.aspx

Keeping in touch

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