



## Partnerships and Communication with Families Policy

**Policy Number:** 26  
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### Rationale and Policy Considerations

The education and care service understands the primary influence that families have in their children's lives, and that effective relationships between educators and families are fundamental to the quality education and care that children receive. Effective collaboration with families occurs when constructive strategies for ongoing two way communication are established by the service. Families can provide invaluable information about children's interests, strengths, and abilities that assists educators to meet their needs.

### Most relevant policies and procedures

- Community Involvement
- Governance, Management, Records and Confidentiality
- Delivery and Collection
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Establishing a Protective Environment
- Grievances and Complaints Management

### Links to ECA Code of Ethics

- **Respect the special relationship between children and their families and incorporate this perspective in all my interactions with children.**
- **Listen to and learn from families, in order to acknowledge and build upon their strengths and competencies, and support them in their role of nurturing children.**
- **Assist each family to develop a sense of belonging and inclusion.**
- **Develop positive relationships based on mutual trust and open communication.**
- **Develop partnerships with families and engage in shared decision making where appropriate.**
- **Acknowledge the rights of families to make decisions about their children.**
- **Develop shared planning, monitoring and assessment practices for children's learning and communicate this in ways that families understand.**
- **Acknowledge that each family is affected by the community contexts in which they engage.**
- **Be sensitive to the vulnerabilities of children and families and respond in ways that empower and maintain the dignity of all children and families.**
- **Maintain confidentiality and respect the right of the family to privacy**

### Scope

This policy is written for children, families, educators and visitors of Lifestreamers Early Learning

### Policy Statement

The education and care service will provide regular information about, and on-going opportunities for families to participate and have input into the service and their child's experiences and learning. Family influence is valued, respected and supported to enhance children's experiences in education and care. The service will actively promote shared decision making with families to support consistency between children's experiences at home and at the service. Families will be viewed as partners in providing quality education and care for children. Any family concerns will be addressed promptly to minimise any negative impact on children and support the good relationships that have been formed between the service and family members.

Lifestreamers Early Learning understands that communication is an important and necessary part of life. To this end, we will ensure that all who use the service are spoken to with respect and kept up to date on matters relating to the centre. Educators will familiarise themselves with methods of communicating with families from non-English speaking backgrounds and use outside resource people where necessary.

### Policy Principles

#### Partnerships with Families

- Information is exchanged with families at arrival and departure times on a daily basis.
- Educators will welcome and value family input and treat all suggestions or concerns with respect.
- The service will create a welcoming environment for all families using the service.
- Families will be provided with regular opportunities to contribute to curriculum decision making and provide feedback about the experiences planned for their child.
- Families are encouraged to speak with educators regarding any aspect of the care of their child at any time. This may be spontaneous, by telephone or by appointment.
- Educators will respond to families' questions, concerns and suggestions in a prompt and courteous manner. Educators will not discuss information of a confidential nature regarding any other child or family within the service.
- Families will be directed to the website to see a copy of the service's policies at the time of enrolment.
- Families will be informed promptly and sensitively of any incidents affecting their child.
- Where a family's request for their child is not able to be implemented within the education and care setting due to safety, health or ethical concerns, the reasons for this will be carefully explained to the family, and an agreed outcome will be negotiated.
- Families will be encouraged to contribute to the development and review of the service's operations, policies and procedures.
- Educators will communicate with parents/guardians in a positive and supportive manner that encourages the parent-child relationship. Information with regard to family issues and personal lives will be handled confidentially. Every effort will be made to treat both parents/guardians, listed on enrolment form, equally. Without legal documentation, educators cannot act as though one parent is more fit than another to the legal rights of their child.
- Parents/guardians may visit the service at any reasonable time whilst their child is in education and care.
- Parents/guardians may bring other relatives to visit at convenient times that have been organised through the educator/nominated supervisor.
- Educators and families will use communication methods which convey respect and acceptance.
- Families will be kept up to date with centre details by the use of newsletters and emails.
- Child information will be passed on through Xplor Playground and emails, as well as verbally through phone conversations, interviews and daily conversations.
- Visitors, students or relief educators will not be responsible for passing on information to families.
- The centre will access Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) if necessary on 131450.
- Educators are not permitted to engage in babysitting services for families attending Lifestreamers Early Learning. This is to avoid a conflict of interest and to keep separation between care at Lifestreamers and care in private homes.
- If an educator comes in contact with a family member outside of the centre and it is not a parent that they are familiar with through drop off and pick up times, no information about the child, the centre or the educators will be given. The location of the centre should be kept confidential to protect the children who attend LEL. Any questions asked by unfamiliar family members should be responded to by saying "I'm sorry, but that is confidential information and you will need to speak to the child's enrolling parent."

### **Communication Strategies**

- A service newsletter will be published regularly and will include:
  - Information about current programs and special activities happening at the service;
  - Highlight specific policies & procedures for families;
  - Advise of changes to educators and other educators;
  - Welcome new families;
  - News from the approved provider (centre management);
  - Information about changes to payment of fees or the operations of the service;
  - Information about social events and ways in which families can participate in the service;
  - Invitation to families to give input and feedback.
- The newsletter will be emailed to each family enrolled in the service. Families without access to email facilities will receive a printed copy on request.
- The service provides information of a general nature to families and interested people through the service's website. Information such as location, learning environment, operational hours, enrolment procedures, centre philosophy etc. is available on the website.

- A Family Handbook will be accessible on the website for enrolled families detailing operational information and relevant policies and procedures.
- Families may also be contacted by email, letter or phone to communicate information about the service or seek feedback from the family.
- Families will be invited to complete a survey twice a year to provide feedback
- The service brochure will provide general information about the service to prospective customers.
- The service's Grievances and Complaints Management policy will be followed to address any concerns raised by families about the service.
- The approved provider/nominated supervisor will organise social events for families and educators from time to time to encourage participation and maintain open communication.
- Educators will ensure that all relevant messages and information regarding the centre and care of your children are passed on to the appropriate person.

### Family Disputes

- Where a child attending the service is not living with both parents/guardians, or where disputes arise in relation to responsibility for the child the following will apply:
  - Parental responsibility remains with both parents/guardians jointly and individually except where it is altered by an order of the Family Court of Australia. In the absence of such an order the child will be released to either parent/guardian who is an authorised person to collect the child on the **Enrolment Form**.
  - Where a non-enrolling parent cites an Order of the Family Court giving him/herself lawful access to the child, the educator/nominated supervisor will contact the enrolling parent to confirm the existence of the order and seek their direction on how to respond to the non-enrolling parent. Educators/educators will not try to interpret or act on any court order without the approval of the enrolling parent.
  - The child will only be released into the care of the enrolling parent/guardian, or other person specifically authorised by the enrolling parent/guardian, except when child protection authorities or the police specifically direct otherwise under the provisions of the applicable child protection legislation.
- In the case of a parent/guardian with parental responsibility for the child arriving at the service to collect their child in a visibly intoxicated or unfit state to drive, the parent/guardian will be encouraged to contact an alternative adult to drive them and their child home or the service will offer to call a taxi. If the parent/guardian insists on taking their child, the police will be informed.
- Where human life is at risk any part of the above may not be able to be complied with and in such circumstances the police will be immediately informed. In such circumstances the educators will follow the centre's **Risk Management Response Plan**. For further information on collection of children refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy.

### Related Documents

- **Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012**
- **Education and Care Services National Regulations**
- **National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (Nov 2010)**
- **Early Years Learning Framework for Australia**
- **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth.)**

### Document History

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