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Enrolment and Orientation in Family Day Care

Educators and services have been successfully enrolling and orientating children for decades

Enrolment and orientation are, as every educator knows, important in Family Day Care. They are important for you as an educator because they are the processes that enable you to ensure your service is always full and because they are the processes by which you start to build a relationship with children and their families.

They are also important for the child because it is how the seeds of trust in us – as educators who will care for them – are formed. If they see their family engaging and trusting us, they will too.

They are important for the family because it may be the first time their child has been cared for outside the family, and it is where they develop their first impressions of us as an educator, and of your Family Day Care service.

Most Family Day Care educators and services have great enrolment and orientation processes, but we always need to reflect on our processes and policies.

- ▶ Are they still working effectively?
- ▶ Can they be improved?
- ▶ How well do families understand them?
- ▶ Are we still excelling when enrolling the third child of a family, or are there areas they may need to know or wish to discuss?
- ▶ Are we managing the paperwork part well, or is it unclear what we do and what the service does?
- ▶ Do we manage to make families feel part of our Family Day Care service?
- ▶ Do most or all of our enrolment and orientation processes really engage the child and give them the security they need?



“Enrolment and orientation, when conducted well, are opportunities to get to know each child and their family. They also enable families to become familiar with the service, educator, program, expectations, and the coordinators.”¹

1. [Orientation & Enrolment: Family Day Care](#), ACECQA.



Orientation and enrolment will look different in each Family Day Care service, and for each educator within that service. There are some legal requirements for the enrolment process that must be followed by the educator and the service.

What is enrolment and what is orientation?

According to ACECQA:²

*“An **enrolment** occurs when the provider has an arrangement with an individual or organisation to provide education and care to a child.”*

***Orientation** is the “process to support the child’s transition to the service, whereby families spend time at the service with the child a few times before leaving the child on their own. The time required for orientation and settling in will vary for each child and their family.”*

Please note: Some Family Day Care services refer to the orientation process as “transition visits” or “play visits”.

In most instances, the **Family Day Care service** will organise the enrolment process – which is the formal part of the process where the service develops the enrolment record for the child, talks to the family about service policies, obtains necessary authorisations, and manages the Child

Care Subsidy. (Sometimes, the family comes to the service via the educator; on other occasions, they come to the service directly, and then the service refers them to a specific educator.) An enrolment can be processed electronically via your service’s software, or prepared manually.

The **Family Day Care educator** will then commence an orientation process for the family, which may include a series of play visits (with the family staying with the child), and talking to the family about the child’s likes, routine and care needs. This is also when the educator will talk to the family about issues such as expected drop-off and pick-up times, and the unique ways they operate as a Family Day Care educator.

Sometimes, the educator’s **co-ordinator** will also be a part of the orientation process to bridge the service and the family, or sometimes, it will just be the educator.

2. [Orientation and Enrolment: Policy Guidelines](#), ACECQA.

Why is it important that enrolment and orientation is done well in Family Day Care?

The Guide to the NQF puts it this way:

“Families’ first major engagement with the service occurs during the enrolment process. The enrolment process presents an opportunity for services to share information about its operations, philosophy and governance with families.

Services can also encourage families to express their preferences about how the orientation of their child into the service will occur. This helps families to feel supported from the beginning and to understand that the service values their input about what is best for their child.

When families are given the opportunity to provide information about their children that will assist educators to get to know them and help them settle into the program, families feel that their suggestions are clearly valued and that they are regarded as partners in their child’s experience at the service. This partnership between the service and the family strengthens

when educators seek further information from families while assessing children’s progress and planning their individual goals.”

As well as these reasons, children take their cues from their family. If their parents or carers are relaxed with the Family Day Care educator, the child will trust that they can also relax with the educator – trust that the home is safe for them and that the educator will care for them.

Sometimes in Family Day Care, the need for a family to start care urgently is so high that the usual orientation process cannot occur. It’s important we still make time for the family to learn about our Family Day Care service and Family Day Care at a mutually suitable time.



Enrolment and orientation are the beginning of the relationship the educator and child and family will develop over the years.



