



Phone Link Ups

Effective Policy Development

Disclaimer

This information is based on information provided by our research and our expertise as service providers. You will need to ensure that you adapt it to your local needs and to stay up to date with current changes.

Key Questions

- 🎨 **Why policies?**
- 🎨 **What policies do I need?**
- 🎨 **What should a policy look like?**
- 🎨 **Who is involved in developing policies?**
- 🎨 **How do I review our policies?**
- 🎨 **Where can I get more information about developing policies?**

What is the difference between a policy and a procedure?

A policy is an outline of strategies and practices carried out by an individual or a group of people. At a centre level, 'Setting-based policies are sets of guidelines that define the way your service operates' (Farmer, 1995, p.3). Policies should reflect the daily practice within your centre. A procedure is the 'how to' part of the policy, as in 'how we will implement what we have written'.

For example, a Hygiene policy would outline the importance of good hygiene; ways of practicing good hygiene; what to do if good hygiene is not practiced. A procedure within the Hygiene policy would be the nappy changing procedure, which would detail how to change a child's nappy efficiently and hygienically.

Why do we need policies?

Policies are essential in ensuring consistency of care and practices within a children's service. They help to guide the actions of everyone involved in the service, and also provide a record of accountability. This helps to protect families, children, staff and management as well as allowing for clear communication about what is expected. So for example, if a service sends a child home with a suspected case of gastroenteritis, the staff at the service can feel confident in their actions, knowing they have a clearly written *Illness Exclusion Policy* to support their decision. Policies also provide stakeholders with clear information and guidelines about what to expect from their service. For


example, parents are aware that they are expected to apply sunscreen to their child on arrival at the centre and provide a hat for their child in accordance with the *Sun Protection Policy*. Clearly written and up-to-date policies also help staff in understanding their role, daily practices within the service and the reasoning behind these practices.

Which policies are required in my service?

CENTRE-BASED SERVICES

State Government – Children’s Services Regulations, 2004

For centre based services, the *Children’s Services Regulations, 2004* requires services to hold certain policies and procedures. For centre based care, the following policies are required:

-  Access Policy
-  Administration of Medication Policy
-  Arrival and Departure Policy
-  Child Health Policy
-  Child Protection Policy
-  Compliance to the Regulation Policy
-  Conduct on Excursions Policy
-  Conduct on Excursions: Water Hazards
-  Confidentiality of Records Policy
-  Emergency for Fires and Other Emergencies Procedure
-  Ethical Conduct Policy
-  Evacuation Procedure
-  Excursion Policy
-  Food and Nutrition Policy
-  Illness, Accident and Emergency Treatment Policy and Procedure
-  Infectious Diseases Policy
-  Interactions with Children Policy
-  Parental Involvement Policy
-  Pool Safety Policy
-  Procedure and Policy on Checking the Premises for Children at the end of the day
-  Procedure for Handling Complaints
-  Procedure on Access to Information About a Child For A parent
-  Procedure Relating to Information Access to Denied Persons
-  Storage of Dangerous Substances and Equipment
-  Sun Protection Policy
-  Treatment of Children with Special Needs Policy

Please ensure you check the *Children’s Services Regulations, 2004* for any other policies specific to your service. Please also note that this list may change with the introduction of the new Regulations this year.

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS, FAMILY DAY CARE AND LONG DAY CARE

Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA)

There are quite a number of policies which services are required to have within the Child Care Quality Assurance. You will need to develop a good understanding of the Child Care Quality Assurance system which applies to your service in order to ensure you have the appropriate policies. You may find that some of the policies required within the CCQA are also required by The Children's Services Regulations. This does not mean you have to double up, it just means you need to make sure your policy satisfies both the Regulations and CCQA. **Please see the attached pages for a list of policies currently required by the CCQA system applicable to your system.**

Organisational Policies






There may be other policies which are not required for regulatory or legislative purposes, but may be required by your organisation. For example, your organisation may require each service to hold policies in relation to Professional Development. Your organisation may also hold general policies which apply to all their services, such as *Staff Leave Policy*, and *Grievance Procedures*. You will need to ensure you, the staff and families at your service are aware of these policies, and of the procedure for reviewing these organisational policies.

Centre-Level Policies

There will no doubt be a multitude of other policies that are not required by governing bodies or by your organisation as such, but will be beneficial in promoting best practice within your service, and also in helping your service to operate as smoothly as possible. Additional policies may therefore need to be developed, to ensure that all aspects of your service's daily practices are reflected. Which actual policies you need will depend upon the circumstances and needs of your service. Some service-level policies you may have or may think about developing include: *Supervision policy*; *Maintenance of equipment policy*; *Planning and Programming Policies*; *Waiting List Policy*; *Visitors Policy* and *Staff Shifts Policy and Procedures*. Remember, all aspects of your service's daily practices should be reflected within a policy.

