

Relationships and Partnerships with Families

- Communication Plan

Policy Statement

Meerilinga welcomes and facilitates family participation and open communication in the children's programs by encouraging families to engage with their children's education and care.

Family participation in our service conveys a positive impression to children and is an important aspect of making the service a true part of the community. Creating an environment that is welcoming and inclusive supports a sense of belonging for children, families and educators.

We believe in offering an open-door policy in which families are welcome to visit the service when it is convenient for them.

Policy Purpose

Meerilinga recognises that a successful partnership with families strengthens the children's program. We believe families are children's first teachers and therefore we embrace parents, guardians and family involvement, their knowledge and resources within our children's programs.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Staff and Families.

Exclusions

Policy Review

At least annually or from time to time the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operation and customer service.

Implementation

We understand the primary influence that families have in their children's lives, and that effective relationships between educators and families are fundamental to achieve quality outcomes for children. Positive relationships with families' turns into a partnership as together we share a common goal and responsibility for reaching goals for children.

We believe that the whole community benefits when we engage in an authentic way to promote the value of early childhood education. Community partnerships that focus on active communication, consultation and collaboration contribute to children's learning and wellbeing.

Meerilinga aims to partner with parents, offering child educational services, share information with families about existing community resources and programs that might help them and provide information for families on health, development and other resources to support them in their own parenting and empowering them to help others.

We aspire to involve families in giving children various learning opportunities and experiences, in a variety of environments and in partnership with them. Providing opportunities to create positive outcomes for all, they can use their expertise as parents to make meaningful contributions.

Parent involvement brings positive outcomes such as:

- Builds knowledge and skills
- Improves the lives of other families
- Opens doors for employment opportunities
- Creates a sense of belonging
- Offers a sense of accomplishment
- Provides parents opportunities to effect meaningful change
- Provides parents opportunities to network with other families and providers
- Increases confidence in parenting
- Models community involvement for children
- Creates active recipients of care and services
- Makes providers accountable to families
- Increases sense of personal power; and offers leadership role models for other families.

* Excerpted from *Making Room at the Table*, Family Resource Coalition of America, 1998.

Information about Meerilinga's educational programs and children's individual participation in the program is shared with and available to families at all times in accordance with regulation 75 and 76.

Families can participate in our children's programs by:

- Working in partnership with Educators about their child's progress towards the learning outcomes, their strengths, abilities and knowledge. Share in the decision making about their child's further learning, development and wellbeing.
- Assisting with activities and projects at the service.
- Sharing their skills with the children, this may include playing an instrument, telling a story, sharing cultural traditions, cooking experiences, workshops etc.
- Joining the parent committee and or share feedback, ideas and thoughts about the service.
- Donating recyclable material and other resources that can be used within our early learning programs.
- Attending service events and celebrations that are organised throughout the year at the centre and in the community.

Information regarding family relationships or issues that may arise in their personal lives will be handled confidentially. Every effort will be made to treat both parents/guardians equally. Parental responsibility remains with both parents/guardians jointly and individually except where it is altered by an order of the Family Court of Western Australia.

Refer to the Delivery and Collection Policy and Processes

Communication with Families

Meerilinga as an organisation aims to improve the quality of life for all families and children through their early learning programs, parenting support programs, facilitated playgroups and its registered training organisation. Information about the organisation is communicated to families and interested people through the Meerilinga website and social media.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with Meerilinga's Branding, Image and Reputation - Section 4 - Marketing and Advertising Policy.

The organisation encourages open and honest communication that can be conveyed through various methods as outlined in the Communication Plan process section of this policy.

Families are informed about what is occurring within the early learning programs through various methods as outlined in the Communication Plan process section of this policy.

Where required, Meerilinga will access support agencies for assistance and resources to communicate with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or have a hearing impairment.

The Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- Families are provided with information about the philosophy, policies and practices of the service at the time of enrolment and through the orientation process.
- They are aware of the custodial and access arrangements for all families attending the service and this information is conveyed to Educators. A copy of all legal documentation such as court orders and parenting plans are kept at the service.
- Educators provide information to families regarding the content and operation of the educational program, in relation to each child's learning and that a copy of the educational program is available for inspection at the service.
- Families are provided with information on the various communication methods utilised within the service as outlined in the Communication Plan process section of this policy.
- Families are regularly provided with comprehensive, current and accessible information about the service, relevant community services, and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
- A Parent Committee is established to encourage family involvement in the service.
- Families are encouraged to give feedback regarding the enrolment and orientation process and when reviewing policies and procedures to improve processes and practice.

