



Early Childhood Induction Toolkit

Factsheet 17

Inductee

Forming Effective Family Relationships

What is this for?

This factsheet is part of a suite of 18 resources to support the induction of new team members when they join a new ECEC service. You can learn more about this in the Course Introduction of the accompanying eLearning module.

Who is this for?

This factsheet is for the new member of staff undergoing induction.

How do I use it?

Use this factsheet to support you with implementing strategies for building positive relationships with families.

Use this together with these resources:

- Importance of Induction Factsheet
- Forming Effective Peer Relationships Factsheet

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The relationship with the family is important. So having that time and dedicating that first month to establishing all those relationships, I think really sets you up for success in your role.”

Linnea, Parkdale Family and Children's Centre

Collaborative partnerships with families are crucial for creating a supportive learning environment for children. This is clearly identified in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and in the National Quality Framework through 'Quality Area 6: Partnerships with Families and Communities' (QA6).

An Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) document on QA6 states that 'families come from a wide range of backgrounds and a diversity of structures. For example, families could classify themselves as blended, extended, LGBTI and/or single parent families. When a child is enrolled, it is not just about the child. In fact, you are embarking on a journey with the whole family'.

For newly qualified teachers and educators, forming effective family relationships that lead to collaboration can be a significant learning curve. By prioritising open communication, mutual respect, and collaboration, new team members can build effective partnerships with families that support children's learning and well-being.

Here are some tips to help you with developing and maintaining these relationships

Introductions:

When possible, make time to introduce yourself to each family. Ensure you say hello, initiate an introductory conversation during drop-offs and pick-ups and offer further communication opportunities. Be open and friendly and use your interpersonal skills to make an initial connection.

Two-way communication:

Where possible, open lines of communication with families and encourage two-way conversations. Your service may already have established communication procedures and structures so ensure you familiarise yourself with these. These communication structures may include face-to-face meetings, email, phone calls, newsletters, communication books or learning journals. If relevant for your role, encourage families to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Get to know each family:

Where possible, take the time to learn about the backgrounds, cultures, and interests of each child's family. Understanding their unique circumstances and perspectives can help you better support their child's learning and development.

Include interests in the program:

Once you know families better, include elements of their identity and interests into the program. You can include cultural celebrations, family photos, music, materials from the children's home, and activities that connect to individual families. This helps children and families feel valued, respected and have a sense of belonging which is key in positive relationships. Ensure all children are offered the same opportunities for their interests and culture to be included.

Welcome families:

Invite families to visit the program, attend service events, and participate in family meetings. Making families feel welcome and involved in the service's community to help foster a sense of belonging and partnership.

Show empathy and flexibility:

Approach interactions with families with empathy, respect, and flexibility. Recognise that each family has its unique strengths, challenges, and priorities. Listen actively, validate their concerns, and work together to find solutions.

Share positive feedback:

Celebrate children's learning and progress with their families. Share your positive observations on children's learning, interactions, social-emotional development, and growth. Sharing positive feedback helps reinforce the partnership between home and the service.

Cultural awareness:

Develop your own awareness of the cultural and identity backgrounds of your families. Engage in training, read articles, and do your own research. Where appropriate, ask families for feedback and guidance to ensure your practice is culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Involve families in decision-making:

Seek input from families on important decisions that affect their child's learning, such as setting goals, or implementing behavior support strategies. Collaborative decision-making empowers families and promotes a sense of ownership in their child's education.

Be responsive and accessible:

Make yourself available to families for questions, concerns, or meetings outside of regular service hours if needed. Respond to emails and phone calls in a timely manner (as expected at your service) and be proactive in addressing any issues that arise.

Respect confidentiality:

Maintain confidentiality when discussing a child with their family by complying with your services' relevant policy or procedure. Ensure that sensitive information is shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know and that a family's privacy rights are protected.

Seek feedback and reflection:

Continuously seek feedback from families on how you can support their child's learning and well-being. Reflect on your interactions and communication with families and be open to adjusting as needed to strengthen your relationships.

Persist:

Partnerships between teachers/educators and families have not always been the norm and may not be an expectation of families. This requires team members to persist in establishing and strengthening relationships.

Seek support:

Not all relationships are easy to establish or maintain. Seek support from your leadership and engage in reflective practice discussions to identify what is working well and what you need help with. Ask for relevant training, information, mentoring or coaching if you are requiring support to develop and maintain positive relationships with certain families.