

Working with families



These tip sheets are designed to help all professionals who work with young children to promote respect and gender equity in their work.

Supporting children to have respectful and equitable relationships when they are young can help them grow into resilient, caring and well-functioning young people and adults and is a key step towards preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women. This involves nurturing children and helping them learn the skills to acknowledge and accept difference, resolve conflict and solve problems. It is also about challenging gender stereotypes, so children of all genders grow up feeling heard, valued and respected.

Conversations with families are important

When we work with children, we also work with their families. Parents, carers and families have a strong influence on children's identities, their view of the world and their development.

Communicating regularly with a child's family helps you to share knowledge with them about their child's learning and establish a partnership approach to supporting their development.

Communicating openly with families also helps create a shared understanding about what children are being taught and the kind of conversations they are having while at the service.

Having conversations with families about respectful and gender equitable relationships is not always easy, particularly if families are not used to talking about things like gender. They might also have pre-existing ideas about what their child should be learning, and this may not include respectful and equitable relationships.



Tips for talking to parents and families about respect and gender equity

- Try to focus your conversations on the child's learning and development. Talk about how respectful and equitable relationships fit into the curriculum or service philosophy and share the ways you approach this. Focus on children's strengths and the progress they are making. Talking about respectful relationships in this way helps families to recognise it as an area of learning and supports them to identify their child's achievements.
- Respectful conversations are reciprocal. As well as an opportunity for you to deliver information about their child, families should have space to share their ideas. Encourage families to share their thoughts and ideas about respectful and gender equitable relationships and how the service promotes them. Support them to share their own thoughts about their child's learning and play.
- The way in which you conduct conversations with parents is also important. Conversations should be safe, non-judgmental, supportive and culturally appropriate.
- Create an environment where families feel welcome and comfortable just dropping in for a chat. Where possible, try to communicate with families in their first language. Pay attention to who you talk to and about what. Are there some families you speak to more?
- Use a range of communication strategies that acknowledge the different preferences or needs of families. As well as one-on-one conversations, consider other ways of communicating about your service's commitment to gender equity and respect through newsletters, email, visual displays or by sharing resource sheets, interesting articles or videos.



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