Introduction

As employees of Bega Valley Shire Council, our Code of Conduct will frame our communications with children, families and each other.

The key principles (1.3) of the Code are:

- Integrity (1.3.1)
- Leadership (1.3.2)
- Selflessness (1.3.3)
- Impartiality (1.3.4)
- Accountability (1.3.5)
- Openness (1.3.6)
- Honesty (1.3.7)
- Respect (1.3.8)

You must treat others with respect at all times. This means not using derogatory terms towards others, observing the rights of other people, treating people with courtesy and recognizing the different roles others play in (local government) decision making.

(2.1.1) General conduct ensures staff:

- must comply with all legal requirements of our service operations;
- must act in ways that are proper and ethical;
- cannot abuse power, intimidate, harass or verbally abuse others;
- cannot discriminate, disadvantage or use adverse treatment in relation to employment;
- cannot use prejudice in the provision of the children’s service

Our processes must be fair and equitable (2.1.2) and not involve harassment or discrimination (2.1.3).

Strategies

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- all Educators, Staff and others know and follow the Code of Conduct
- non-compliance with the Code of Conduct is addressed through established Human Resource procedures including discipline, grievance and complaints.
All Educators and Staff will ensure:

- All communications are respectful, ethical and follow the BVSC code of conduct. Communication will focus on the issue/problem/system not the person. We will attempt to avoid assumptions about what other’s know and understand, and instead ask and listen respectfully to their views, and expect to be asked and listened to respectfully in return.

- All communication is appropriate and ethical. We will choose appropriate times and places for communication. This means we will not discuss personal information in front of children or families, particularly where it may affect the rights of others to respect or to confidentiality. If we notice someone involved in inappropriate communication, we will step in to stop it.

- Established systems are used for communication. Information about families, children, staff, programs or services will be shared only with permission in the appropriate venue and only with the appropriate people. For example: staff meetings, children’s records, specialist children’s services planning meetings etc.

- The first step in communication is to speak with (not to) the other person. If we see or experience something that we are unsure about, concerned about, unhappy about or want to change we will speak with the other person involved at the time. If it cannot be resolved in this discussion we will then speak with the program leader. If it still cannot be resolved we will speak with the Nominated Supervisor. If attempts to resolve it are unsuccessful we will use the established BVSC grievance processes.

- We make time for communication and that everyone has access to the same information. We will acknowledge that people have different preferences for types of communication and make time at the start of each shift to make sure everyone has the information necessary to do their job or has been directed to where they can get that information.

A guide for Educators and Staff to 6 important principles for communication

1. Focus on the situation, issue or behaviour not the person.
   a. Remain objective and acknowledge your own subjective interests in the situation
   b. Step back and look at the big picture when analysing a situation
   c. Avoid letting personality difference keep you from dealing with a problem
   d. Ensure expectations are clear and consistently applied
   e. Make decisions based on facts
   f. Consider the point of view of others

2. Maintain the self-confidence and self-esteem of others – see others as a resource
   a. Create an atmosphere of acceptance, approval, confidentiality and respect
   b. Consult with and openly express confidence in others
   c. Recognise accomplishments and ideas
   d. Encourage people to express their ideas using appropriate communication channels
   e. Encourage people to use and expand their abilities
   f. Consider the impact of rank and power and how to mitigate any negative impact

3. Maintain good working relationships
   a. Approach others with a positive attitude and communicate support
   b. Use every interaction as an opportunity to build respectful relationships
   c. Acknowledge problems openly, honestly and objectively
   d. Deal with conflicts as they arise and only with the person/s involved
   e. Share information with those who need to know while maintaining confidentiality

4. Take initiative to make things better
   a. Continually reflect with the team for ways to make things better
   b. Look for opportunities for improvement
   c. Ask for input and feedback from others
d. Stay informed and alert to changes that will affect staff and ask how they have been involved in the proposed change
e. Take risks and stay open to creative solutions to problems
f. Know when to ask for and when to offer help to others

5. Lead by example
   a. Model behaviours you expect others to practice
   b. Follow through on your commitments
   c. Admit your mistakes
   d. Remain calm and positive
   e. Challenge yourself and others to try new ways of doing things

6. Think beyond the moment
   a. Uphold ethical standards of the BVSC
   b. Deal with problem and issues as they arise
   c. Look for solutions
   d. Weigh the risks, benefits and potential impact of your decisions before taking action on them
   e. Plan ahead

Evaluation

Communication follows the Bega Valley Shire Council staff Code of Conduct and is effective.

References

- UVic Manager Tool Kit, Achieve Global