fka CHILDREN'S SERVICES INC

Engaging with Multilingual Families Reflection Booklet

As you engage in these reflective activities, be sure to document your thinking, actions and outcomes in your Quality Improvement Plan.

Understanding your enrolment practices

Enrolment is the perfect time to lay foundations for responsive and collaborative relationships with children and families, as it provides our first understanding of a family and child's identity.

It is here that we begin building individual relationships with each family. These moments also influence the ways in which families and children experience a positive sense of belonging and value of their identity within your environment.

It is important that we understand the value we place in the enrolment process and how this supports the needs of families, children, and the service.

- Enrolment is the first encounter families may have with your service

- At this point, families are sharing valuable information that supports you in establishing a connection with them

- At enrolment, early childhood professionals begin understanding the cultural values, expectations and experiences of each family

- Families and children begin to 'read' and understand the culture and values of the service and picture how they as a family can belong to the learning community

Reflection break

- What is your view of enrolment?

- What barriers does your service face with the current enrolment practices?

- Do these barriers affect the way you begin building relationships with families?

- In what ways would you like to strengthen your practice in this area?

- **What will you action?**

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Enrolment practices supporting families

It is important that we understand the experience of families and children during the enrolment process. This will help us to decide what actions we can take to offer support.

- Awareness and access barriers
- Communication and language barriers
- Barriers service providers, practitioners and educators perceive or experience
- Structural barriers
- Active/inactive prejudice or discrimination
- Trust/respect and identity barriers

Reflection break

- What is currently in place to support families in navigating the enrolment process?

- How do your enrolment procedures and policies support building relationships?

- What is one thing you could change or implement to minimise barriers families face at enrolment, to create an environment that supports a sense of belonging and connection?

- What possible barriers to active participation could your families be experiencing?

- In what way can you reduce these identified barriers?

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Engaging with your community

You will already have connections to a number of local community groups, services and networks.

Reflecting on the connections you already have, and those you endeavour to develop, is an important part of ensuring that your service enhances your growing knowledge as well as your capacity to support multilingual children and families and that your environment supports a sense of belonging.

- Connecting and engaging with local community services support your growing knowledge and capacity to support multilingual children and families

- Local community connections can support you in creating and maintaining an environment of belonging

- Regular engagement with local settlement services and migrant resource centres will contribute to building a network that is ready to support newly arrived families

Reflection break

- What local community services are you currently connected with?

- In what ways could you strengthen your engagement in your local community services network?

- What connections will you plan to develop?

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Welcoming first impressions

To ensure that your spaces promote a sense of connection and belonging, start with critical reflection. Use the following provocations to reflect on your spaces and practices.

Consider your pedagogy and the curriculum decisions in your environment:

- What areas of your program reflect the identities of your community? Look at your walls, display boards, resources on the shelves, characters portrayed in the texts available to children.

- What materials and resources could you include in your environment to support children and families in feeling a strong connection to the learning community?

- In what ways can families hear and see their language in your environment? What else might be useful to include?

> "…children [and families] feel welcome and learn well when professionals respect and acknowledge their unique identity"
>
> – VEYLDF (2016, p. 12)

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Welcoming environments supporting identity

When we think about the development of identity, it is important to view identity as a holistic and dynamic structure.

This means we need to consider the environment, including the physical and interpersonal environment, and how these environments support and impact a family's sense of belonging and identity.

Reflection break

- What is the relationship between welcoming environments, identity and inclusion in your service?

- What messages does your environment send about your philosophy on inclusion and identity?

- How might changing your lens of inclusion and identity support stronger relationships with families?

- What is one thing you will consider implementing to support a family feeling connected and strong within their identity at your service?

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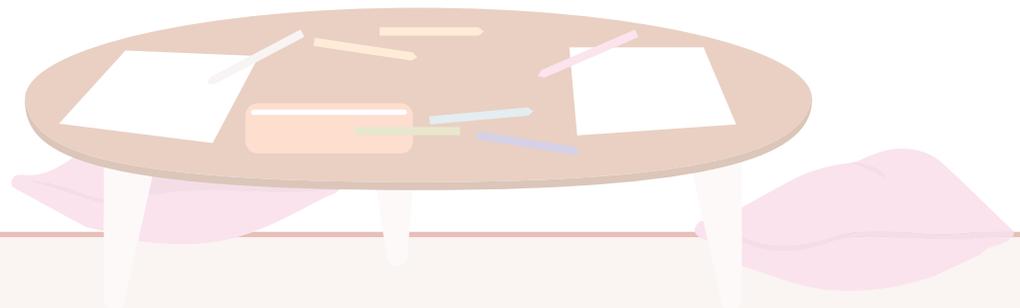
Using existing resources to support orientation

Understanding how the components of a strong sense of identity are supported throughout your environment, is an important step. The next step is reflecting on the tools and practices we already have in place, that support children and families orientating into our spaces, and where we might strengthen our approach.