What do the learning frameworks, National Quality Standard and Regulations say?

The *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* and *My Time, Our Place (MTOPI)*, the Regulations and the *National Quality Standard*, all lay the foundations and expectations for us about enrolment and orientation in Family Day Care.

The Early Years Learning Framework

The EYLF says that:

“Children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the context of their families and communities. This includes their relationships with people, places and things and the actions and responses of others. Identity is not fixed. It is shaped by experiences. When children have positive experiences, they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of belonging. Relationships are the foundations for the construction of identity – ‘who I am,’ ‘how I belong’ and ‘what is my influence?’

In early childhood settings, children develop a sense of belonging when they feel accepted, develop attachments and trust those that care for them...”

The EYLF also tells us that *“when children feel safe, secure and supported they grow in confidence to explore and learn”*.

What does this actually mean?

1. Experiences such as starting at Family Day Care, help form children’s identity.

2. If children feel they belong and feel safe at our Family Day Care, they will learn more.

Quality Area 6 of the NQS

Quality Area 6 of the *National Quality Standard* requires us to build collaborative relationships with families.

Element 6.1.1 requires that:

“Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.”

Element 6.1.2 requires that:

“The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child’s learning and wellbeing.”

Element 6.1.3 requires that:

“Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.”

What does this actually mean?

1. Families need to be supported to be involved with our Family Day Care.

2. Families are children’s first teachers and we need to respect their knowledge of their children.

Education and Care Regulations

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, a Family Day Care service must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for managing enrolment and orientation (regulation 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (regulation 170).

The most important parts of the law and regulations regarding enrolment and orientation require your Family Day Care Service **and** you as an educator to:

D Keep an enrolment record for each child with specific information in it:

- the full name, date of birth, gender and address of the child, language used at home, cultural background of the child and their parents/carers
- the names of the parent(s)/guardian(s)
- emergency contacts
- who can collect the child, authorise medical treatment, authorise transport of the child
- any court orders relating to parenting
- any special needs the child may have (including dietary, cultural or religious)
- authorisations giving you consent to provide medical treatment for the child and to seek medical attention for a child from a registered medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service, including transportation of the child by an ambulance service
- authorisations for regular transport or excursions

- health records, including contact details for their doctor, their Medicare number, immunisation status, specific health needs and management plans, and acknowledgment you have sighted their health record **(regulation 160)**.

D As a Family Day Care educator, you must take reasonable steps to ensure the enrolment documents are accurate (regulation 178).

- D You must make the enrolment documents available to the family or to authorised officers of the NSW Regulatory Authority on request **(regulation 178 and section 175 of the Education and Care Service National Law)**.

The Regulations tell us what you and the Family Day Care Service must have in the enrolment record for every child.

Why do we have orientation processes?

Think about how hard it can be for us as people to do something new – whether it be move houses, change jobs, meet new people, or travel somewhere different. If these things are hard for us, then imagine how much harder it is for a baby or child. Imagine also how hard it is for a family to trust the care of one of their most precious loved ones to us.

These are some of the reasons why we have an orientation process:

- ▶ **Because transition to Family Day Care can be complex.**

It is important that we remember that we may have enrolled dozens of children, but for each new child or family, it may be the first time they have started in Family Day Care, or any education and care outside of their family setting.

- ▶ **Because Family Day Care is unique and different.**

Not to us, but to newcomers! It is complex to understand the difference between the service and the Family Day Care educator.

- ▶ **Because this is where relationships start.** Orientation is where we begin to form relationships with the child and their families. When children see their families relax with us and begin to bond, they know they can be safe with us.

- ▶ **Because the formality of them allows information exchange.** We need to know a lot about the new child and their families, and they need to know about us as an educator. Formal processes ensure we obtain and provide the information we need.

- ▶ **Because they allow a family to talk about their concerns.** By acknowledging that families have concerns about putting their child into care, we can address them directly.

- ▶ **Because they give us a chance to present ourselves as an educator to the family.** It allows us to explain the depth and breadth of what we do with children.

