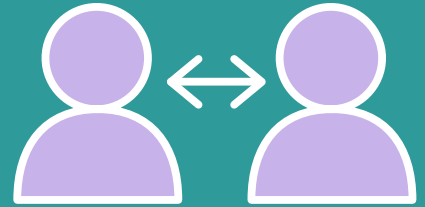


ABOUT TALKING TO FAMILIES



About talking to families in early childhood settings about their child's learning and development

Children can start preschool without families or carers noticing any developmental concerns. Sometimes you will realise that a child could benefit from more support. It can be a difficult or awkward conversation when you raise this initially with families or carers who may not be aware that their child will need some additional support.

The initial conversations can be uncomfortable and emotional but some families and carers might also feel relieved and validated if they have had concerns they have not discussed before. There are things you can do to help the process be a more positive one.

See the online practice guides for full references and to find out more:

edi.sa.edu.au/practiceguidance

Talk with families and carers as soon as possible

- Early intervention is more effective the earlier it is in place.
- Preschool educators only have a short amount of time to have an impact.
- If you say nothing to families and carers it could give them a false sense that everything is on track.
- Some services have long waiting lists.
- Getting access to services quickly helps the connection with other follow-up services that might be needed.

Obtain information about all children during enrolment

The enrolment and transition process is an opportunity to screen all children and get early data about those children who may need more support. Your preschool enrolment process could do these things:

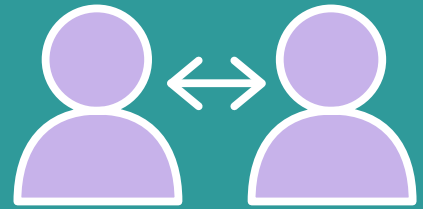
- Encourage families and carers to provide detailed information on the enrolment form.
- Have a questionnaire about the child's birth history, strengths, interests.
- Have a questionnaire about speech and language development.
- Have 2 transition visits, including 1 with support staff.
- Explain the role of Student Support Services, the consent form, and how any concerns will be followed up by the preschool.
- Use screening tools such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaires.

Gather information about services

When you talk with individual families and carers, the initial conversation will be easier if you can give them some possible options to consider. Services to contact could be:

- Department for Education Student Support Services, for example Speech Pathologist, Inclusion Educator, Psychologist
- local hospital services, including programs working with university students, for example Flinders Health2Go
- providers in the area
- private health funds
- Child and Family Health Services, for health check and site visits
- local councils for playgroups, and parent workshops
- Watto Purruna is the state wide service of which Muna Paiendi is one part of for the North only. There are Aboriginal Family Clinics which are also located South at Noarlunga and Clovelly Park
- Statewide Inclusive Education Services (SIES), formerly known as Special Education Resource Unit (SERU)
- other services such as Raising Children Network, Women's and Children's Health Network, Starting Blocks, Parenting SA, including the parent easy guides.

ABOUT TALKING TO FAMILIES



Get to know the child

Get to know the child as well and as quickly as possible. This will give families and carers confidence that you know the whole child, not just areas of concern. Remember that with Aboriginal children there may be long periods of silence or lack of eye contact, which is normal and appropriate. Ask the family who they want to be involved and find out who in the family can approve additional support.



Prepare responses

Have some phrases that you can use to start the conversation more smoothly, for example: 'I noticed you mentioned on (child's) forms that you have a concern about (for example child being understood by other family members). Could you please tell me a little more about that?' Remember that it's not your job as an educator to suggest a diagnosis.



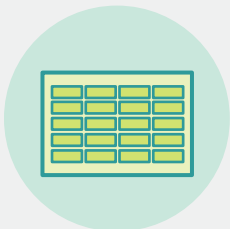
Cultural factors

Different cultures have different views of disability and this affects families and carers' willingness to look for support. Be aware of the cultural background of a family and research any possible influence this could have on their attitude to support. A child's family might not conform to your cultural expectations.



Information sharing

Ask for permission to talk to any other care environments using the permission for exchange of information form. Parents can also give you a report themselves from the other provider. When seeking input from Student Support Services, the family or carer will need to sign the Student Support Services consent form.



After the meeting

You can encourage the parents to follow up with health professionals if they still have concerns.

Contact families or carers the week after the conversation to see if they have any questions. The information might be new to them and they might need time to think about it.

If you take action with Student Support Services, follow the request for additional support process flowchart and tell the families or carers when this has happened.

If there are follow-up actions for families and carers, set a future date to contact them to see if they have been able to achieve this or if they need support.

If the child is in care, identifies as Aboriginal, has extensive adjustments requiring over 8 hours of support, or accesses a special options setting, then they need a personalised plan or One Plan developed in consultation with the families and carers (and the children themselves if appropriate).

