

Family Involvement Policy



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Warning - Ensure you are using the latest version of this policy.			
DCC Network/All Organisation Information/DCC Policies/Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities			

1. Policy Statement

River Region Early Education has a commitment to developing and maintaining respectful relationships with families that honour their expertise, culture, values and beliefs, and supports them in their parenting roles, in their involvement with services, and in decision-making about their child’s learning and wellbeing. This commitment aligns with the RREE Philosophy and the core belief that it “takes a village to raise a child.”

Feedback from River Region Early Education families says that they feel welcomed when they know the names of staff and are proactively and warmly greeted and encouraged to talk, that electronic communication needs to be purposeful, clear and not too frequent, and that notifications need to give sufficient time for response and take into account limited access while working. Families say they greatly value opportunities to be involved in special days, celebrations and events.

2. Rationale

Education and Care Services National Regulations require approved providers to ensure that parents of children attending early childhood services have access to the service unless this poses a risk to the child or contravenes law or a court order. The RREE Philosophy recognises families as the foundation of children’s learning and the NSW Child Safe Standards emphasise that a child safe organisation talks to, consults with, and invites the participation of families to promote the rights of children. This policy gives guidance on parent access to services and when this might be refused, how families are involved in services, decision-making and governance, and how information is shared with families.

The following policies relate to regulatory requirements applicable to collaboration with families:

- *NQS2.50 Delivery and Collection of Children Policy* provides information about access for parents when collecting children,
- *NQS1.10 Educational Program and Practice Policy* gives information about requirements to give information about educational programs to parents,
- *NQS6.40 Enrolment and Orientation Policy* gives information about requirements for parents to provide enrolment information,
- *NQS7.56 Governance and Organisation Management Policy* gives information about requirements for information to be provided or displayed to parents, and
- *NQS3.20 Physical Environment Policy* gives information about requirements for administration areas to have adequate space for consulting with parents.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers, including students and trainees.

4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Board as approved provider to:

- ensure that a parent of a child being educated and cared for may enter the service premises at any time that the child is in attendance unless entry would pose a risk to the safety of children and staff, conflict with any duty under Law, or may contravene a court order.

It is the responsibility of the General Manager to:

- Carry out or delegate the responsibilities of the Board as listed above,
- Ensure that systems are in place and maintained to ensure safe parental access to services and employees are supported to understand how and why access might be refused,
- Ensure that systems are in place to allow families to contribute to service decisions and be involved in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing,
- Ensure that systems are in place to share information with families that supports them in their parenting role, and
- Support nominated supervisors to make available current information about services, relevant community services, and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing,

It is the responsibility of the Quality Coordinator to:

- Conduct a survey at least annually that encourages parents to give feedback on quality of education and care and their satisfaction with services and provide a survey report to the General Manager and Board, and
- Provide opportunities for parents to contribute to the review of policy and procedure that relate to children's health and safety and conditions of enrolment and attendance.

It is the responsibility of Nominated Supervisors to:

- Support educators to understand access for parents to services and how and why that access might be refused,
- Ensure that information about court orders affecting access is made available to educators and is kept up to date,
- Ensure that information from child and family profiles is communicated to educators and incorporated into educational and program planning,
- Encourage families to contribute to service decisions and be involved in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing, and
- Support educators to share information with families that supports them in their parenting role.

It is the responsibility of educators to:

- Approach and welcome families when they access services and encourage them to spend time in the service if needed and share information about their child,
- Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children, including in relation to parents accessing service venues,
- Include families in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing, and
- Share information with families that supports them in their parenting role, including current information about services, relevant community services, and resources.

5. Definitions

Parent – Under Education and Care Services National Law, a person who is the birth or adoptive parent of the child, a legal guardian of the child, or a person who has parental responsibility for the child under a decision or order of a court.

Family member - Under Education and Care Services National Law, a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or cousin of the child, whether by birth, by marriage (including a de facto relationship), or by adoption or otherwise. This includes a relative of the child according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition, 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.

6. Guidelines

a) Access for parents

Parents can access the education and care service where their child is enrolled and in attendance at any time and services will ensure this can be done whilst maintaining the safety and wellbeing of children at the service.

The safety and wellbeing of children is a priority and any employee can:

- Refuse to allow a parent to access the premises or ask them to leave if they deem there is a risk to their child, other children, or employees and volunteers, for example if the parent has a contagious disease, is affected by drugs or alcohol, or is displaying aggression,
- Ask to see proof of identity of a parent if the person is not known to them,
- Refuse to allow a parent to access the premises if entry would conflict with a law, for example if the person is not compliant with a Public Health Order during a pandemic,
- Refuse to allow a parent to access the premises if there is a court order in place that prohibits or limits access to their child, and
- Call the police if there is a concern for the safety of children and employees.

b) Family involvement in services and decision-making

RREE encourages families to be involved in the service their child attends by providing a welcoming environment and opportunities for family members to spend time at the service. This includes:

- Offering the opportunity for an orientation to the service before their child first attends in line with *NQS6.40 Enrolment and Orientation Policy*,
- Encouraging parents to help their child settle or to volunteer for activities such as reading to children, sharing a skill they have, or attending an excursion or incursion,
- Approaching and welcoming families at delivery or collection and encouraging them to share information about their child,
- Helping families know the names of educators who will be interacting with their child, through introductions, displays of photographs and names and wearing of name badges,
- Hosting special days and celebrations where family and community members are invited into the service for activities and to spend time with their child, and
- Supporting parents to spend time in the service to celebrate a special occasion for their child, such as a birthday.

