

What are the characteristics of the service?

The service is a family day care located in a family home. The service has a down stairs area specifically for family day care that includes a separate sleep room. The services opening hours are from 6:30am to 4:30pm and caters for children overnight, on weekends and public holidays as needed. The service looks after 4 children each day of the week, and currently includes 6 families on a regular basis. The age of the children is from 19 months to 5 years. The service educator works alone, with support from an organisational family day care scheme. The service caters for children with a range of developmental and behavioural needs, including diverse sleep needs.

What are the services current sleep practices?

Flexibility and building relationships with parents and children is the key focus of the service. The service philosophy is that each child and each family is different, so there is a need to negotiate and collaborate with parents regarding sleep and rest. The service works hard to facilitate different children's individual needs and is flexible in order to be as consistent as possible with parent's practices at home. When something is not working, particularly due to the group based context, the service negotiates with parents to work out a strategy that is more feasible. The service speaks to parents each day about sleep and rest, and regularly communicates about any issues or changes in sleep need.

The service does not have specific age limits for children regarding sleep need. The service responds to the individual child and adjusts practice as needed. To support children who require sleep, the service has a 20 minute rest time in which all children are encouraged to lie down and rest. The children who require sleep typically fall asleep during this time. Children who do not sleep are provided with a range of quiet activities, both indoors and outside. These activities allow sleeping children to have a time without too much noise and distraction. Finding new activities for non-napping children that give children choice, but also allow for the needs of sleeping children, is a key on-going consideration for the service.

How did the service arrive at these sleep practices?

The educator's attitude and approach to sleep and rest has changed across time in response to their experience of working with a large range of children and families, and their own experiences as a parent. The services practices were originally more rigid and included a 2 hour sleep time, without flexibility in timing or activities and the expectation that all children would sleep. The service has worked towards making their practices more flexible to meet the diverse needs of children and families. Questioning their practices and reflecting on what might not be working is an on-going process. The educator continues to talk to other educators and parents to help develop strategies and ideas for sleep and rest.