- Families are notified of an incident, injury, trauma or illness that occurs for their child while they are in attendance at the service.
- The early childhood environment has administrative spaces that are adequate for the purpose of consulting with families and for conducting private conversations.
- Families are given at least 14 days notice of changes to policies or procedures and fees charged in accordance with Regulation 172.
- Families are invited to enter the service at any time unless such entry would pose a risk to the safety of children/educators or breach court orders regarding access to children.
- Families have access to a copy of the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Families are informed about the processes for providing feedback and making complaints.

The Educators will ensure:

- Families are consulted about how they would like to receive information about the service and their child's progress.
- They promote continuous open and honest two-way communication with families, assisting them to feel connected with their children's experiences, developing trust and collaboration.
- They are available for families on arrival and collection times to pass on important messages and information about the child's wellbeing and participation in the children's program.
- Families are encouraged to be involved in the children's programs, providing feedback, visiting the service, bringing items from the home environment and giving feedback on children's emerging interests and needs.
- They recognise that families, and parents in particular, are often busy with many competing priorities, they will need to consider a range of strategies to build and maintain relationships with each family.
- Documentation is prepared and made available to families in a way that is readily understandable to the parents of the child and to other educators
- They respond to families' questions, concerns and suggestions in a prompt and courteous manner.

Families will:

- Provide accurate and current information on enrolment and medical information forms.
- Notify the service of any changes to the child's enrolment.
- Be invited to contribute to the quality improvement process, this includes reviewing service policies and procedures.
- Be invited to service events that support families to network and develop friendships in the local community. Educators will be encouraged to attend these events.

Relationships and Partnerships with Families Process

Process Owner	CEO
Effective Date	28 February 2019
Date of Last Revision	11 February 2019

Process Details

	Description
1.	<p>Communication Plan</p> <p><i>Upon Enrolment in a Children and Family Centre</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Families are directed to the Meerilinga website for information on the services provided by the organisation.- Families will complete a tour of the service where important information such as policies, procedures and the children's programs will be conveyed. They will also receive the early learning program family handbook.- Families are required to complete the enrolment record that includes communicating specific written information about the family and child. Information such as their interests, strengths, family background, languages spoken, sleep and rest, dietary, medical and health requirements.- Opportunities will be given during the orientation process for children, families and educators to discuss vital information about the individual child's needs and interests. This will enable children to feel safe and secure, and to set the foundations for a trusting partnership.- Families are consulted about how they would like to receive information about the service and their child's participation in the children's program. <p><i>Daily</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Informal conversations between the educators and families about the child will occur at drop off and collection times.- A written journal of the day's activities at the early learning program will be provided by the educators and displayed in a prominent position for families to view.- Educators will use the flexibuzz messaging platform throughout the day to keep in touch with families regarding their child's participation in the program and welcome their feedback.- Information will be provided to families about their child's daily food intake, toileting and sleep and rest needs.- Families are encouraged to contact the centre to enquire about their child's wellbeing. Educators may contact the family if a child is not settling throughout the day.

Process Details

	Description
	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Communication and feedback on children's education, individual and group programs, children's care and wellbeing, centre and community activities and events, Educators, quality improvement, compliments, fees, policies and processes will be conveyed through one of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Informal conversations either in person or via Telephone.- Email.- Child's individual 'my story' book.- Meerilinga website.- Newsletters.- Social media- Noticeboard and service displays.- Communal signage throughout the service.- Flyers and brochures.- Feedback surveys.- Parent committee. <p>Periodically as required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Formal conversations conducted in a private meeting area. These conversations are usually sensitive or personal and may be centred on a family concern or complaint, a child's development, care requirements or wellbeing.
2.	<p>Communicating with Families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds</p> <p>Register with TIS – Translation and Interpreting Services Website - https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en Ph: 1300 655 820 Email: tispromo@border.gov.au</p>
3.	<p>Communicating with Families who may need additional support due to having a medical condition <i>such as: hearing impaired</i></p> <p>Contact Communicare Children and Family Services Inclusion Support Programme WA Ph: 1800 11 WA IS (1800 11 92 47).</p>

Associated Documents

Meerilinga Policy Manual

- Preface - Section 1 - Strategic and Business Planning Policies (Code of Ethics & Conduct)
 - Section 2 - Human Resources Policies
 - Section 7 - Workplace Health and Safety Policies
 - Section 6 - Children's Program Policies
 - Section 8 - Guidelines
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- Application for Enrolment www.meerilinga.org.au/early-learning-program/enrol-online-for-our-early-learning-program/
 - Family Handbook
 - CFC Integrated Handbook
 - Early Learning Programs – Curriculum
 - Early Years Learning Framework
 - Flexi buzz Flyer
 - Request for Inclusion Support
https://www.wainclusionagency.org.au/CommunicareWAIA/media/documents/WAIA-ISP-Request-for-IS-Form_Interactive_V2-0.pdf
 - Inclusion Parent consent
https://www.wainclusionagency.org.au/CommunicareWAIA/media/documents/WAIA-ISP-Parent-Consent-Form_Interactive_V2-0.pdf

Guidelines for Advisor

Guide respectful, supportive relationships with families. A collaborative partnership with families builds a strong inclusive community in the service. Respectful, honest and open two-way communication with educators assists families to feel connected with their children's experience in the service and helps them to develop trust and confidence.

