

Engaging with families



The National Quality Standard (NQS), along with the assessment and rating process, sets a new, higher standard for Australian early childhood education and care services.

The NQS was introduced to give children the best start in life and learning. Positive learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when educators work in partnership with families and communities¹.

¹ Early Years Learning Framework, page 12; Framework for School Age Care, page 11.

Benefits of working with families

The importance of fostering collaborative partnerships with families is reflected in one of the seven quality areas of the NQS. Engaging with families will help your service meet this quality area and guide your quality improvement planning process.

By involving families in the process and ensuring that they are aware of the new standards, you will help them to better understand your service's rating.



Forming partnerships with families

Each service and community is different, so the ways in which you engage with families will differ.

When looking at how your service develops partnerships with families, consider:

- Does your service communicate with families in their preferred way?
- Does your service identify and promote opportunities for parent contribution, drawing on their skills and interests?
- Is shared decision making encouraged?
- How can you improve families' understanding of how your service operates?
- How can families and educators learn more about each other?
- How can you promote what your service is doing to meet the NQS?
- Can each staff member confidently respond to questions about the National Quality Framework and the assessment and rating process?
- Does your service refer families in need to community and support agencies?

Engaging with families

Engaging families regularly is vital to building genuine collaborative partnerships but there are occasions when additional support is needed.

Child's first days

When settling children into their new learning environment, it is important to remember families also need support. Help them to learn more about the service and how they can be involved in their child's education and care.

Quality Improvement Plan reviews

Parents will have ideas and suggestions on what steps can be taken to improve the quality of the service. Check your policies and procedures to ensure they promote a collaborative approach with families and engage them in this process.

Assessment and rating visit

When families are involved in the preparation for the assessment and rating visit they are better able to understand the outcome and what this means for your service. Give families advance notice of your visit and explain what the process will be on the day. On the day of the visit, introduce the authorised officer to families as you would with other visitors to the service.

Release of ratings

Families should be aware of your service's rating in each of the seven quality areas as well as the overall rating.

Tell them about your service's strengths and how the team is working to meet the higher standards, even if your service has not yet been assessed.

You can download departmental resources to help explain what is involved in the assessment and rating process and what the quality ratings mean.

More information for families

Visit www.dete.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood and download:

- Brochure for Families – Rating quality in early childhood education and care
- Fact Sheet for Services – Understanding quality ratings

For service ratings visit the MyChild website at www.mychild.gov.au or the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website at www.acecqa.gov.au

For regular updates, families can subscribe to ACECQA's *Family News* e-newsletter at <http://acecqa.gov.au/families>

Or phone the ACECQA hotline on 1300 4 ACECQA (1300 422 327) during business hours*.

*Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates.



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