

Relationships and Interactions with Children

Policy Statement

Within the Meerilinga community many different relationships are negotiated. The way in which these relationships are established and maintained, and the way in which they remain visible, impacts on how our community functions as a whole. Relationships directly affect how children form their own identity, whether or not they feel safe and supported, and ultimately, their sense of belonging.

The underlying principles related to this policy reflect adherence and commitment to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics, The National Quality Standards and the Early Years Learning Framework;

- Children are active in constructing their understanding of their world.
- Children's autonomy and initiative must be respected.
- Children must be empowered to express their views and to expect that their views will be taken into account.

Any adults interacting with children in a professional or personal role should adhere to principles that reflect respect for children's rights.

Policy Purpose

We aim to create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions. We will build positive and meaningful relationships with community members through collaboration and interactions, which is reflective in our Philosophy and the Early Years Learning Framework.

Educators will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers as well as with educators and families at the service, ensuring children feel safe and supported. This is perhaps the most important aspect of the service.

Scope

This policy applies to the Board of Governors, Executive, all workers, volunteers, students and those employed on a fee for service or contract basis while conducting Meerilinga business.

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.

Implementation

The policy encourages warm nourishing relationships between children and staff that support and view children as strong, powerful, competent, complex and full of possibilities. Children need positive relationships with adults that they can trust and who respond to them.

This is the basic foundation that they need in order to feel good about themselves and their being in the world, and secure enough to take pleasure in actively exploring and learning about themselves, people and things around them.

Article 12 of The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child expresses the view that children have a right to give their opinion and for adults to listen and take it seriously. The underlying principle is concern and respect for the child's views and opinions in all matters affecting them. The process by which they are consulted must reflect commitment to maintain the dignity and welfare of children and their families. All those consulting children must adhere to the accepted guidelines of professional and ethical practice.

Professional and ethical practice includes consideration of each situation with reference to context, time, environment, acknowledgment of key players and their values, legal aspects, professional and ethical principles.

Respectful and equitable relationships with children are maintained in a way that encourages children to express themselves and their opinions. When children have positive experiences of interactions they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of belonging.

Children's Learning and Development

Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships are one of the basic principles of *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* that provides a vision for the children's learning at this service. Relationships between staff and children can have an impact on other relationships and can dictate the mood of the group, or the whole group environment.

From birth a child is capable of expressing views and is able to make them known, especially to those attuned to interacting with children.

Children from birth are very sensitive to what is going on around them, and are continually trying to make sense of their environment and to discover new ways of relating to it. As they develop, their ability to understand other people, to take account of others' feelings, and to modify their behaviour, increases. However, even when they are five, they are not yet very experienced or skilled in the complexities of social and communications skills.

Emotional development and social relationships are enhanced through thoughtful and sophisticated approaches to conversation, discussion and promotion of children's language and communication. Children who experience relationships that are built on respect, fairness, cooperation and empathy are given the opportunity to develop these qualities themselves.

The value of other skills like observing, planning and organising the environment depends upon the extent to which educators are able to develop these relationships. Children who are secure in the relationship with their educator/s are confident in their learning and are able to enjoy and feel relaxed in their time at the preschool.

Interactions with children must be based on sound knowledge, research and theories that assist adults to understand the best approach given the age group and the context of the situation.

All adults, and especially experienced educators, are more able than young children to empathise, adapt and modify their behaviour. One of the basic principles of communicating with children is that educators need to approach children in their care in a child-centred way. Children under five are still very much the centre of their own universe.

Children's Rights, Family and Cultural Values

Interactions within the setting are greatly enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect. Administrative procedures, initial conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families are a reference point for interactions and a foundation for genuine and respectful communication.

Advocates for children must be authentic representatives who value and honour individuality and diversity. Any interpretation of data gathered from consultation with children must be done based on a sound understanding of contemporary childhood theory.

