

# Gathering evidence of quality practice

By Jan McFarlane

The Validation step of the Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) process provides an opportunity for a family day care scheme to demonstrate the quality practices of its carers, coordination unit staff and management. The FDCQA *Validation Report* provides a 'snapshot' of the family day care scheme and of the daily practices that occur in carers' homes and in the coordination unit.

There are a variety of ways in which quality practices can be demonstrated. Carers and staff often feel anxious about what information and evidence the Validator will need to see in order to complete the *Validation Report*. As a result there is often a tendency to gather 'evidence' for everything that happens in the service 'just in case'. This can be a time consuming process and places a great deal of pressure on already busy carers and staff.

As part of their preparation for a Validation Visit carers and coordination unit staff are encouraged to think about the ways in which they demonstrate quality practices and how this information can be presented to the Validator in the most effective and time efficient way.

## The role of the Validator

The Validator is required to visit both the family day care scheme's coordination unit and the homes of a number of carers and to complete a *Validation Report*. The Validator needs to observe practice and asks questions to gather sufficient information to enable them to validate the indicators outlined in the FDCQA *Quality Practices Guide*.

The Validator understands the importance of gathering sufficient information to obtain a complete picture before making a decision about the validation of an indicator. This may involve determining if what is being observed during the Validation Visit is typical of what happens on other days and whether practices are consistent for all children and their families. Carers and staff may be asked to provide additional information to support what they are doing and saying.

## Evidence to support practice

In determining what evidence might be required during Validation Visits carers and coordination unit staff are encouraged to carefully read the preamble and indicators for each Principle in the *Quality Practices Guide* and ask themselves the following questions:

### Will the Validator be able to clearly see or hear how I meet this Principle?

In a caring environment evidence about quality practice is all around; it can be seen in the way children and families respond to carers and staff, in the materials and experiences available to children, and in the environments created for them. The everyday practice of carers and coordination staff is often all that is required to demonstrate that the scheme is meeting many of the indicators outlined in the *Quality Practices Guide*.

### Can I tell the Validator how I meet this Principle?

Yes. FDCQA recognises and appreciates that the same positive outcomes can be achieved in many different ways and that carers and coordination units may do things in a particular way because it works well for the children and their families. Often these practices are taken for granted and carers and staff are not used to telling others about what a great job they do. Having regular conversations with each other about how everyday practice meets the indicators in the *Quality Practices Guide* can help carers and staff begin to feel more confident about explaining to the Validator 'how we do things here'.

### Does this Principle ask for documentation?

Words such as 'written', 'documented' or 'recorded' in an indicator signify that some form of documentation is required. It is important to highlight the indicators that ask for documentation and ensure that this is available during the Validation Visit.

The index in the *Quality Practices Guide* is a useful guide in determining which Principles require a policy, procedure, record or plan.

### Will the Validator need more than one source of evidence to decide whether I meet this Principle?

It is important to think about how carers and coordination unit staff will demonstrate what normally happens in situations when the Validator may be unable to observe a practice as it is occurring. For example, it is unlikely that the Validator will observe the enrolment of a new child and family during the Visit. Coordination unit staff and carers can explain the enrolment process to the Validator and provide examples of the written information they exchange with new families as evidence of their practice.

Similarly, documentation alone is not always sufficient to demonstrate that a Principle is being met by the scheme. A carer may have a certificate from a workshop they attended on incorporating cultural diversity into the program,

but on its own this is not sufficient evidence to support the validation of indicators about cultural diversity. The Validator will need to see that the learning that occurred during training is being put into practice and is evident in the environment and experiences planned for children every day.

### **Making evidence useful and accessible**

Carers and staff do not have to develop additional documentation in preparation for a Validation Visit but are encouraged to think about the way the documentation they use every day can also be used to provide the Validator with evidence of quality practice. Examples of this include:

- Information kits used for new families, family and carer handbooks, policy folders, home visit records, programs, menus, noticeboards and communication books used to share information with families can easily be made available to the Validator.
- A scrapbook for each child or group of children provides evidence for the Validator that staff respect and value the learning that occurs through children's play experiences. A collection of photographs of children's experiences, samples of their artwork and works in progress, together with snippets of their conversations and questions can create a lasting record that can be treasured and shared with the children and their families.
- A photographic record of an excursion, special project or event, together with children's comments or stories about what was happening, makes a good addition to the bookshelf. It provides lots of opportunities for children to re-tell and share the story with their friends and family and also provides meaningful evidence of quality practice.

- A display folder or business book which may include details about the carer and their family; training they have completed; the daily routine; and examples of programs and menus, can be shared with families seeking care as well as with a Validator.
- A scheme journal can provide a record of the regular things that happen in the scheme, including play sessions, meetings and training sessions, as well as documenting special one off events. Celebrations, fundraising and community events, special achievements and awards can be noted as they occur and, at the end of each year, the journal provides a useful reminder about the positive outcomes that can be achieved through collaboration and teamwork.
- The way in which evidence is organised and presented is a matter of choice, but in order to minimise disruption during the Validation Visit it is strongly recommended that all the required documentation is easily accessible to the Validator. The Validation Visit schedule does not allow time for the Validator to search through filing cabinets, multiple folders or records stored on the computer.

### **Conclusion**

While compiling evidence can greatly assist the Validation process, it is important to remain focussed on the outcomes for children and their families. Developing positive relationships with children and providing stimulating environments and experiences in ways which can easily be observed by the Validator are the best use of a scheme's time and resources ■

### **Family Day Care Quality Assurance**

Step 3: Validation

### **References and further reading**

- Giugni, M. (2007). Quality Assurance without folders. *Putting Children First*, 22, 22-23.
- McFarlane, J. (2007). Typical practice in a child care services. *Putting Children First*, 22, 3-5.
- NCAC. (2007). Ask a Child Care Adviser: Strategies to assist services preparing for and during Validation Visits. *Putting Children First*, 21, 8-9.



**For more information on FDCQA please contact a NCAC Child Care Adviser.**

Telephone: 1300 136 554 or (02) 8260 1900  
E-mail: [qualitycare@ncac.gov.au](mailto:qualitycare@ncac.gov.au)  
Level 3, 418a Elizabeth St  
Surry Hills NSW 2010

[www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)