What should a policy look like?

Written policies should be clear and consistent, to make it easier for stakeholders to read and understand. When writing policies, you should use simple, non-jargon language so parents and staff alike can easily understand what is written. There are several components to a policy. An example of what should be included in a policy is below.

-  Policy Title (title of the policy)
-  Policy Number (sequential or linked in strands/clusters)
-  Rationale (why do we have or need this policy)
-  Policy Objective/Aim (what are we hoping to achieve)
-  Policy (detailing the procedures, expectation and how the policy will be implemented etc)

- 🌈 Legislative Links (does this link to any government policies and if so what are they)
- 🌈 Sources (a list of websites; publications and agencies that were used as references when developing the policy, or may be useful for further reading)
- 🌈 Date of Endorsement (date the policy was approved)
- 🌈 Date of Review (date the policy is to be reviewed)

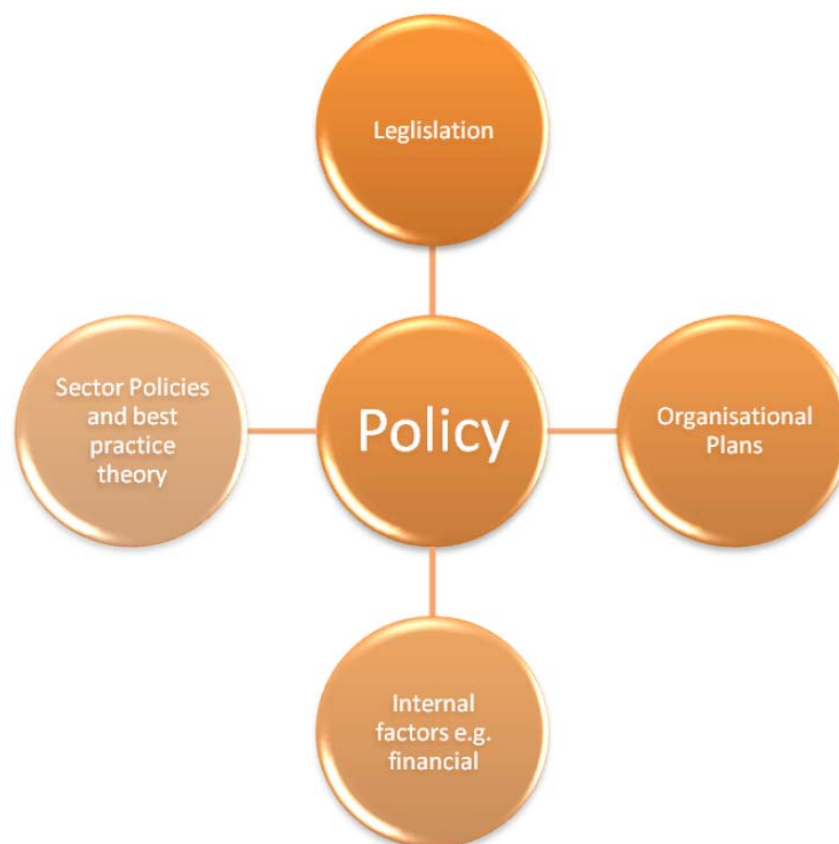
The NCAC have policy templates available on their website for services to use. Not all policies are covered in their template list; however it does provide a good guide on how to set out a policy, as well as useful sources for your policies. Go to:

http://www.ncac.gov.au/policy_development/policy_development.asp





There are also some sample policies available on the **Community Child Care NSW (CCCC NSW)** members' page. If you are a member of **CCCC NSW** you can access this page by going to www.ccccnsw.org.au and clicking on the "Members" tab.

How is a Policy Developed?

Policies are influenced by several factors. When developing policies you will need to determine what are the internal and external influences on the particular subject/area you are writing a policy. The diagram below demonstrates the various influences on policies.



Throughout the policy development process, it is best for a group or a committee to share the responsibilities involved in writing a policy rather than one person working alone. Not only does this help to lighten the workload, but also allows for greater consultation and sharing of ideas and perspectives. Policy development involves the following steps:





1. **Identification of policy required** – look at current policies, are there gaps where a policy is needed to guide best practice? Do you currently have all the required policies?
2. **Determine the goal of the policy** – why does the service need this particular policy? What is the aim of having this policy?
3. **Research and analysis** – this will involve gathering as much relevant information relating to the policy subject as possible. Relevant information may be gathered from the following : legal requirements from Government websites and publications; recommendations from recognised authorities such as *The Cancer Council*; looking at the service’s philosophy and related policies; sample policies from other organisations; documented information such as parent feedback/ incident and accident forms/observations/staff feedback through meetings and performance reviews.
4. **Development of a draft Policy** – a draft policy should include components similar to the ones outlined in the section above, or as set out on the NCAC policy templates. When writing the draft, ask yourself the following questions:
 -  Who am I writing for? Remember your audience. This will help you remember to keep the language simple, as well as remind you that the purpose of writing policies is to provide ‘best practice’ for caring for children.
 -  What am I trying to say? Make sure your main message is clear and to the point. Try not to get off the track too much. If you find you are digressing, perhaps you have found another policy that needs to be developed?
 -  Is the writing style consistent with other policies? You want all policies to be consistent in style, layout and language.
 -  What should be done to make sure the policy is implemented? What strategies and procedures need to be put in place to implement the policy?
5. **Review the draft policy**– copies of the draft policy should be shared with as many stakeholders as possible, including parents, committee/management members and staff members, for consultation. This may be done through general discussion in meetings; through surveys; or by having a copy of the draft policy accessible to families and staff, and asking for their input.
6. **Collate responses** – you will need to collate the responses and suggestions from stakeholders and determine what changes/additions should and should not be made to the draft policy. This decision should be based on whether the suggestions are: relevant to the policy; comply with relevant legislation, regulations and advice from registered authorities; in the best interest of the children. It is important to remember that reaching a consensus may not be easy, as there




may be times where what is considered 'best practice' or current thinking in the field differs from parents wishes.

7. **Develop Final Draft** – write the final draft on letter heads or with company logos in applicable. This is the final copy, so extra attention should be paid to ensuring the use of correct spelling, grammar, and content.
8. **Endorsement/Ramification** – The policy should be endorsed by the relevant managers/committee representatives. Endorsement verifies the authenticity of the policy. Copies of the final copy should be made available to stakeholders with an explanation of any consequent changes to practice.
9. **Implementation** – the policy is put into practice. As is the case with all policies, a copy of the policy should be available to staff and families.
10. **Review** - Policies should be reviewed regularly to accommodate changes in practice, legislation, standards and current trends. This requires services to stay up-to-date with current information, which can be done by attending training, conferences, reading relevant journals and newsletters, and checking recognised authorities' websites regularly.

There are no set time frames for how often policies should be reviewed; however they should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are effective and up-to-date. Services may find it useful to develop a schedule for when policies will be reviewed. The NCAC recommend that services aim to review their policies at least once between self-study periods. You may find that some policies are reviewed more regularly than others, due to changes in legislation or practice. Other policies may not change at all or very little, but it is important to at least take the time to review all of your policies to see if any changes need to be made.

When reviewing policies you may like to consider the following points:

-  What are the current trends, beliefs and information from within the sector? Will any of these changes impact on the practices within your centre, and thereby affect your policy?
-  Have there been any recent changes to legislation and/or regulation? If so, are these changes covered in your current policies?
-  What is the current information and advice coming from registered authorities? Is this inline with your current practices and what is written in your current policies, or will your policies need to be up-dated?
-  How effective is the current practice of your service? Is there anything in your service you could/should improve? Have a look through minutes from previous meetings; parent feedback forms and incident/accident forms. Are there any issues or ideas from these that require you to make changes to current practices? How will this be reflected in your policy?

-  Have there been any changes to your service since the policy was last reviewed/written? Changes may include physical changes to the environment, changes to staff and changes to daily practices such as routines and systems. If there have been changes, what were these changes, why did they occur and how will this be reflected in your policies?
-  Have you looked at policies from other organisations and sample policies from the NCAC? Is there any ideas/information from these that you would like to add to your policies?
-  How practical is your policy? Is it easy to understand, easy to read, consistent with the other policies in language and layout? Is it an accurate portrayal of the day to day practice in your service?

If, after considering the above points, you have decided not to make any changes to the policy, you will still need to write the date the policy was reviewed as well any sources used during the review process. This will show that your policies are up-to-date. After reviewing policies, services should destroy previous versions of the policy to avoid confusion.

How and Why do I Source Policies?

Sourcing policies is an important way of making sure the information in a policy is relevant, up-to-date and recommended practice. Policies that are clearly sourced by recognised authorities assist services in controlling risks, and making decisions which are supported by current research and advice. This can help parents and staff to understand the reasoning behind certain decisions and practices in the service. It also provides details for parents and staff to access further information. So, what are recognised authorities? Recognised authorities are organisations that provide specialist information and advice on current research. Some recognised authorities include:

-  Food Standards Australia (www.foodstandards.gov.au)
-  Early Childhood Australia (www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)
-  The Cancer Council (www.cancer.org.au/sunsmart)
-  Kidsafe Australia (www.kidsafe.org.au)
-  Sids and Kids (www.sidsandkids.org)
-  Raising Children Network (raisingchildren.net.au)








There are many other recognised authorities. To find more, you can access the **‘Useful Links for Services’** section on the NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au); read through the reference section in relevant articles and newsletters; use your internet search engine, e.g. safety standards for playground equipment. When sourcing your policies, you can also use other resources such as books and articles as references or ‘further reading’. Guides, manuals and journals published by organisations such as **Early Childhood Australia** and **Community Child Care Co-operative** are a good example of these.

