

## Rationale

SDN is committed to the establishment and maintenance of strong and positive working relationships with families across all of our services and in the community.

Evidence shows that well-co-ordinated service delivery helps to overcome barriers for children and families that can prevent children and families from accessing the resources they need and want for their own wellbeing and learning. SDN has committed to:

- Being consistent, responsive and as hassle-free as possible
- Listening and responding to families
- Using our knowledge to provide our programs and advice
- Being a trusted adviser and sharing our knowledge
- Being an honest broker and advising about other services.

## Scope

This policy, and its associated documents, applies to the entirety of SDN Children’s Services and the entirety of its wholly owned subsidiaries.

This policy applies to all SDN Board members, permanent and casual staff members, volunteers and students.

## Policy

SDN takes a person-centred and place-based approach which is referred to within SDN as the Pathways approach. It outlines the approaches that we use to engage with families, to facilitate their access to services and to support their transitions into, within, and out of SDN.

### Pathways for families

SDN’s Pathways approach commits us to communicating with families based on the following principles:

- maintaining respectful, reciprocal and supportive relationships
- supporting families in their parenting role
- respecting diverse beliefs about childrearing
- going to families, not waiting for families to come to us
- engaging families as equals

- understanding family and community priorities
- creating child and family-friendly, inclusive and non-stigmatising services and environments
- communicating in a personal and genuine way
- supporting understanding of SDN services and options in the community
- establishing key relationships early to support consistency and reliability
- knowing the community and staying informed
- activating a Team around the Child when multiple agencies and/or multiple professional disciplines are involved with a child or when a family is facing specific challenges
- developing ‘family-held’ material that they can use to share information about their child’s abilities and learning needs with others.

**Meeting individual families’ communication needs**

Staff will encourage families to discuss their communication needs, and make families aware of the methods of communication currently used by the service.

The organisation's philosophy, vision, purpose and values will be clearly displayed in services, and families will be made aware of how to access policy information.

Where possible, SDN will support communication for families whose first language is not English by utilising staff members who speak the same language as the family, or by using professional translation and interpreting services when these are needed to support a child and family’s access to an SDN service.

Where possible, SDN will utilise professional sign interpreters when required to support access to an SDN service by a family who use sign language as their primary means of communication.

Staff will be sensitive to the literacy levels of each individual, taking time to pass on information verbally where there is a risk that families might not fully understand a written document.

**Listening to families**

SDN will seek regular feedback from families and welcomes unsolicited feedback. Families will be encouraged to submit unsolicited feedback through SDN’s website or through feedback forms available at each SDN location.

Feedback that is a complaint will be managed in line with SDN’s *Complaints Management Policy* and associated Procedure.

All research will be conducted in accordance with our *Research and Evaluation at SDN Policy*.

**Family engagement**

SDN engages with families in a range of ways including:

- regular reports to families on their child’s activities, program and progress
- notification to parents about incidents or events that may impact their child

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- service-specific updates and information required by legislation to be displayed or made available
- participation in community events
- SDN organisational messages, policies and strategic plans.

Where an SDN Children’s Education and Care Centre wishes to have a centre committee, it will be open to all families of enrolled children and all staff members working at the centre. More detail on the establishment, responsibilities and running of centre committees is outlined in *Centre Committees Procedure*.

## Managing personal, sensitive and health information

SDN staff members may collect, use, store or disclose personal, sensitive and health information about individuals in order to provide an effective service to a child, family or another service. This information will be managed in line with SDN’s *Privacy Policy* and *Records Management Policy*, and their associated Procedures.

## Related SDN Documents

### Policies

- GI-HLP-1.01: Policy Framework
- GI-HLP-1.04: Equity, Social Justice and Social Inclusion
- GI-HLP-1.05: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement
- GI-HLP-1.09: Privacy
- GI-HLP-1.10: Code of Conduct
- GI-HLP-1.11: Social Media and Electronic Communications
- GI-HLP-1.19: Research and Evaluation at SDN
- GI-OP-1.13: Complaints Management
- LGL-HLP-8.03: Records Management

### Procedures

- GI-PRO-1.01-01: Policy Development and Review
- GI-PRO-1.14-01: Feedback Management
- GI-PRO-1.14-02: Centre Committees
- GI-PRO-1.13-01: Complaints Management

### Other SDN Documents

- GI-ADD-1.11-A: Social Media and Electronic Communications Protocols
- Pathways for Families Discussion Paper

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## Relevant Legislation/Regulations

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Privacy Act 1988
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
- National Standards for Disability Services
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators

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