**Procedure 1.05.16 Communication with families**

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<th>Department</th>
<th>Community Relations and Leisure</th>
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<td>Responsible Officer</td>
<td>Manager</td>
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**Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**

**Introduction**
Communication is an essential part of a well-functioning team. While there is value in how different viewpoints can generate discussion about an issue, unresolved conflict and disagreement take up time, increase tensions and may be destructive. Bega Valley Shire Council Children’s Services educators will always follow the Code of Conduct for staff and the Communication Contract (2011). Educators and staff will ensure communication are based upon respect for each other and for those that we work with.

This will ensure that open communication takes place between teams and between educators and families in both formal and informal conversations and communications.

All educators and families will be acknowledged as partners in the care and education of children. Their knowledge will be valued and they will be actively involved in decision making processes about a child. They will be encouraged to question and contribute to how programs are designed, implemented and evaluated for children.

**Strategies**

**Respect**
All Educators, Staff and others will practice respect for families by:

- Asking the family how they care for their child, what their child likes/dislikes, what they love about their child, what they want for their child, what help or support they need.
- Accepting their differences and similarities
- Avoiding negative judgments and focus instead on our shared goals, and how they can each work in the best interests of children
- Establishing consistent and effective communication patterns

**Protocols for communicating**
The Educational Leader will:

- Ensure each family in the group has a primary educator who is responsible for the child during their time in the group. The decisions about who that person will be will be made by the educational team prior to orientation for the child.

The Administrative Officer will:

- Be responsible for managing the family’s entry to the service and the primary educator will be responsible for orienting the child and family into the care and education environment.
The Primary Educator will

- Be responsible for establishing a pattern of conversation with families at arrival and departure times that includes information about what they like about a child, what a child is doing well and appreciation of how a parent is 'parenting'.
- Where an issue concerning a child’s health, well-being, relationships or learning arises it will be documented in child records and discussed with the educational leader.

The Educational Leader and Educators will:

- Agree to a plan for who will speak with the parent, what will be discussed and how any issues that arise will be addressed.
- Refer any issues of significant concern to the Nominate Supervisor.

All Educators and Staff will:

- Be ready to refer families with problems to a person with specialised expertise, or with more knowledge.

Evaluation

There are effective processes in place for communication with families.

References

- Bega Valley Shire Council Code of Conduct for Staff (procedure 5.02.1), Available online: www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au
Appendix A

FAQ’s

1. *I’m a relief educator and I see things happening for a child that others in the team don’t seem to see. Can I speak about these with the family when they come to collect their child?*

   It is important for you to document what you see in the child’s records, and to discuss it with the educational leader. Together you will make a decision about who will speak with the parent, what will be discussed and how any issues that arise will be addressed. Usually relief staff do not raise significant issues of concern with a parent.

2. *I’m a child’s primary educator but I’m usually gone when her/his parent arrives to collect. How do I raise a concern with the parent?*

   If the issue is minor (for example the child didn’t want any afternoon tea today), you can pass a message to a person who is part of the child’s regular team of educators to give to the parent. If the issue is more significant you should document the issue, discuss it with the educational leader and decide on a communication plan. This might involve a phone call to the parent prior to the time you leave for the day, or speaking with the parent at another pre-arranged time.