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Families are supported to provide information about their child and their family's culture, values, beliefs and routines that is then used to ensure their child feels included, that there is consistency between routines and expectations at home and at the service, and to better meet the individual learning and wellbeing needs of their child. This includes:

- Gathering information on enrolment about the family's cultural and religious background and expectations, the child's routines at home, the family's expectations for their child's experience in education and care, and information to help their child settle in and feel welcomed and supported,
- The completion of a *Family Profile* during orientation that identifies the child's strengths and interests, the special people in their life, any physical, emotional, behavioural or learning challenges or goals or inclusion and support needs, and any cultural traditions or routines at home that will help support their learning and wellbeing,
- An enrolment update twice a year that provides an opportunity to learn of changes in the family or the child's individual needs or circumstances,
- Communication with parents through a dedicated online portal (Story Park) where they can view and comment on their child's learning plan and day-to-day activities and share stories, and
- Conversations with educators when delivering or collecting their child.

Families are encouraged to give feedback on the quality of education and care their child is receiving and their interactions with the service and organisation at any time.

- Parents are encouraged to speak directly to educators and nominated supervisors if they have a concern or feedback,
- Family members can give feedback or make a complaint about services at any time and contact details for complaints are displayed in the entryway of each service - see *NQS7.52 Child Safe Complaint Policy* for more information about complaint handling, and
- Parents are invited to complete a satisfaction survey at least annually, which allows them to give anonymous feedback on the quality of education and care and their satisfaction with services.

c) Family involvement in governance

RREE encourages parents to contribute to the governance of the organisation to ensure that the expertise, experiences and values of families are reflected in the organisation's strategic direction and core governance documents. Parents and interested family members can be involved by:

- Becoming a member of the organisation,
- Nominating to be a Board director,
- Participating in working groups or committees,
- Providing feedback on policies and procedures that relate to children's health and safety and conditions of enrolment and attendance, and/or
- Participating in strategic or community planning.

Invitations and opportunities for involvement will be shared with families via newsletter, direct or group email, and via the online communication portal (Story Park).

d) Communication and information sharing

RREE shares information with families about their child, activities at services, external activities and other community services that support parenting.

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Services will take into account the amount of electronic communication families may be receiving in any given day and ensure:

- It is clear which service the communication relates to,
- Notifications that need to be read or responded to are sent via a platform that families can access within the required timeframe, and
- The volume of communications is managed and minimised where non-essential.

Phone and SMS will be used for:

- Urgent notifications and emergency contacts.

Email will be used for:

- Information specific to a child’s enrolment,
- Accounts or invoicing, and
- RREE newsletter.

Parents will be given access to the online communication portal (Story Park) that is used for:

- Each child’s learning plan and information about their daily experiences,
- Important notices and information, such as emergency drills, infectious diseases, changes to services, or updates with security,
- Daily events and activities, such as excursions and incursions, new or changes to staffing, what’s on at services, and requests for help,
- Expressions of interest for enrolments and holiday programs,
- Reminders, such as ‘bring a hat’, lost property, or forms to be returned,
- Special events, such as Book Week or Special Person’s Day,
- Information about transitions to school,
- Community events, or information about community services, training or workshops to help support parenting, and
- Feedback on policies, procedures, and activities.

The foyers and entryways of services have a selection of information relevant to parents, including:

- Important notices and prescribed information, such as anaphylaxis and allergy alerts, infectious disease alerts, emergency management information, and provider and service information, including the responsible person on duty and who receives complaints,
- Access to policies and procedures and risk assessments on request,
- UV and Fire Danger Ratings during certain months of the year,
- Upcoming events and activities,
- Posters and brochures about community services, activities and events, and
- Information relevant to parenting, such as healthy eating, safe sleep, child health and safety, and child protection.

7. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards

Legislation	
171	Offence relating to direction to exclude inappropriate persons from education and care service premises

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172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
Education and Care Services National Regulation	
157	Access for parents
National Quality Standards	
6.1.1	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2.1	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.2.2	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
6.2.3	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.
Child Safe Standards	
3	Families and communities are informed and involved
4	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes	
1	Children have a strong sense of identity
2	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Early Years Learning Framework Principles	
	Secure, respectful, and reciprocal relationships
	Partnerships
	Respect for diversity
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
	Equity, inclusion, and high expectations
	Collaborative leadership and teamwork
Early Years Learning Framework Practices	
	Holistic, integrated, and interconnected approaches
	Cultural responsiveness
	Continuity of learning and transitions

8. Related Documents

Doc #	Attachments
NQS6.42A	Family Communication Matrix

Doc #	Intersections with other key documents
NQS6.40	Enrolment and Orientation Policy
NQS6.40B	Enrolment Form
NQS6.40C	Enrolment Update Form
NQS1.10 A1	Family Profile
NQS7.52	Child Safe Complaint Policy
NQS2.50	Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
NQS1.10	Educational Program and Practice Policy
NQS7.56	Governance and Organisation Management Policy
NQS3.20	Physical Environment Policy

9. Document Control

Doc #	Doc Title	Version	Approved	Next Review
NQS6.42	Family Involvement Policy	1	September 2018	September 2020
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