At times children are not able to speak for themselves which may have an impact on their future experiences. In these situations groups and individuals who represent children must have the opportunity to speak for them. In order to be a voice for children, advocates must consult with children and their families.

Consent must be obtained from children and their families in order to include them in any process of data gathering. The purpose of the consultation must be made clear to the children and their families. Children involved in any process must have it explained to them at a level which they can understand.

The privacy of all children must be respected at all times. Information collected in the process of consultation must not be used inappropriately. While confidentiality can never be absolute, information must be treated in a professional, legal and ethical way.

Listening

Educators and staff must use listening as a foundation for interactions. Listening is based on observation and in leaving spaces in conversations and communication, suspending judgement and in giving full attention to children as they communicate. Truly attending to children's communication promotes a strong culture of listening.

Every effort must be made to ensure that it is the voice of children that is heard. Adults must acknowledge the children's perspective in any representation they make on their behalf. When interpreted or presented to others this information should maintain the truth as viewed by the children consulted. A child's opinion must be valued for its validity to their perspective.

Children and Families

Children's views must be valued and treated with respect. Due consideration must always be given in any situation where a child expresses themselves. In the process of consultation and consequent representation these views and a child's perspective is to be valued.

A culture of respectful interaction is promoted when children's attempts to communicate are valued. Turn taking and regulating children's conversations promotes active engagement. Respectful communication with families generates greater confidence in interacting.

Children must not be intimidated or interrogated in any way and must be given sufficient time to respond. No form of deception or bribery should be involved in consulting with children.

Children must not be placed in any environment that represents a threat to their health or wellbeing. In consulting with children, adults must consider the children's health and well-being at all times.

Reflection and Consideration

Time is dedicated to reflecting upon interactions within children.

Reflections should consider how to spend extended periods engaged in interactions with children that comprise communication and listening.

Role Modelling

Educators and staff model positive interactions when they show care, empathy and respect for children, families and colleagues. Educators learn and use effective communication strategies.

Children under five are learning communication and social skills. The way in which educators relate and interact with them and to other people is an important source of information about how they should communicate and interact with others.

Therefore, educators should relate to children in a positive way which responds to each child's individual needs and enables the child to develop the ability to relate in a similar positive way to others. Children also need adults who actively teach them communication skills, by relating to them in ways which build upon their existing and emerging social and interactive communication skills, and by providing them with opportunities, and activities to exercise and develop these skills.

Process Partnerships and Interactions with Children

Process Owner	CEO
Effective Date	11 March 2019
Date of Last Revision	18 February 2019

Process Details

	Description
1.	<p>Interactions with Children</p> <p><i>All Staff will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all interactions with children are genuine, positive and responsive and are based on respect, fairness, acceptance, co-operation and empathy.• Respect each child's uniqueness, displaying appreciation and respect for children as individuals.• Support children's secure attachment through consistent and warm nurturing relationships.• Respect children and families diversity and the development of cultural competency within the service.• Actively promote and extend children's individual development.• Acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration and alternative perspectives and social inclusion.• Inspire, encourage and support each child's efforts. Guide them to do the same with their peers by actively:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fostering each child's construction of a knowledgeable, confident self-identity.- Fostering each child's comfortable, empathetic interaction with diversity among people.- Fostering each child's critical thinking about bias, to question and enquire.- Fostering each child's ability to stand up for herself/himself and others in the face of bias.- Respond respectfully and appropriately to children's determinations as they participate and converse in sustained conversation about their interests.- Encourage children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves.- Encourage children to work through differences appropriately.• Ensure routines such as meal times, toileting, nappy change and rest times are relaxed, unhurried and are used for positive interactions with individual children. Sit with children during mealtimes, engaging in respectful conversations.• Encourage children to make choices and decisions.• Never force a child to do something against their requests, this includes: rest, eat, participation in group experiences and activities.• Regularly reflect on their relationships and interactions with children and how these can be improved to benefit each child.