The enrolment and orientation process provides families with information about the philosophy, policies and practices of the service.

Information provided to families regarding the content and operation of the educational program, in relation to their child and that a copy of the educational program is available for inspection at the service.

Families must have access to documents regarding the assessment of their child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program and assessments of the child's progress against the outcomes of the educational program.

Ensure that parents may enter the service at any time unless such entry would pose a risk to the safety of children/educators or breach court orders regarding access to children.

To ensure the safety of all children and educators, be aware of the custodial and access arrangements for all families attending the service. Ensure all service staff know this information and a copy of all legal documentation such as a parenting court order or parenting plan are kept at the service.

Families are notified of any incident, injury, trauma or illness that occurs for their child while in care at the service at the education and care service. Inform the CEO of all serious incidents.

Adhere to the Communication Plan process and guide service staff compliance and practice.

Administrative spaces are available for the purpose of consulting with parents and for conducting private conversations.

Families are given at least 14 days notice of changes to policies or processes and fees charged.

Families have access to a copy of the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Families are informed about the processes for providing feedback and making complaints. Complaints and grievances are documented and dealt with in a timely manner.

Establish a parent committee to encourage family participation in the service, providing feedback on the review of service documentation and processes, surveys and make meaningful contributions to service decisions.

Records Management

Title	Location	Responsible Officer	Minimum Retention Period
Enrolment Form	CFC	Director	3 years from exit
Parenting Court Order or Parenting Plan	CFC	Director/Advisor Enrolment & Inclusion	3 years from exit
Educational Program's	CFC	Director / Educator	3 years from exit
Children's Individual Developmental Records	CFC	Director / Educator	3 years from exit
Inclusion Support Request Inclusion Parent Consent	CFC	Director/Advisor Enrolment & Inclusion	3 years from exit
Incident Report	CFC	Director / Educator	7 years
Formal Complaint	CFC W/LEED	CEO / Advisor / Director	7 years
Complaint Settlement Form	W/LEED	CEO / Advisor	7 years
Action Plan Template	CFC	CEO / Advisor	5 years
Continuous Improvement Form	W/LEED	CEO / Advisor / Director	5 years
Stakeholder Feedback	CFC	Advisor / Director	3 years

Reference

- Education and Care Services National Law Act (WA) 2012 - October 2018
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) 2012 - October 2018
- ACECQA - National Quality Standards - February 2018
- ACECQA - Belonging, Being & Becoming - Early Years Learning Framework
- Code of Ethics - Meerilinga
- Code of Conduct - Meerilinga
- Family Assistance Law
- Privacy Act 1988
- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- TIS - Translation and Interpreting Services - <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en>
- Communicare Children and Family Services, Inclusion Support Programme WA - <https://www.wainclusionagency.org.au/>
- Family Court of Western Australia:
 - Parenting Order - https://www.familycourt.wa.gov.au/P/parenting_orders.aspx
 - Parenting Plan - https://www.familycourt.wa.gov.au/P/parenting_plans.aspx

Definitions

Term	Definition
Flexi buzz	The digital communication platform that enables Meerilinga to communicate with families, keeping them updated their child’s learning, medical information and daily activities at the service.

Mapping Policy and Processes

Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012	
Section	167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 174, 175.

Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) 2012	
Regulations	73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 81, 84, 86, 87, 90, 91, 98, 111, 117(A,B,C) 157, 160, 161, 162, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 176, 177, 181, 183, 185.

Standards for RTOs 2015
Vocational Education and Training is a significant contributor to Australia’s economy domestically, being the primary mechanism to meet the skilling needs of the Australian community. The standards give the community confidence that RTOs are delivering quality training and assessment that is highly regarded both locally and overseas.

Policy Area	National Quality Standards Early Childhood	National Standards for Volunteering Involvement 2015	Standards to Community Services	Standards to Family Support
Children’s Programs	QA 1 - 1.1, 1.3.3. QA 2 - 2.2, 2.1.2, 2.2.2, 2.2.3. QA 3 - 3.1, 3.2. QA 4 - 4.1, 4.2. QA 5 - 5.1, 5.2. QA 6 - 6.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.2, 6.2.2, 6.2.3. QA 7 - 7.1, 7.2.	S2: 2.1 S3 S7	S 1- 6	S 3