

Enrolment Tips for Migrant and Refugee Families in Early Childhood Services

Belonging, Being & Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) has been developed to assist educators provide all young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. The EYLF puts great emphasis on the value and importance of demonstrating respect for diversity and cultural competence within your child care service and states that 'learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with families.'

(EYLF: p.12)

In genuine partnerships, families and early childhood educators value and trust each other, communicate respectfully and engage in shared decision-making. The enrolment process is an important process in establishing and building a trusting partnership between you as an educator, and with migrant and refugee families. If you ensure that this is a positive experience for all, a strong foundation will be laid. This will provide future opportunities for partnerships with families to find inclusive and equitable ways to achieve quality outcomes for children.

Things to consider

- Don't assume parents can read and write in English if they can speak English.
- Families may be wary of providing personal information depending on past experiences with authorities (refer to **Tip Sheet 6** on *Working with Refugees*).
- If a family has become comfortable with a particular worker try to keep consistency between that worker and the family.

If you are unsure about what to do, all you need to do is ask sensitively.

Tips on how to ask sensitive questions

- ▶ Explain clearly and simply why you need the information.
- ▶ Remember to use a relaxed and informal manner.
- ▶ Ensure quiet and uninterrupted space.
- ▶ Do not pursue questions that cause unease or discomfort.
- ▶ Only ask questions relevant to the information that you need.
- ▶ Some examples "do you mind if I ask you about" or "we would like to understand more about ... so that your child will feel more included in our centre, that is why we need to ask these next questions".

Things to remember



- Be fully prepared for the enrolment interview beforehand including an initial assessment as to whether you may need an interpreter and/or access to other resources.
- Allow adequate time to explain how the service operates and reassure families of the professional skills and qualifications of educators.
- Explain the benefits of using the service, how it can assist the child's health, development and learning, for example, offer some examples of the educational benefits of learning through play.
- Encourage families to ask for support and information and to share their cultural practices with staff. (See *Tips on how to ask sensitive questions.*)

Tip Sheet 3

Quick Tips

- ▶ Provide an option to complete the form orally with the family and/or give the family the opportunity to take the form home to complete with clarification about what needs to be completed before enrolment commences.
- ▶ Adopt a sensitive and gradual approach to collecting information. If forms are lengthy, consider scheduling two or more meetings for gathering necessary information for the enrolment process.
- ▶ When you are arranging an enrolment interview, explain to the parents that they are able to bring an adult family member or another adult of their choice with them for support.
- ▶ If necessary, ensure you have organised an interpreter and have made the necessary preparations (refer to **Tip Sheet 4** on *Using Interpreters*).
- ▶ Do not use children as interpreters.
- ▶ Try to gather some background information on the family's cultural background.
- ▶ Schedule in ample time for the enrolment process. The use of interpreters when gathering relevant information from parents will take a longer time than usual to complete this process.
- ▶ Before you start to ask questions, explain the principles and requirements of the enrolment process so they are clear of what is expected.
- ▶ Consider the questions that are asked in the enrolment process. Before you start, explain why you are asking them and what you will do with the information. Reassure the parents that the information gathered is confidential.
- ▶ Consider how you ask the questions. Some questions could be considered too personal or intrusive. Always explain why you require that information.
- ▶ Be aware that families may not be able to answer all of the questions and may not have the required documentation (be prepared to assist the family with access to documentation). Manage this with sensitivity and understanding.
- ▶ Remember to take this opportunity to ask families whether there are any culturally specific practices or preferences around etiquette or religion that they would like to be observed, including childrearing practices and cultural dietary restrictions. Asking families about toileting, sleeping and feeding routines may allow for a soft approach for other more sensitive issues to be raised.
- ▶ Remind parents to bring their immunisation documents and/or other documents relevant to the enrolment process.

Support Services

Bicultural Support Program

Provide time limited linguistic and cultural support to eligible children's services to assist with the inclusion of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, refugee and Indigenous children. Recruitment and training of new workers offered on an ongoing basis. To access the program you need to be referred by either Children's Services Central or by your regional Inclusion Support Agency.

Phone: 02 9569 1288
www.eccfcsc.org

Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) - Sydney North West

Provide childcare services staff with practical advice and support in including children with additional needs into a quality child care environment.

Phone: 02 4732 7843
Email: isa@penrithcity.nsw.gov.au

Resourcing Parents Network

A Families NSW funded initiative aimed at assisting parents looking for parenting information and parenting education includes a 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Resources' page with links to resources and information available in community languages about child development, health, feeding and nutrition, mental health, parenting, parent education, and safety/child protection.

www.resourcingparents.com:80/cald.html