



Developing and reviewing policies and procedures



Photo: Gilimbaa

Policies and procedures provide a road map for how early childhood education and care (ECEC) services will be delivered. This information sheet explains how policies and procedures can strengthen the inclusion of all children in your ECEC service.

Why focus on policies and procedures?

With effective policies and procedures in place, an ECEC service is better equipped to:

- meet legal requirements
- outline the purpose and direction of program activities
- make decisions and deliver services in transparent and consistent ways
- deliver positive outcomes for children and families
- identify, manage and minimise risk
- reduce grievances and conflict.

Policies and procedures to build inclusive services

While legislation is the foundation of inclusion, policies and procedures can provide the scaffolding to guide the work of ECEC services towards greater inclusion of all children.

The process of policy development and review is an ideal way to consider how well policies and procedures are meeting the needs of children with disability or complex additional needs, and how changes could better support inclusive service delivery.

There are many books, guides and online resources to help ECEC services identify which policies are required, as well as how to develop, manage and review them. [Develop and update policies successfully \(without the stress\)](#) was produced by the Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) National Alliance to help ECEC services understand and meet policy requirements under the *National Quality Framework* (NQF). It provides a useful starting point for understanding policy development and review in the ECEC sector.

The [Strategic Inclusion Plan Guide](#) was developed by the Inclusion Support Agency (IAP) to help ECEC services create more inclusive policies and practices for all children.

Consultation is part of the process

The Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* emphasise the importance of consultation with people with disability. Where young children are involved, this will include consultation with parents and carers of children with disability, as well as their advocates and support agencies. Respectful consultation—in which views and experiences are listened to and incorporated into policies—can produce improved outcomes for children and families, and prevent discrimination.

Encouraging families of children with disability, as well as representatives of local support agencies, to contribute to the development and review of policies and procedures can help your ECEC service to address barriers to access and participation. Inviting input from families on policy development also demonstrates your commitment to improving inclusion by engaging directly with the people who have practical experience and expertise.

Learning from other services

ECEC services can benefit from building strong relationships with specialist early intervention and disability support agencies. This will help the service keep up to date with changing practices on how to support children with disability and complex additional needs. Ongoing learning can inform future policy development and further demonstrate how the ECEC service is seeking to promote inclusion.

Shared learning can also include other ECEC services in your community. There are many benefits to sharing problems and solutions surrounding inclusion with other ECEC services, including drawing on shared local knowledge of support agencies, suppliers and funding mechanisms.

Which policies help build inclusive services?

There are some key policies in ECEC services that can help to build inclusion. These are:

- **Statement of philosophy**

All ECEC services are required under the National Quality Framework to develop a Statement of Philosophy, which outlines the service's purpose, values and core principles. The service's philosophy will generally encompass social justice principles and a rights-based approach to equity, access and participation of all children. A Statement of Philosophy is the primary place where commitments to inclusion for all children are explicitly stated.

Questions to ask:

- » What does your Statement of Philosophy say about inclusion?
- » How is inclusion defined—is it specific about what inclusion means in your ECEC service?
- » Would families with a child with disability or complex additional needs feel confident that their child would be welcome and supported



Photo: Tony Phillips

- » at your ECEC service?
 - » When the Statement of Philosophy was written, were families of children with disability consulted?
 - » Is the Statement of Philosophy regularly reviewed?

- **Diversity**

ECEC services should have specific policies that demonstrate the service's commitment to eliminating discrimination and harassment, promoting access and equity, and valuing diversity. These are important policies to outline the service's attitude and approach, as well as guide decision-making and behaviour in the ECEC service.

Questions to ask:

- » Are your ECEC service's policies up to date with current legislation?
 - » How are the goals of the legislation reflected in each policy?
 - » How do these policies link to your ECEC service's Statement of Philosophy and operational policies?
 - » Who was consulted in the development and review of the policies?
 - » Do the policies include where to go for help if there is a breach of a policy?
- **Operational policies and procedures**
- Operational policies and procedures—such as enrolment, relationships with family, confidentiality and grievances—should be assessed from the perspective of how they support and foster inclusion. Sometimes indirect discrimination and barriers to access and participation can inadvertently emerge through operational policies. This is where consultation with the people who are implementing and affected

by the policy can prevent oversights and omissions.

Questions to ask:

- » Is the policy's terminology and language up to date?
- » Are children with diverse and complex additional needs directly addressed in the policy?
- » What level of consultation has taken place with families of children with disability in developing the policy?
- » How is the role of consultation with families described in the policy?
- » How accessible are the policies for parents and other support agencies?
- » Do practices and procedures such as information collection sheets, record keeping and staff training reflect the intent of the policy?
- » Does the policy explain where a family can seek additional information or provide feedback?

Where to find more information

You can access information and advice through the [Inclusion Support QLD program](#) for the Australian Government's Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP).



Photo: Vicki Yen

References

Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) National Alliance. (2012). *Develop and update policies successfully (without the stress)*. Malaga, WA: Child Australia.

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