

## Sleep Need

**Key areas for conflict include: requests that a child not be allowed to have a sleep or trying to get a child to sleep who no longer requires one.**

One issue that arises for educators are requests by parents that do not match the sleep needs of the child in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) setting. Sleep needs of children can be impacted by a range of factors including the time they wake and their level of activity across the morning. The busy, social environment of ECEC may increase need for sleep, rest and relaxation in some children, while for others it may make sleep more difficult. For this reason sleep needs at home will not always match those that an educator views in the ECEC setting. Identifying and responding to individual sleep cues is an important strategy for meeting individual sleep, rest and relaxation needs in ECEC.

### Practice Example 2: The Case of the Non-napping Child

Sam, a 2.5 year old toddler, attends a service from 6am to 5pm 2 days per week. Sam's parents indicate that Sam does not usually sleep at home and have asked that Sam not be allowed to sleep during the day while at the service. The educator is concerned as Sam often shows multiple signs of being tired including yawning, rubbing his eyes, and falling asleep while eating his lunch. The educator has tried multiple strategies to keep Sam awake, but they report that it is almost impossible.

### 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 shared their observations with the parent and worked with the parent to understand the reasons for their request. The educator learnt from the parent that when Sam napped during the day, he would be up very late at night and that this was causing a lot of stress for the family. The educator discussed with the parent how the social environment of ECEC can be very mentally and physically exhausting and, using available sleep and rest resources, how children who are transitioning from regular napping may still need to nap on some days and not others. The educator suggested that, with the parents' permission, they film Sam over a few days to share some of the behaviours the educators were seeing from the child while at the service. The parent and educator reviewed the film together and discussed the different tiredness cues the child was showing across the morning. Together the parent and educator agreed that the educator would monitor Sam's behaviour each day and provide an opportunity for him to sleep when he needed it.