

Safety

Key areas for conflict include: request to sleep child in environments that do not meet Safe Sleeping principles (e.g. tightly swaddling an older infant, putting an infant to sleep on their tummy) and using amber necklaces.

One issue that arises for educators is a request for a sleep practice that does not align with evidence-based safety guidelines. These relate to safe sleep environments, safe sleep positioning and safe sleep apparel. Educators should be confident to refer to policy guidelines if parents make requests that are contrary to the safety of the child. Child safety is always the first priority and family requests should not be placed above the safety of a child.

Practice Example 1: The Case of the Amber Necklace

An educator was discussing the sleep needs of a new 7-month old infant, Sarah, with her family. When asked “do you have any specific strategies that help Sarah to sleep?” the parent indicates that “Sarah has an amber necklace, it really helps her to sleep and we would really like her to continue wearing that at all times”.

Reflective questions:

What does 'genuine partnership' look like in this case?

What advice might you give this educator?

What resources might be useful to help support discussion with the family?

Here is an example of how one educator worked in partnership with the family to resolve this issue:

The educator was able to talk to the parent about her concerns about the child wearing the amber necklace using the following information:

1. Service Policy: The service policy is that all evidence based safe sleeping guidelines must be followed.
2. Safe Sleeping Principles: The educator was able to give the parents a referral to the SIDS and Kids safe sleeping website - <http://www.sidsandkids.org>
3. The educator also informed the parent's about the Australian Government's Consumer Safety Warning which was issued in 2011 against the use of amber teething necklaces:
<https://www.productsafety.gov.au/publication/consumer-protection-notice-no-35-of-2011-safety-warning-notice-amber-teething-necklaces>.

After using this information to discuss the issue, the educator informed the parents that for safety the educators would need to remove the necklace during sleep and or rest times.