How is your service supporting the transition families are experiencing? Consider the following:

- Review your current practices to identify what aspects and strengths of your current orientation practice supports families and children transition into your early learning space.

- Think about families individually. How are your processes equitable to all families?

- Identify the unintended barriers to inclusion prior to participation in orientation practices to proactively source strategies and procedures that support the active participation of all families who access the service.

- Identify the local support services available to you. Are there community connections that can support your understanding of what families require to experience a positive transition into your service? Could an interpreter or multilingual team member offer support?

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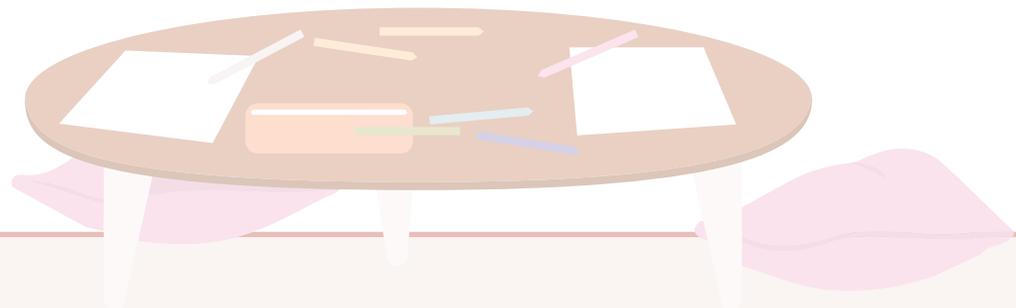
Identifying strengths to support reducing barriers

When we reflect for action, it is important to take time to reflect on what we are doing well, and the strengths we currently have.

It is through these strengths, that we can support improvement in other areas where you may feel that further development is needed.

For this reflection activity, consider the strengths you have within the orientation processes of your service. Think about what works well for you as the service, and for families and children.

You will then use these identified strengths to consider how you may be able to reduce the unintended barriers that families may face.

Reflection break

Think about your current orientation practices:

- What aspects of your current orientation practices support families?

- As a service and as an individual, what is occurring to empower families during these times?

- Can you identify the unintended barriers that families may face when engaging in your processes?

- What strengths in your orientation practices can support eliminating these barriers?

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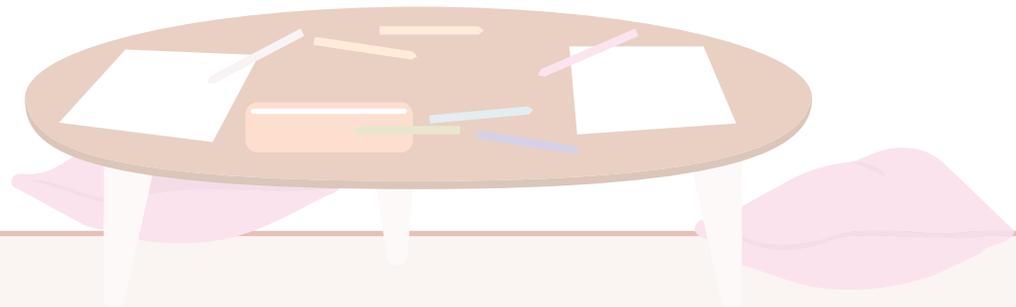
Planning for shared communication

Think about the modes of communication you may need to engage in prior to orientation, and where possible, employing these within the orientation period, to support families orientating into your environment.

Such inclusions will very much support you in the development of your relationship with individual families.

Reflecting on the types of communication that would best suit your community and your service, will support you in prioritising which modes of communication you may need to learn more about.

Reflection break

- What are the current modes of communication available to families at your service now? i.e., multilingual, visual, plain English?

- What mixture of communication styles would best suit the needs of your community?

- How will you investigate including these communication styles in your practice?

- Who will you consult with and gain further information from?

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Developing a shared communication toolkit

Including a range of communication tools in your toolkit will best support you in ensuring all families are receiving your messages, and families have an avenue to communicate with you.

If we think about the online resources available to us during the learning from home period, we can identify which methods worked well for our communities.

Reflection break

- What communication tools and resources support your shared communication with families?

- What modes of communication would you like to include in your toolkit as an embedded resource?

- Can you identify the unintended barriers that families may face when engaging in your processes?

- How will you begin to add these tools? What might you need to plan for?

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