Who is Involved in Developing Policies?

Everyone involved in the service should be involved in deciding what best practice is for children. This can include: *parents; children; families; staff; Managers/Directors/Co-coordinators; Management Committees; community members; students and child care and health professionals.*

How do I involve families in policy development?



Involving families in the policy development process not only ensures that the policies reflect their needs and interests, but also helps families to understand the practices of the service and the reasoning behind them. There are a number of strategies you could use to involve families in the process of developing and/or reviewing policies. Some of these may include:


-  Giving families a copy of the policy with a note explaining why you are reviewing/developing the policy and what kind of input you are after.
-  Holding a parent meeting, openly discussing the content of the policy.
-  Having a policy development consultation group whereby parents are asked to be a part of the process, including doing some of the research; proof reading; designing the layout etc.
-  Sending out a feedback form or survey to families, asking for their feedback on specific policies/practices.
-  Having a 'policy of the month' system where a policy is displayed once a month with feedback forms attached (or sent home via newsletters).
-  Writing down comments and feedback from parents, which relate to policies and practices.
-  Looking through the complaints/feedback register in your service.

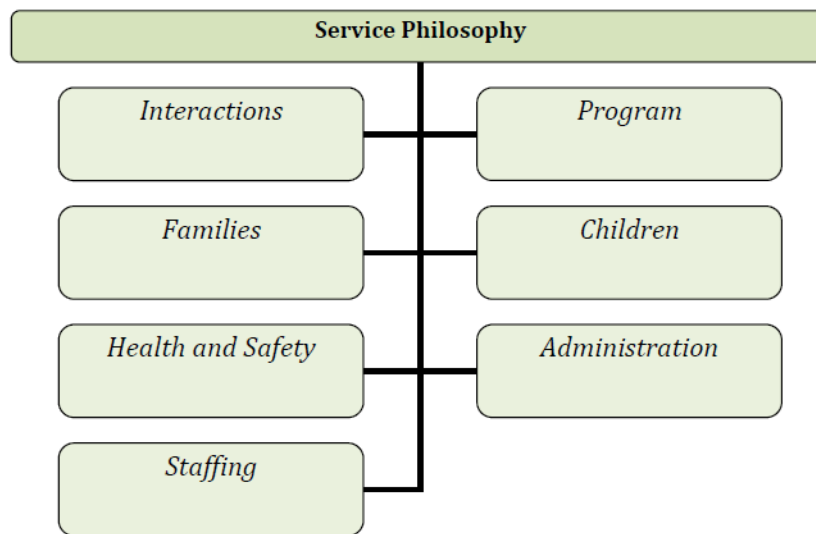
You may not always receive as much input from families as you would like, however it is important to demonstrate that you are trying to consult families in as many ways as you can. It is also important to remember that families have busy lives and daily pressures that we may be unaware of, so giving them ample time and opportunities to offer feedback is needed.

Clustering Policies

Policies can be grouped together in a variety of ways. How you cluster your policies depends on your service and preference for organisation. Here are some suggestions:







-  Some services group their policies according to QA areas, which makes it easier come validation time. However, this then leaves a whole lot of policies that do not come under QA but still need to be filed somewhere.
-  Many centres have a separate Health and Safety policy folder, as there are quite a number of policies and procedures which fit within this heading.

 Common policy clusters include:



However, your service may come up with another system for clustering or grouping your policies. As long as the policies are readily accessible and available to all stakeholders, the policies can be grouped in any way that is convenient and practical for your service.

References and Further Reading

-  Community Child Care Co-operative NSW (2001). 'Developing your centre's policy guidelines'. Rattler. Issue 58. Community Child Care Co-operative Ltd NSW.
-  Community Child Care Co-operative NSW (2005). *Managing a Child Care Service: 2005 Student Edition*. Community Child Care Co-operative NSW
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-  National Child Care Accreditation Council (2006). 'Ask a Child Care Adviser – Involving Families in Policy Development and Review'. Putting Children First. Issue 17. National Child Care Accreditation Council.
-  National Child Care Accreditation Council. Policy Development Guide www.ncac.gov.au
-  Network of Community Activities (2005). *Policies in Practice Manual*. Network of Community Activities: NSW

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Program for Isolated Children, Families and Communities

