



INFORMATION SHEET

Guidelines for documenting children's learning

Documented plans, records of children's assessments and evaluations can be effective ways to support and extend children's thinking, learning and development.

One of the strengths of the approved learning frameworks¹, the National Quality Standard (NQS) and related regulatory standards is that while acknowledging the important role of documentation, they are not prescriptive about how it is done.

Recognising the individuality of each service, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Educators can explore a range of styles and methods to determine what works best for their children, families, service and community. This recognises the professionalism of the sector and allows educators to concentrate on documentation that supports quality outcomes for children.

Points to keep in mind

- **View** documentation as an important part of your work with children and families.
- **Capture** children's voices and ideas in planning, documentation and evaluation.
- **Try different methods** to find what is realistic, achievable and relevant for children, families, educators, then set and establish some benchmarks that are reviewed regularly.
- **Be selective** in what you choose to document because it is not possible to capture all of the rich experiences and learnings that occur every day.
- **Share** documentation efforts and experiences, and continue to learn, grow and develop.
- **Be open to change** as the dynamics of the children's group or team change.
- **Constantly review and remind** yourself why you are documenting and for whom.
- **Make it relevant for the setting**, as documentation will look different across different settings. For example, long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and preschool require different methods of documenting, given that children vary in ages and amounts of time spent in the service.
- **Be clear** about what the standards, learning frameworks and, if relevant, the funding agreements are asking you to do.

Why do you need to document?

Gathering and analysing information about what children know, can do and understand is part of the ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning.

¹ (The Early Years Learning Framework, the Framework for School Age Care and other frameworks approved for use in Tasmania, Victoria, West Australia and the Australian Capital Territory – see regulation 254 - **Declared approved learning frameworks**, Education and Care Services National Regulation). Information on and copies of jurisdictional specific approved learning frameworks can be obtained from the relevant state or territory education department.

This process helps educators (in partnership with children, families and other professionals) to:

- **plan effectively** for children’s current and future learning/wellbeing
- **communicate** about children’s learning and progress/wellbeing and development
- **determine the extent** to which all children are progressing in their learning outcomes and if not, what might be impeding their progress
- **identify** children who may need additional support in order to achieve particular learning outcomes and provide that support, or assist families to access specialist help
- **evaluate the effectiveness** of learning opportunities, environments and experiences offered and the approaches taken to enable children’s learning/wellbeing
- **reflect on pedagogy** that will suit the context and children².

The requirements for documentation are outlined in Quality Area 1 of the NQS and in regulations 73 to 76 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations and section 168 of the *Education and Care Services National Law*.

Do I need a template or a program to follow?

No - there are no mandated templates or programs for documenting children’s learning or educational experiences. While templates and programs may be a helpful way to organise information, there is a risk that they can be limiting. Resist the temptation to reduce documentation to a ‘tick and flick’ approach. It is not about filling in blank boxes.

There are many ways to document children’s learning and the cycle of observing, planning, reflecting and evaluating. Examples include:

- reflective journals
- photographs
- videos
- children’s work
- observations
- portfolios
- narratives
- learning stories.

The main thing to remember is that it is not the amount of documentation you have, or how immaculately or colourfully the information is presented, but how the documentation is used. Ask yourself, how does the documentation assist in planning effectively for children’s current and future learning and communicating about children’s learning and progress?

What is the authorised officer looking for when they are assessing and rating?

The authorised officer will observe, discuss and sight supporting documentation to identify examples and evidence that your service is meeting the NQS and legislative requirements.

Be prepared for these assessments by thinking about how you would talk about your documentation and what you particularly want the authorised officer to observe, discuss and sight that shows how you are meeting the requirements.

² (Page 17 of the *Early Years Learning Framework* and page 16 of the *Framework for School Age Care*).

While the *Guide to the National Quality Standard* provides examples on documentation, it is important to remember the examples are not a checklist, but rather 'paint a picture' of what is expected at the Meeting National Quality Standard level.

Are there resources and examples of documentation available?

Many educators have generously shared their thoughts and ideas about documentation. For example, the [Early Childhood Australia Professional Learning Program](#) includes several newsletters that explore documentation and provide examples.

Another example can be found in *Rattler* (issue 109) where teachers from the Mia Mia Child and Family Study Centre share examples of their documentation.

The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) online library also includes resources. The Professional Support Coordinator in each state and territory provides professional development and support in this area.

Your peak organisations are also likely to have resources and professional development available to help you.

In addition to the learning frameworks, the related educators guides – *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework* and *Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care* and the *Early Years Framework in Action* are useful resources.

For more information on documentation please visit:

ACECQA – www.acecqa.gov.au/mythbusters

Community Child Care Co-operative NSW, *Rattler* Magazine – Edition 108 and 109

Early Childhood Australia – <http://bit.ly/1glQpfG>, <http://bit.ly/1nlinNY>, <http://bit.ly/OnusIO>

Inclusion and Professional Support Program On-line library – www.ipsplibrary.net.au

Professional Support Coordinators Alliance – www.pscalliance.org.au