- ▶ **They allow us to clarify expectations.** Clarifying expectations at the beginning helps both parties to be clear as the relationship progresses.



- ▶ **They enable us to show hospitality to families.** We are entering into a business relationship with families that may last for many years.
- ▶ **They enable us to showcase our environment and ourselves as educators.** This is where we can show how great we are as an educator – when they have time to take it in, outside the rush of drop-offs and pick-ups.

What do Family Day Care educators do during orientation sessions?

Every educator manages orientation differently but, essentially, it is based around visit/s by the new child with their family to our residence.

Different educators have told us the things that work well during orientation are:

- ▶ asking the family beforehand for any specific interests of the child, so they can ensure they have something available that will excite the child;
- ▶ having the family come at a time when they don't have other children, so the educator can focus just on the new child and families;
- ▶ having a few shorter play sessions to begin with, then gradually progress to a whole day visit before the child starts. Once the child starts (if possible), make the first few days shorter;
- ▶ where possible, making enrolments a minimum of two days a week seems to help a child settle into Family Day Care quickly;
- ▶ giving the child time to slowly examine the indoor and outdoor environment by themselves (such as during the time talking to their parents) can help them;
- ▶ having pictures of each child and their family on the wall can support new children to feel they belong;
- ▶ always having a set up that includes familiar things for play (don't bring out totally new resources each time);
- ▶ making sure families have somewhere to sit while their child is at a play session or when they come for a meet-and-greet, can make them feel more comfortable;
- ▶ talking directly to parents about any concerns they have about leaving their child before the first time they do this;
- ▶ explaining a little bit more about Family Day Care each time they see the family, including after the child has started to attend. This leads to less information overload;

- ▶ having a booklet for families prepared so that families can take information away with them to read and check information;
- ▶ having a checklist to work off, to ensure they had covered everything the family needs.

Some of the things that different families have told us about orientation and enrolment are:

- ▶ that it was usually during the first meeting with the educator that the family makes the decision to enrol their child, based on the strength of the connection they, or their child had made, with the educator;
- ▶ there was a lot of information for them to absorb during enrolment and orientation, and some key information was not communicated to them or they missed it at the time;
- ▶ forming a relationship with the educator was more important than viewing the residence;
- ▶ online enrolment processes were easier because they could get the information they needed and complete the form at their own pace.



Possible orientation and enrolment checklists

All educators should have their own checklists to determine what information they need to discuss with new families during the orientation and enrolment process. This also needs to be done in conjunction with your Family Day Care service. This list may also change if the family comes to you via your own advertising, or is referred to you by the service. The sample checklist below may help you draw up your own personal list.

Draft orientation and enrolment checklists

Contact and care details

- contact details swap – parent(s)/guardian(s) and educator’s phone and email addresses
- days and times of care needed
- hours and days available
- immunisation requirements

Fee information

- hourly rates
- minimum bookings
- public holidays
- absences
- payment processes
- Child Care Subsidy
- additional day availability and processes

Family Day Care operational information

- role of the educator and service
- enrolment process
- educator background and experience
- educator and service philosophy
- orientation process
- National Quality Standard, EYLF/MTOP, and service’s quality rating

- service policies
- relief educators/educator assistants (if applicable)

Care environment

- indoor
- outdoor
- sleep/rest
- other children in care on the same days

Child information

- current routines
- likes/dislikes/skills
- sleep/rest procedures and timing
- family situation
- eating likes/dislikes/restrictions
- medical or other conditions
- communication/toileting/other information

Educational program

- setting goals for children
- school readiness
- daily program
- development progress, e.g. observations, portfolios, etc.
- the importance of play
- play/messy play/wet weather
- excursions
- transport
- food (who supplies what)
- bedding (who supplies what)

Authorisations

- creams/lotions including sunscreen/Panadol
- water activities (if applicable)
- regular excursions/transport
- authorisations to collect
- medication
- media consent forms

Starting Family Day Care

- orientation/play sessions/transition visits (when and what)
- what to bring each day
- what not to bring
- what to wear (including SunSmart practices)
- what the educator needs to know each day (rest/illnesses/changes, etc.)

