

Family Forum Guidelines

A forum is a place where people come together to share ideas, discuss issues, and exchange views.

Purpose

The purpose of the Family Forum is to strengthen respectful, collaborative partnerships between families and the service. The group provides an inclusive forum where families can share perspectives, provide feedback, and contribute to continuous improvement. In all discussions and shared insights, the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children remain the paramount consideration, reflecting a shared commitment to placing children at the center of decision-making and practice. This group is not advisory in nature and does not hold decision-making authority.

Guiding Principles

- Partnerships are based on mutual respect, trust, and open communication.
- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of children are the paramount consideration in all conversations and reflections.
- All families are valued as experts on their children.
- Participation is voluntary, inclusive, and accessible.
- Feedback is welcomed and used to support reflective practice and service improvement.

Objectives

- Provide families with a meaningful voice within the service.
- Encourage open dialogue between families and educators.
- Support continuous quality improvement through shared feedback and ideas.
- Strengthen relationships and a sense of community.
- Ensure discussions remain focused on outcomes that support children's wellbeing, learning, and development.

Membership

- Open to all families enrolled at the service.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Educators or leadership representatives may attend to support discussion and information sharing.



Roles and Responsibilities – Families

- Share experiences, perspectives, and feedback respectfully.
- Engage in open, constructive discussions.
- Respect confidentiality and differing viewpoints.

Roles and Responsibilities – Service Representatives

- Facilitate meetings in an inclusive and respectful manner.
- Listen actively and acknowledge family feedback.
- Communicate how feedback will be considered and actioned.

Scope of the Group

The Family Committee

- Discuss general service practices, communication, and experiences.
- Share ideas for strengthening partnerships and engagement.
- Provide feedback on proposed changes or initiatives.

The group does not:

- Make operational or management decisions.
- Address individual complaints or grievances (these are managed through existing procedures).

Meeting Structure

- Meetings may be held in person, online, or in a hybrid format.
- Frequency will be determined by the service, however preference is for meetings to occur close to scheduled Family Advisory Network meetings.
- Agendas will be shared in advance where possible.
- Notes or key discussion points may be shared with families following meetings.

Confidentiality and Respect

- All participants are expected to maintain confidentiality.
- Discussions must be respectful and culturally inclusive.
- Personal or sensitive matters relating to individual children or families are not discussed.

Use of Feedback

- Feedback will be documented and considered as part of the service's continuous improvement processes.
- Where appropriate, outcomes or actions arising from feedback will be communicated to families.

Family Advisory Network (FAN)

- Family Advisory Network (FAN) meetings will be held quarterly, with dates scheduled at the beginning of each calendar year.
- Each service may determine its own process for selecting family representatives to attend FAN meetings. This may include:
 - Inviting a family directly
 - Selecting representatives from Family Forum participants
 - Seeking expressions of interest from all families
- Representatives may change each quarter based on availability. Services may choose to have one or more family representatives attend. The priority is ensuring a family voice is represented.
- Where possible, Family Forums should be scheduled before or after FAN meetings to provide an opportunity to gather feedback and perspectives from the broader family community on agenda items.
- Services should consider how they will gather and represent the collective family voice when Family Forums are not held in conjunction with FAN meetings.

Review of the Guideline

This guideline will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant, inclusive, and effective in supporting family partnerships.

