

COMMUNITY CHILD CARE

DEVELOPING POSITIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS IN A COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD CARE CENTRE

Adapted with permission from Queensland Council of Social Service Inc (QCOSS) Child Care Management Training & Support Unit www.qcoss.org.au

Respect and trust are fundamental to the development of positive working relationships. In a childcare centre there are several key sets of relationships that the management committee must establish. These are:

- ▶ The relationships between the management committee members and between the committee and the general membership.
- ▶ The relationship between the management committee and the director or coordinator.
- ▶ The relationship between the management committee and the staff.

Creating a climate for positive working relationships

The use of good communication skills by all involved will contribute to the development of these relationships. These skills include:

- ▶ Actively listening to one another
- ▶ Accepting that different people will have different views
- ▶ Considering contrasting perspectives before coming to a decision
- ▶ Saying what we mean but in ways that are respectful to others
- ▶ Attempting to reach consensus or, if this is not possible, agreeing to disagree in a principled way
- ▶ Keeping discussions confidential where necessary

It is also useful for each participant to remember that there are differences in personal style and that there are no right and wrong ways of feeling and thinking – just different ways of doing so.

Creating a climate for positive partnerships with families

Positive relationships between the management committee, director or coordinator and staff help create a climate for developing the most important relationships of all – supportive relationships and partnerships between children, families and staff. These are the most important relationships in the service as they have the greatest impact on children.

The relationship between the management committee and the director or coordinators.

The selection and appointment of the director or coordinator of a service is one of the most important decisions a management committee has to make as, together with the management committee, the director or coordinator provides leadership at the centre.

When selecting a director or coordinator it is important to consider the applicant's professionalism, competence, communication skills, ability to plan and to relate to people at all levels. You may also want to consider the applicant's suitability for undertaking tasks that may be specific to your service or community. For example, marketing your service or managing limited resources.

It is important that the responsibilities of this person be clearly defined by the committee. Generally this person is regarded as the front-line manager of the service overseeing key aspects such as:

- ▶ The care and education of children
- ▶ The management and professional development of staff
- ▶ The promotion of positive relationships with families
- ▶ The implementation of high standards in terms of protective care, health and safety
- ▶ Assurance that all Regulations and Acts are complied with on a day-to-day basis.

This person is also the first point of contact for staff and parents when issues arise. The director or co-ordinator is accountable to the committee and the members of the association. Although the committee delegates tasks to this person the committee remains legally responsible for the management of the service.

The relationship between the management committee and staff

All staff are in the first instance accountable to the director or coordinator of the service. Overall all staff are accountable to the management committee. One way some services foster good management-staff relationships, is by having a staff member attend all or part of management committee meetings. Some management committees have a staff liaison member who attends part of some staff meetings and is the designated point of contact for staff to raise suggestions or issues with. It is a good idea to include issues / ideas and feedback for the committee as a regular agenda item staff meeting. Any items raised are then passed on to the committee by the director.

Practical tips for building relationships

Between committee members:

- ▶ Consider an annual retreat or planning day. This allows time for organisational planning as well as social interaction.
- ▶ Include a coffee-break or meal in the meeting schedule to encourage informal discussion.
- ▶ Hold a training program for new members. Community Child Care provides training for management committees on their roles and responsibilities.

Between the committee and general membership:

- ▶ Hold general meetings to discuss topics of interests – invite guest speakers.

Between the committee and director or coordinator:

- ▶ A trusting relationship between the chairperson and the director is particularly important for effective leadership. Regular meetings or phone/email contacts are useful for keeping each other updated on events and situations. Both should operate on the principle of 'no surprises'. That is, if one party has concerns or news (good or bad) then the other party should be among the first to hear about it.

Between the committee and staff:

- ▶ The achievements of staff should be celebrated and appropriately acknowledged. This can be done publicly in centre newsletters, through a special resolution noted in the minutes, letters of thanks or award systems.
- ▶ Committee members can attend special events at the centre to show their support. A calendar of such functions presented at a committee meeting is a useful reminder.

When both parties act fairly and in accordance with good employer-employee principles, mutually supportive relationships develop.

Community Child Care

Capacity, Community, Collaboration

Check our website regularly for training, consulting, resources and sector updates

www.cccinc.org.au

Phone (03) 9486 3455 or freecall 1800 177 017



CCC provides leadership, advocacy and support to build the capacity of the children's services sector and promote public support for community owned, not for profit services.

COMMUNITY CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION INC.

ABN 90 494 504 678 Reg No A0030026F

Suite West 08 & 09, 215 Bell Street, Preston Victoria 3072

Tel 03 9486 3455 Freecall 1800 177 017 Fax 03 9486 3271

Email reception@cccinc.org.au Web www.cccinc.org.au