

Montessori Works

Background

Feedback from families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating a Service that meets regulations, meets the needs of enrolled children and their families, and continues to improve the quality of education and care it provides to children.

It is inevitable that feedback will include differing opinions, occasionally resulting in complaints.

Policy statement

This Policy details the Service's procedures for receiving and managing informal and formal complaints. Parents and staff therefore can lodge a legitimate grievance in the knowledge that it will be managed diligently and confidentially.

Strategies and practices

- The Service's processes for airing concerns/complaints are communicated to families at enrolment.
- The email address and telephone number of the Service's Approved Provider and, if relevant, Management Company, together with the full contact details of the Regulatory Authority are displayed in the entrance of the Service, and are also listed in the Parent Handbook.
- The Service prioritises open, respectful and confidential exchange of information between the Service and its families. Parents are provided with many avenues for verbal and written communication about the Service's operations. Parents are informed when any of their feedback has led to improvements in the way the Service operates. Refer to the Service's *Interacting with Families Policy*.
- The Nominated Supervisor models respect and a problem-solving approach to the receipt of grievances and complaints, and engenders this across the Service.
- Educators and staff receive professional development on ways to receive parents' concerns/complaints and to value the opportunity this feedback affords the Service for quality improvement.
- Staff/educators, students and volunteers are informed of the Service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* before commencing at the Service and are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement to strictly adhere to that Policy.
- At all times the parents' right to air a grievance will be respected and no discrimination will be applied to either the family or child/ren as the result of the grievance.
- Parents are encouraged to raise informally with the child's primary educator or the Nominated Supervisor any concerns they have about the daily care of their child.

Grievance and Complaint

- Formal complaints can be raised verbally with the Nominated Supervisor who will document the complaint clearly and objectively on the Service's Grievance and Complaint Form. If the grievance is about the Nominated Supervisor, the matter can be directed to the Approved Provider.
- The Service maintains a register of written complaints and actions taken in response through its Grievance and Complaint Register. The register is reviewed regularly (e.g. nature, recurrence, outcome) to determine if the actions taken are consistent with the Service's Quality Improvement Plan and if changes to the Service's Policies are required. Each review is documented on the Grievance and Complaint Analysis Sheet.

Procedure for formal written complaint

- Complaints are to be submitted in writing using the Service's Grievance and Complaint Form. Information requested on the form includes the:
 - Name of the person making the complaint
 - Postal address and/or telephone number of the person making the complaint
 - Details of the complaint
 - Details of any witnesses.
- The complaint will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. The Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider or delegated staff member involved in investigating the complaint will ensure that information is restricted only to those who genuinely need to be notified in order to deal with the complaint. If information specific to the complaint needs to be disclosed to others during its resolution, the complainant will be informed prior to this occurring.
- The complaint will be entered into the Service's Grievance and Complaint Register, and written acknowledgment that the complaint has been received sent to the complainant.
- The Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider will investigate the complaint in an equitable, transparent and fair manner, and document the findings. Investigations involve consulting with the relevant stakeholders (including any person who may be the subject of the complaint) and reviewing documentation such as attendance records, accident reports and the Service's Policies.
- Actions to address the complaint will be determined, and the complainant notified in writing of those actions.
- Should the complaint made to the Service allege that the relevant legislation has been contravened or that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is compromised while that child or children is or are being educated and cared for at the Service, the Regulatory Authority will be notified within 24 hours of the complaint being lodged.
- When an issue cannot be resolved at the Service, the complainant can contact the Regulatory Authority.
- The same processes as those set out above apply to educators and staff in submitting formal complaints about any aspect of the Service's operations. However, staff grievances are dealt with under its Staff Grievance and Complaint processes.

Grievance and Complaint

Additional safe practices for babies

- N/A

Responsibilities of parents

- To raise issues and concerns in a timely manner using the processes outlined in this Policy.

Procedure and forms

- Confidentiality Agreement
- Grievance and Complain Analysis Form
- Grievance and Complaints Form
- Grievance and Complaints Register

Links to other policies

- Educators Professional and Ethics Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Interactions with Families Policy
- Policy and Procedures Review Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

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| Regulation | 168 | Education and care service must have policies and procedures |
| Regulation | 173 | Prescribed information to be displayed |
| Regulation | 176 | Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority |

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| NQS | QA4.2.1 | Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills |
| NQS | QA 6.1.1 | Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and to contribute to service decisions |
| NQS | QA 6.1.2 | The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing |
| NQS | QA 6.1.3 | Current information about the service is available to families |
| NQS | QA 7.1.1 | A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations |
| NQS | QA 7.1.2 | Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service |
| NQS | QA 7.1.3 | Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service |
| NQS | QA 7.2.3 | Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development |

Sources, further reading and useful websites

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 (September 2020 Update): Section 4 – Operational Requirements <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Guide-to-the-NQF-September-2020.pdf> accessed 30 December 2020

Grievance and Complaint

Further reading and useful websites (Consistent with the approach of the National Quality Framework, the following references have prioritised efficacy and appropriateness to inform best practice, and legislative compliance over state or territory preferences.)

- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority – <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>
- Bhathela, M., Dunn, L., Tregillgas, T. (2008) Ask a child care adviser (sic): Managing challenging issues with families.
https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20170216174643/http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/pcf-articles/ACCA_Managing_Challenging_Issues_Sep08.pdf
- Owens, A. (n.d.). *Managing complaints*.
https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20170216181546/http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/factsheets/oshcqa_factsheet_15_managing_complaints.pdf
- ACECQA. (2017). *Reporting requirements about children*. <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/reporting-requirements-about-children>

Policy Review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service’s commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

| Version | Date Reviewed | Approved By | Comments/Amendments | Next Review Date |
|---------|------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | 8 January 2018 | Dr Brenda Abbey (Author) | Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs. | |
| 2 | 6 September 2019 | Dr Brenda Abbey (Author) | Updated references. | |
| 3 | 29 November 2020 | Dr Brenda Abbey (Author) | Updated references. | |
| 4 | 30 December 2020 | Dr Brenda Abbey (Author) | Updated references. | |
| 5 | May 2022 | ACA NSW | Updated References Updating Regulation Table | |
| 6 | August 2022 | Susan Chahwan | Adapting ACA NSW policy | |