Arrival and departure processes

- signing in and out
- hazards on arrival and departure (e.g. gates that must be closed)

Educator's child protection obligations

Child exclusion periods

- when not to bring a child in – e.g. sickness
- when they can return to care after being sick
- why this is so important.



Having clear roles and responsibilities for enrolment

Because of the unique type of education and care that Family Day Care is – where the service and the educator are separate – it is very important that clear roles and responsibilities exist for the service and educators.

These roles and responsibilities should be clearly laid out in the service's enrolment policy: if they aren't, you may want to talk to your service about making them explicit. Having these roles and responsibilities clearly defined enables us to avoid duplication; understand what has been or will be communicated with the family; or who has the responsibility to obtain the correct documentation from the family.

It is important to remember that as Family Day Care educators, even if the service has obtained the information in the enrolment record, we have a legal responsibility to make sure that information is as correct as possible.

When we change information in the enrolment record, such as adding in a new authorisation, we also need to let our co-ordinator or someone else within the service know.

When a family enrolls an additional sibling, sometimes the roles can be blurred – by this stage, the family may have a stronger relationship with us as the educator than they do with the service. It is important that we continue to follow the formal processes. This way, we can ensure high quality practices are followed for all children.





How to ensure your families are well informed

Think of the many things that a new family needs to learn about Family Day Care:

- ▶ Child Care Subsidy and fees (so complex! Think about how long it took you to understand the issues such as allowable absences and Additional Child Care Subsidies!).
- ▶ Drop-off and collection protocols (e.g. which door do they enter, and is there a set time to pick up and drop off? What happens if they are late?).
- ▶ Additional days or hours of care (are these possible, how do parents/guardians ask, are they charged at the same rate?)
- ▶ Who do they pay fees to and when?
- ▶ How do they sign in and out, why do they have to do this?
- ▶ What do they pack in a child's bag?
- ▶ What clothes should they dress the child in?
- ▶ Lunchboxes!

- ▶ How do they find out information from you and give you information about the child?
- ▶ Excursions and outings.
- ▶ What happens if their child is sick?
- ▶ How will a child's special medical conditions be handled?
- ▶ How you will apply safe sleep practices and what does this entail?
- ▶ Who are the other people who live at your home?
- ▶ What happens throughout the day in Family Day Care?
- ▶ What will their child learn in Family Day Care?

Also, remember that just because you provide information to a parent or guardian, it doesn't always mean that it has been understood. That's why using written handbooks or providing information in bite-sized chunks can be useful and follow up with regular conversations.

Families can be concerned about putting their parenting skills on show to others – especially when they are placing their child into care for the first time. Having fears about their child’s safety and being concerned about what you will think of their child is natural.

Remember that many things that we think families know about Family Day Care are also culturally-biased knowledge. Things such as lunchboxes, the need to wear hats and sunscreen, the whole concept of excursions – a lot of these things may be different or non-existent in other cultures.

As Family Day Care is new to families, they may be uncertain of what they can expect from you or what they can ask about. Give them plenty of space to ask questions.



Reviewing your orientation and enrolment process

Reviewing your orientation and enrolment process regularly is a really good idea. Ask the parents what they thought of your enrolment and orientation process. Ask questions like:

- ▶ Did they receive all the information they required?
- ▶ Which did they originally find confusing?
- ▶ How could you make this clearer?
- ▶ What would they change about the process?
- ▶ Did they receive different information from the service and from you as the educator? How did they resolve this?
- ▶ What part of the orientation worked well for them?
- ▶ Do they think their child settled in well?
- ▶ What do they think you did that contributed to this?
- ▶ Was the process between the service and you smooth, or did they have to keep coming back to you or the service to clarify anything?

- ▶ Did they like what they saw from the first time you met them, or did it take a while?

Also go through this process with your co-ordinator. It may feel strange to do it so soon after enrolment, but you will be pleased you have when you take on your next enrolment.



