



Governance Tips

Helping you stay on track

Good Governance and Policy – an invaluable link.

Term 4 2010

What is Governance?

Governance is about how your organisation is run – the structures and systems that enable you to make the right decisions and keep your service on track. The elected committee of management/board are responsible for developing, understanding and implementing the governance of the organisation.

What is a policy?

Policies are agreed sets of rules and procedures with a common purpose and are a critical element of providing good governance. A policy provides information about what you do and, in some cases, what you don't do. It is the responsibility of the committee of management or board to ensure policies are developed that:

- best meet the needs of the children, parents/guardians, community and staff
- reflect both the values, beliefs and philosophy of the service
- are relevant in terms of current legislation and regulations.

Why have policies?

Clearly articulated policies and procedures are important because they:

- provide a framework for the operation of the organisation

- guide day-to-day practice
- enable a consistent and considered approach by staff and management
- promote a smooth transition when there are changes to management or staff
- provide direction for decision making
- are a tool for marketing the centre program by outlining what new and potential users of the centre can expect
- provide a framework for compliance with legislative and regulatory obligations.

Guidance from good policies limits the risks of confusion and poor decision making.

Examples of issues addressed by policies include the enrolment and enrolment priorities, management of waiting lists, offers of places and group allocation of children.

How do we develop and use policies?

Policies establish, in clear language, what the organisation wants to achieve, and provides guidelines for how to get there.

In writing and reviewing your organisations policies, keep in mind the following points:

- Policies are unlikely to be supported and adhered to unless people feel they have ownership of them. Consult widely on each policy you develop, taking into account all the people in your organisation that will be affected by the new or revised document.
- Policies should be living documents designed to serve the organisation, not the other way around. Setting aside regular time to review policies helps to ensure

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people are reminded of their existence and content.

- Appoint a subcommittee to undertake a review of policies and procedures and make recommendations for changes. Circulate draft changes before decisions are made final by the committee of management or board. Once a decision has been made the new or amended policy all members should be informed within 28 days.
- Policies should be easily accessible and written in a clear language that is easy to understand and free of jargon. A printed copy of each policy should be available at the service and provided to all Board/Committee members and staff members.
- Weak or inconsistent policies can be worse than having no policies at all. So if you find flaws, fix them up as soon as possible.

Which policies do we need?

The *Children's Services Regulations 2009* require children's services to have policies regarding:

- admission requirements and enrolment procedures
- arrangements for the payment of fees
- employment of qualified staff
- the educational or recreational program provided for the children
- behaviour management
- arrangements for the delivery and collection of children
- procedures for dealing with illness and emergency care
- procedures for dealing with infectious diseases
- procedures for dealing with complaints
- management of anaphylaxis

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(DEECD) are required to have policies and procedures that promote equal opportunity for all children and comply with legislation such as the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. Relevant policies will include;

- *Access and inclusion*
- *Critical incident closure* (voluntary and mandatory) as part of the *Emergency Management Plan*
- *Privacy policy*

Children Services Advisors from DEECD regularly inspect children's services for compliance with the *Children's Services Regulations 2009*, *Children's Services Act 1996* and the *Funding Criteria*. During these visits they may request to see the relevant policies. Therefore it is important that they are up to date and reflect and quote current legislation.

Committees of management/boards may also develop a range of operational policies to assist in their day-to-day operations. These may include;

- communication
- code of conduct
- information technology

KPV PolicyWorks V2 2009 is a valuable resource for committees of management/boards which includes information about the development of policies and approximately 30 up-to-date model policies for licensed children's services. PolicyWorks is available as a manual or in CD format from \$99 for KPV members (plus p&h). To order a copy go to www.kpv.org.au/resources and download an order form.

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