Process Details

	Description
2.	<p>Communicating with Children</p> <p><i>All staff will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak with children in a positive manner at all times. Using appropriate language and behavior, promoting respect, tolerance and empathy.• Use listening as a foundation for interactions based on observation and in leaving spaces in conversations and communication, suspending judgment and in giving full attention to children as they communicate.• Use a variety of communication strategies inclusive of verbal and non-verbal cues to support the development relationships with children.• Use a positive and non-threatening tone when interacting with children in all situations.• Support children’s home language when communicating and interacting to build trust and positive relationships.• Respond to children’s communication in a just, timely and consistent manner.• Respond sensitively and honestly to children’s attempts to initiate interactions and conversations.• Record children’s ideas and decisions in an approved format.• Maintain confidentiality of children’s records
3.	<p>Consulting with Children</p> <p><i>All Staff will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individualise planned communication for the purpose of any consultation must be developed to meet the needs of a child in any particular situation.• Have specialist knowledge of children and childhood and acting as an advocate for the child should always be present when consultations are being conducted with children.• Ensure the environment in which any consultation takes place is assessed as being appropriate and authentic for the children and families involved.• Provide support structures to ensure consulting with young children is inclusive of all children. E.g: children with a language other than English; children’s age, physical and intellectual development, abilities and family cultural values.• Consider individual culture when consulting with children.• Ensure questions addressed to children are age/stage appropriate in style, content, complexity and length.• When questioning children, it is important that those involved have an understanding of how children recall information.• Consider how much questioning needs to occur to obtain relevant information.• Provide Children with sufficient appropriate information to express a meaningful opinion. <p>(Based on the Early Childhood Australia Policy: Guidelines for Consulting with Young Children)</p>

Associated Documents

Meerilinga Policy Manual

- Preface - Section 1 - Strategic and Business Planning Policies (Code of Ethics & Conduct)
- Section 2 - Human Resources Policies
- Section 6 - Children's Program Policies
- Section 7 - Workplace Health and Safety Policies
- Section 8 - Guidelines
- ELP Learning Program and Planning Guide

- 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 Educators, Staff, Students and Volunteers to develop positive relationships with children based on respect and fostering children's self-esteem and development.

All children have a right to feel accepted and respected. This is a principle set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention emphasises the importance of children developing connections to culture and community as a means of fostering a strong sense of personal identity and belonging.

Children must feel safe and secure. Lead quality practice in forming strong attachments and connections with educators, children and families at the service.

Educators and staff employed at the service will be guided in teaching techniques to establish positive relationships with children and their families, working in conjunction with the National Quality Standard and build supportive relationships.

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	Until the Child is 25 years old Adult - 7 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
- Privacy Act 1988
- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics - 2016
- Greenwood A (1993). Children's rights: the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child.
- AECA Resource Book Series. Australian Early Childhood Association: Canberra
- HREOC & UNICEF. A guide through the Convention.
- Nyland B. (1999). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Using a concept of rights as a basis for practice. Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 24(1), 9-14.
- Rodd J. (1998). Leadership in Early Childhood. Second Ed. Allen & Unwin: St Leonards, NSW
- Schiller W (1989). "A Fair Go" for children: An early childhood perspective on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 14(20), 15-20.
- Wiersma W (1995). Research methods on education: An introduction. Sixth edition. Allyn & Bacon: Needham Heights, Massachusetts.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Meerilinga Community	All persons associated with the Organisation - Children, Families, Staff, Students, Volunteers and wider Community members.

Mapping Policy and Processes

Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012	
Section	166, 167.

Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) 2012	
Regulations	73, 74, 75, 76, 155, 156, 168(2)(j).

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, 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3. QA 2 - 2.1.1. QA 4 - 4.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2 QA 5 - 5.1, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2, 5.2.1. QA 6 - 6.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3. QA 7 - 7.1.1, 7.2, 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.2.3.	S3 S8	S2 S6	S1