



ARMSU

## Deadly Director Series

# Different Families, Different Ways

## Involving Parents and Families in Your Centre

### Mums, Dads, Nanas, Pops, Aunties, Uncles, Sisters, Brothers, Cousins

#### Special events and celebrations

Aboriginal cultural events and excursions

Christmas parties at the centre or in other venues, e.g. park

Open Days

NAIDOC week celebrations

Graduation ceremonies for children starting school

Day time and evening events held alternately at the centre, so working parents can attend.

Fundraisers – raffles, lucky tickets, garage sales

Home visits

#### Parents helping out with special skills

Find out parent's special skills and ask them to help using those skills, e.g. play football with the children, cook a certain food, art or craft work, teach a song, literacy / language

Asking parents if they can help with certain jobs – e.g. painting a fence, assembling equipment, fixing a toy

#### Photo and Information boards

Photo boards of children and staff in the centre to encourage interest in what happens in the centre.

Pin up boards with local information and photos of interest to the community, e.g. newspaper cut outs

Annual photo days for families to come in, have their photo taken by a professional photographer

Pin up board of family snaps

Display children's work and photos of their activities and learning areas in the centre

Occasionally send home photos of the children taken during the day

If parents have access to email, send electronic copies of the photos.

#### Acknowledging help from families

Acknowledging when parents become involved by thanking them in your newsletter

Put photos of parents helping out at your centre up on a board or in your newsletter e.g. grandparents who help out at your centre

#### Involvement in centre operations

Encourage parents to join the committee.

Give drafts of policies for certain parents to review.

Let parents know when their feedback or comments have influenced decisions in the centre.

# Responding to Parents' Concerns

There is no easy way to respond to some situations. But it will help if you work out what you can say in response to certain common issues and concerns that come up. Some suggestions of things you can say or do are listed here.

## **"My baby girl fell over and she has a bruise on her head. Why didn't staff stop this from happening?"**

Explain that accidents can't be prevented all of the time and that children can't be stopped from falling occasionally.

Let parents know that you have good policies for supervision of children, e.g. we always have 2 staff outside.

Let parents know about what first aid procedure was followed and show the parents the accident report.

## **"My child does not like that worker in the toddler's room."**

Take the parent/ carer into a meeting room and ask about their concerns.

Calm the parent and tell them you will talk with the worker and suggest some ways that the staff member can build the relationship with the child.

If the allegations are serious, collect evidence, investigate and then let the parents know of the follow up and the plan.

## **"My little son keeps coming home with clothes missing."**

Show empathy.

Ask if the clothes were labeled. If not, suggest that this would be a good idea.

Allow parents to look through lost property.

Tell parents you will bring it up with other staff members and monitor more closely.

## **"My child came home with bite marks on her arm. What happened?"**

If possible, ring or tell the parent before the parent notices the bite mark.

Ensure that first aid was given and that their child was comforted.

Keep the name of the biter confidential.

Let parents know that staff watch children very closely but that certain children may go through a biting stage as part of their development.

Ensure that staff will do a management behaviour plan for any child who bites repeatedly which will involve monitoring the child and reducing stresses in the environment.

Assistance to develop anti-biting strategies in your centre is available from your local DECS Early Childhood Initiatives Coordinator.

## **"Why do I have to take my son home just because he's a bit sick?"**

Talk about the policy in the centre around illness.

Explain that when you look after a group of children, care must be taken to stop illnesses being passed from child to child. Let the parent / carer know when they can bring their child back.

**“I sent Uncle Trevor to pick up my daughter from care yesterday, but staff wouldn’t let her go with him. Why not?”**

Firstly listen and show empathy.

Then explain that the family must list all people that they allow to pick up the child. If a parent wants a different person to pick up a child (other than those on the list), then they can ring up the centre and let them know the name and relationship that this person has with the child.

Explain that a child care service has to do this out of duty of care for the child and also to protect the child if there is a custody dispute over the child. It is part of licensing requirements for all child care services.

**“Why have the fees gone up? I’m having trouble paying them.”**

Explain why the fees have gone up.

Refer to the budget and discuss increases in costs in operating the centre.

Explain also what will happen if the fees are not put up, what children and staff will have to go without if the fees are not put up.

**“I sent some snacks and soft drink for my daughter to eat but she wasn’t allowed to eat them. Why not?”**

Talk about the policy of healthy eating in the centre. If you talked about the food policy on enrolment, remind the parent.

Be clear about the foods or drinks that children are allowed to bring in and discuss these with the parent when they first enroll their child.

Explain that when you are caring for a group it is difficult to encourage all kids to eat healthy food if some kids are bringing in foods that might not be on the healthy food list.

Give the parent a copy of the list of foods that children can bring in.

**“Why do I have to pay fees when my child did not come to child care on those days?”**

Explain the policy.

Give the reasons – In order to run the centre without losing money we need to be able to estimate how many children we will have each day.

The centre relies on a certain sum of money coming in each day which allows us to match the number of staff with the number of children and also to buy food and resources.

On public holidays or closure days we still have to pay staff wages so we need to collect fees for those days also.

**“Sometimes I have a bit of trouble picking up my kids on time. I can’t help it. Why do I have to pay a late fee?”**

Show empathy and listen to the reason why. You might decide to waive the fee if the late pick up is an occasional event.

Explain that the centre has to ask for a late fee because the centre has to pay staff overtime if they are kept later than normal closing times.

Staff have their own families and commitments so it is difficult to get them to stay later.

Give the parent a copy of the policy on late pick ups.

# Strategies to Deal with Difficult Situations

Make space and time to talk with parents or carers one-to-one. Assure them that what is talked about is confidential.

Build strong relationships with your families through regular chats so that when difficult issues arise you are able to speak openly and honestly with them.

A strong trusting relationship will also mean that families won't feel shamed to talk honestly with you when they have difficult issues in their lives.

Plan ways of saying things so that the discussion stays calm.

Know when you need to impose harder decisions on families. Know the families, the limitations and when enough is enough

Sometimes it is better to be hard on families early before a situation gets out of control, e.g. fee paying

Supporting families with outside issues which impact on the children, by listening, advising and referring them to other support services.

In a difficult situation remind yourself and the parents / carers that the children's health, well-being and safety must come first.

## Not pointing fingers or blaming

Find a quiet area to talk.

Remain calm yourself and keep the parents calm also.

Take time to listen to their views and issues and be supportive and understanding while explaining the situation.

Explain how the situation fits within the centre's policies and procedures. Do not point fingers or lay blame.

Work on a positive outcome that best assists all parties.

## Talking about a difficult issue

Engage the parent or carer in a positive discussion about their child's day.

Then lead into an explanation of the difficult issue or accident.

Offer reassurance that all is well and that there are procedures in place to manage risks.

Have all relevant documents on hand and copies available for them to keep.

## Alcohol or Drug Abuse - Parents and Carers

If a parent or carer arrives to pick up a child and they are affected by alcohol or drugs or behaving in an aggressive way:

Tell the Director or contact them if they are not in the centre.

The Director or senior staff member talks to the person calmly

Delay the parent, e.g. chat to them, offer cup of tea or coffee

Try to move the group of children to another area

Contact a known and trusted alternative family member. They should be listed on the child's list of carers.

Explain situation and ask if they can come and pick up the child

Last resort: If the parent or carer is very forceful and aggressive about taking the child, let them, but warn that you will need to ring the police. Important to protect yourself in this situation.

**Protect the Child**

**Protect Yourself**

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