

# Supporting your Child's Orientation in Early Childhood Education and Care Services

## Resource for Families

A positive start in early childhood education is important. It is important you and your family feel welcome, safe and supported. The first days at the service are about your child getting to know other children and beginning a trusting relationship with their teachers, educators and other early childhood professionals.

Early childhood education and care services in Victoria are guided by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). This framework informs educators that children's 'identity and their family and cultural histories shape their learning and development. Children feel welcome and learn best when professionals respect and acknowledge their unique identity' (VEYLDF, 2016, pg. 12). This understanding will underpin the approach educators take in supporting you and your child during their orientation and settling period at their new early childhood education and care service.

Early childhood education and care services view collaborative partnerships between educators and families as the foundation of a quality program. Respectful relationships from the beginning are a strong indicator of a high-quality service. You can expect educators to be warm and welcoming and encourage the use of your family language[s].

Services can support communication with you via a telephone interpreter service to ensure you are appropriately informed and have the opportunity to ask questions and seek further information in the language you are most comfortable with. In addition, a support worker who speaks your family language may be available to assist your child for a short period of time as they develop a connection and sense of belonging at the service.

Quality early childhood education recognises families as 'the primary influence on children's learning and development' (VEYLDF, 2016, pg. 9). Educators value and seek family input and involvement in the early years program. This not only informs the practice of educators but also helps children to develop trust, security and connection between the people in their education and care environments and home environments which enhances learning outcomes. Families are also encouraged to be involved with the service and present during initial sessions. This helps your child feel secure and helps you to understand what happens at the service when your child is there without you.

Your early childhood service will have an orientation plan to help you and your child become familiar with the services. This could include:

- visiting the service with your child before formal attendance begins
- starting with short sessions and building up to longer sessions to help you and your child feel comfortable.

Your early childhood educators will spend time with you and will ask you some questions about you and your child. This will give them a better understanding of your child's needs and helps them to create a program that maximises learning opportunities and positive outcomes for your child.

Examples of information an early childhood services may ask you to share with them are:

- Information about children's health – immunisation records, medical needs, illnesses or allergies.
- Nappy change preferences, toileting preferences and home practices.
- Foods children eat, mealtime customs/routines.
- Children's rest/sleeping needs.
  - Do they sleep in a cot, their own bed or co-sleep?
  - What songs might comfort them?
  - Do they have a favourite book, a special toy or blanket?
  - What times do they usually rest/sleep during the day?
- What celebrations and traditions are important to your family?
- Educators will welcome any other information you would like to share with them.
- You will also have information about your child that you would like the Educators to know that will help them to engage with your child.

## Other ways to support your child as they settle into their early childhood service

- Spend time with your child at the service – explain the routines of the service to your child, play, read stories and sing songs in your own language.
- Support them to communicate with other children. This might be simply by encouraging them to sit next to others, introducing yourselves to other children, joining in activities and games.
- Spend time talking with your child and others who speak the same language.
- Talk with your child about what they are experiencing and feeling: reassure and encourage them.
- Ensure your child knows who their educators are; their names and that they can go to them if they need any help. Give them opportunities to practice saying their educator's names with you and role-play asking for assistance.
- Always say goodbye before leaving and reassure your child you will be back later. It is a good idea to settle your child by helping them to engage in an activity with an educator and/or other children before you leave.
- Discuss the routines and environment of the service with children the night/morning before they attend to give them the opportunity to ask any questions and for you to respond to any concerns they may have.
- Remember your child's teachers and educators are there to support both you and your child during your time at the service.

### References

Department of Education and Training. (2016). *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*. Victoria State Government.