Using your service's Enrolment and Orientation Policy

Your service must have an *Enrolment and Orientation Policy* under the Regulations. ACECQA³ suggests it should include procedures that consider:

- ▶ ensuring that the individual needs of children and families are considered throughout the enrolment and orientation process;
- ▶ effectively using the information supplied by the family about the child at enrolment and orientation to support the child to transition into the service, including incorporating the family's decision-making into their child's learning and wellbeing;
- ▶ use enrolment and orientation as a basis for forming collaborative partnerships with families and setting expectations;

- ▶ quality enrolment and orientation practices beyond the minimum regulatory requirements, including for things such as:
 - maintaining a waiting list,
 - supporting and assisting families to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child.

You need to follow this policy whenever you enrol a new child into your Family Day Care.

The policy should specify who is responsible for which parts of the enrolment procedure between you and your service. Remember you have a responsibility to ensure the accuracy of the enrolment record as much as possible, even if your service provides it to you fully completed.

3. [Orientation and Enrolment: Policy Guidelines](#), ACECQA.

Keeping enrolment records

Keeping accurate records is important in dealing with enrolment.

As a Family Day Care educator, you are responsible for keeping this record, and ensuring it is accurate. This is explained in the *Guide to the National Quality Framework*, an excerpt of which is below.

Children's enrolment record

The approved provider must ensure that an enrolment record is kept for each child enrolled at the service. The family day care educator must keep an enrolment record for each child educated and cared for by the educator. The enrolment record must include the information below.

Information that must be included in enrolment record

Full name, date of birth and address of the child

The name, address and contact details of:

- each known parent of the child
- any emergency contact
- any authorised nominee
- any person authorised to consent to medical treatment or administration of medication
- any person authorised to give permission to the educator to take the child off the premises
- any person authorised to give permission for the child to be taken outside the premises on an excursion
- any person authorised to give permission for the child to be taken outside the premises on transport provided, or arranged, by the service

Details of any court orders, parenting orders or parenting plans

Gender of the child

Language used in the child's home

Cultural background of the child and their parents

Any special considerations for the child, such as cultural, dietary or religious requirements or additional needs

Authorisations for:

- the approved provider, nominated supervisor or an educator to seek medical treatment and/or ambulance transportation for the child
- the service to take the child on regular outings
- regular transportation of the child

Name, address and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner or medical service

Medicare number (if available)

Details of any specific healthcare needs of the child, including any medical conditions, allergies, or diagnosis that the child is at risk of anaphylaxis

Any medical management plan, anaphylaxis medical management plan or risk minimisation plan

Dietary restrictions

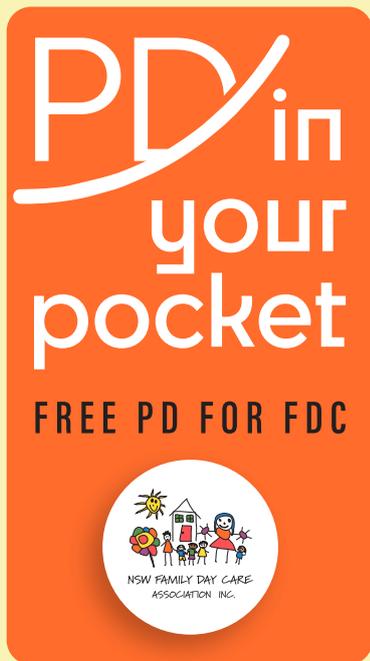
Immunisation status

If the approved provider or a staff member has sighted a child health record, a notation to that effect

In NSW, certificates for immunisation or exemption for the child, as required under the *Public Health Act 2010 NSW*



This booklet is part of the PD In Your Pocket professional development program.



This topic – **Enrolment and Orientation in Family Day Care** – has an accompanying webinar and video, both of which can be viewed as videos or listened to as podcasts.

There is also a Facebook Group where you can discuss the topic with other Family Day Care educators in NSW.

For more information about PD In Your Pocket, go to:

www.nswfdc.org.au/pdinyourpocket



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“We didn't realise
we were making
memories, we just
knew we were
having fun.”

A.A. Milne

leaf painting Mark



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