

# Connecting with your Community

Families are the biggest influence in a child's life. It is important that Educators work in partnership with families and the children's immediate community to share insights and perspectives about each child.

Quality Area 6 of The Guide to the National Quality Standard, states 'Effective collaboration with families regarding the education and care their children receive occurs when constructive strategies for ongoing two-way communication are established by the service.'

When Educators develop and maintain respectful and supportive relationships with families, and share decision making about the program, they are assisting the children to achieve Early Years Learning Framework:

## PRINCIPLES

## 2. Partnerships

Strong relationships, as well as open and honest communication assists families and child to feel a sense of belonging to their day care community, giving them the confidence to expand their communities.



Use surveys to encourage families to have input. You could do a questionnaire or look at doing something a bit more outside the box. This photo, accessed from Pinterest, allows the families to have input without taking up a lot of their time.

*Get to know each individual family and learn their preferred style of communication. While some might prefer email or text, others need hard copies or communication diaries. Smart phone apps work really well with notifications, but some parents might need face-to-face or over the phone communication. You could set aside a time to do this outside of normal drop off and pick up times to avoid the rush.*

*You could also consider holding an open day or inviting families to visit day care on their day off to get to know the families better.*

*Keep a notebook for each family, recording conversations, dates that information is sent to them, and their responses. This can simply be used for your own records or be added to your observations.*

*Be honest and open in your communication with families from the very start of your care journey. Make your expectations and what you are willing to offer clear, and in writing where possible. Always refer to the original HAFDC contract, and policies and procedures.*

### Tips for difficult conversations:

- Remain calm
- Practice commencing the conversation
- Ask if you can have a moment of their time or if you can make a time to chat
- Ask parent's advice on how they deal with the situation at home
  - Use a 'compliment sandwich'
  - Have documentation as back up
- Demonstrate that you are listening by repeating their concerns
  - Actively sympathize and try to be objective
- Be clear and honest with your message

Have resources, links, flyers and business cards ready to give to families to help connect them to community support services.



*Use displays to communicate with parents. Add photos of the children to draw their attention. Post about your displays on your Facebook page and invite parents to look at them when they pick up. Word up the children to show the parents when they arrive. This is great reflection for everyone and opens the door for input.*

*Use word processor templates to create newsletters. Add clip art or photos to draw attention to each point. Keep the points short and concise.*

*Newsletters are a great way to remind families of the rules and policies of your service without singling out individual families.*

Learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with families.

Early Years Learning Framework