

Collaborative Partnerships with Families

- Communication Plan

Policy Statement

Meerilinga welcomes and facilitates family participation and open communication in the children’s programs by encouraging families to engage with their children’s education and care.

Family participation in our service conveys a positive impression to children and is an important aspect of making the service a true part of the community. Creating an environment that is welcoming and inclusive supports a sense of belonging for children, families and educators.

We believe in offering an open-door policy in which families are welcome to visit the service when it is convenient for them.

Policy Purpose

Meerilinga recognises that a successful partnership with families strengthens the children’s program. We believe families are children’s first teachers and therefore we embrace parents, guardians and family involvement, their knowledge and resources within our children’s programs.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Staff and Families.

Exclusions

Policy Review

Biennial or from time to time when the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operations and customer service.

Policy Reviewed	22 October 2023	By	Advisor Policy & Compliance
Approved By	CEO		
Previous Review	14 April 2021		

Implementation

We understand the primary influence that families have in their children’s lives, and that effective relationships between educators and families are fundamental to achieve quality outcomes for children. Positive relationships with families’ turns into a partnership as together we share a common goal and responsibility for reaching goals for children.

We believe that the whole community benefits when we engage in an authentic way to promote the value of early childhood education. Community partnerships that focus on active communication, consultation and collaboration contribute to children's learning and wellbeing.

Meerilinga aims to partner with parents, offering child educational services, share information with families about existing community resources and programs that might help them and provide information for families on health, development and other resources to support them in their own parenting and empowering them to help others.

We aspire to involve families in giving children various learning opportunities and experiences, in a variety of environments and in partnership with them. Providing opportunities to create positive outcomes for all, they can use their expertise as parents to make meaningful contributions.

Parent involvement brings positive outcomes such as:

- Builds knowledge and skills
- Improves the lives of other families
- Opens doors for employment opportunities
- Creates a sense of belonging
- Offers a sense of accomplishment
- Provides parents opportunities to effect meaningful change
- Provides parents opportunities to network with other families and providers
- Increases confidence in parenting
- Models community involvement for children
- Creates active recipients of care and services
- Makes providers accountable to families
- Increases sense of personal power; and offers leadership role models for other families.

* Excerpted from *Making Room at the Table*, Family Resource Coalition of America, 1998.

Information about Meerilinga's educational programs and children's individual participation in the program is shared with and available to families at all times in accordance with regulation 75 and 76.

Families can participate in our children's programs by:

- Working in partnership with Educators about their child's progress towards the learning outcomes, their strengths, abilities and knowledge. Share in the decision making about their child's further learning, development and wellbeing.
- Assisting with activities and projects at the service.
- Sharing their skills with the children, this may include playing an instrument, telling a story, sharing cultural traditions, cooking experiences, workshops etc.
- Joining the parent committee and or share feedback, ideas and thoughts about the service.
- Donating recyclable material and other resources that can be used within our early learning programs.
- Attending service events and celebrations that are organised throughout the year at the Service and in the community.

Information regarding family relationships or issues that may arise in their personal

lives will be handled confidentially. Every effort will be made to treat both parents/guardians equally. Parental responsibility remains with both parents/guardians jointly and individually except where it is altered by an order of the Family Court of Western Australia.

Refer to the Delivery and Collection Policy and Processes

Communication with Families

Meerilinga as an organisation aims to improve the quality of life for all families and children through their early learning programs, parenting support programs, facilitated playgroups and its registered training organisation. Information about the organisation is communicated to families and interested people through the Meerilinga website and social media.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with Meerilinga's Branding, Image and Reputation - Section 4 - Marketing and Advertising Policy.

The organisation encourages open and honest communication that can be conveyed through various methods as outlined in the Communication Plan process section of this policy.

Families are informed about what is occurring within the early learning programs through various methods as outlined in the Communication Plan process section of this policy.

Where required, Meerilinga will access support agencies for assistance and resources to communicate with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or have a hearing impairment.

The Nominated Supervisor/ Co-ordinator will ensure:

- Families are provided with information about the philosophy, policies and practices of the Service at the time of enrolment and through the orientation process.
- They are aware of the custodial and access arrangements for all families attending the Service and this information is conveyed to Educators. A copy of all legal documentation such as court orders and parenting plans are kept at the service.
- Educators provide information to families regarding the content and operation of the educational program, in relation to each child's learning and that a copy of the educational program is available for inspection at the Service.
- Families are provided with information on the various communication methods utilised within the service as outlined in the Communication Plan process section of this policy.
- Families are regularly provided with comprehensive, current and accessible information about the Service, relevant community services, and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
- A family consultancy group is established to encourage family involvement in the Service.
- Families are encouraged to give feedback regarding the enrolment and orientation process and when reviewing policies and procedures to improve processes and practice.

- Families are notified of an incident, injury, trauma or illness that occurs for their child while they are in attendance at the service.
- The early childhood environment has administrative spaces that are adequate for the purpose of consulting with families and for conducting private conversations.
- Families are given at least 14 days notice of changes to policies or procedures and fees charged in accordance with Regulation 172.
- Families are invited to enter the Service at any time unless such entry would pose a risk to the safety of children/educators or breach court orders regarding access to children.
- Families have access to a copy of the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Families are informed about the processes for providing feedback and making complaints.

The Educators will ensure:

- Families are consulted about how they would like to receive information about the Service and their child's progress.
- They promote continuous open and honest two-way communication with families, assisting them to feel connected with their children's experiences, developing trust and collaboration.
- They are available for families on arrival and collection times to pass on important messages and information about the child's wellbeing and participation in the children's program.
- Families are encouraged to be involved in the children's programs, providing feedback, visiting the Service, bringing items from the home environment and giving feedback on children's emerging interests and needs.
- They recognise that families, and parents in particular, are often busy with many competing priorities, they will need to consider a range of strategies to build and maintain relationships with each family.
- Documentation is prepared and made available to families in a way that is readily understandable to the parents of the child and to other educators
- They respond to families' questions, concerns and suggestions in a prompt and courteous manner.

Families will:

- Provide accurate and current information on enrolment and medical information forms.
- Notify the Service of any changes to the child's enrolment.
- Be invited to contribute to the quality improvement process, this includes reviewing Service policies and procedures.
- Be invited to Service events that support families to network and develop friendships in the local community. Educators will be encouraged to attend these events.