

Ask a Child Care Adviser

Strategies to assist services preparing for and during Validation Visits

NCAC Child Care Advisers answer common questions about preparing for and undertaking Validation Visits

How should our service prepare for a Validation Visit?

There is no set way for services to prepare for a Validation Visit. Services can prepare for the Validation Visit by either gathering relevant documentation to support their practices and keeping it in one place, or by making supporting documentation easily accessible to the Validator. Documentation that may support service practices include written policies, a written philosophy, staff/carer meeting agendas and minutes, written communication with families and records of emergency drills.

The service may be aware that a key person such as the owner, manager or director is due to be on leave during the six week timeframe nominated for the Visit. In this circumstance services need to prepare strategies to undertake the Visit should it occur during the key person's absence. Strategies to prepare for this contingency include nominating an alternative service representative and ensuring they are aware of and can access the information that

needs to be provided to the Validator and, if appropriate, arranging for the absent person to be contactable if needed. Just as services must be able to provide quality care during a key person's absence, they must also be able to undertake the Validation Visit in these circumstances. NCAC cannot consider the anticipated absence of a staff member, carer or other person from the service as reasonable grounds to grant a request for an extension of the Validation Visit timeframe.

What should we do when the Validator arrives at our service?

The Validator will usually have a basic timetable prepared for the Visit. However, it is important for the service to provide the Validator with information about specific routines and activities, such as activity times and meal routines in each room, as well as any special events that may be occurring during the Validation Visit. This information helps the service and the Validator negotiate a practical schedule for the Visit, maximising the Validator's opportunities to view relevant practices and documentation and to speak with staff and carers. When the Validator arrives it is helpful to give them a quick 'tour' of the service to assist them in planning an effective timetable for the Visit.

Can we show the Validator practices or documentation they have not asked to see?

Yes, a service can show a Validator additional information that the Validator has not seen or requested. Different services often provide different types of documentation to demonstrate how they meet the Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) standards. Services must be proactive in providing the Validator with all relevant information. It may be helpful to ask the Validator to let you know if they are having difficulty validating an indicator so that you can provide



them with additional evidence, or further clarify the service's practices verbally.

Can we provide the Validator with more information if they observe an indicator in the Validation Report as 'not occurring'?

Yes. Validators are required to observe practice and, where appropriate, documentation in determining whether the indicators in the *Validation Report* are occurring in the service. If a service believes that a Validator has not seen enough information to make an accurate assessment of practice and further evidence can be provided, services are encouraged to do so. However, it is the Validator's role to determine whether a practice is occurring, based on the evidence they have seen. If the service disagrees with a Validator's decision they are encouraged to write a clear comment in the *Validation Report* and/or the *Validation Evaluation Form*.

What should our service representative(s) do during the Validation Report discussion ?

During the *Validation Report* discussion it is important for the service representative to focus first upon Satisfactory indicators that have been validated as 'not occurring'. If the service representative believes that a practice is occurring, it is their responsibility to be proactive in putting their point of view forward to the Validator. This can be achieved by explaining their practices further and/or providing further evidence to show that the practice is occurring. Validators are able to change a 'not occurring' rating to 'occurring' if they are provided with the required information or evidence to do so.

What should we do if we disagree with the validation of indicators in the Validation Report?

Services need to adopt a constructive approach in providing Validators with the information needed to complete the *Validation Report*. However, there may be instances where a Validator does not believe that the information provided demonstrates that an indicator is occurring in the service. If a service disagrees with the Validator's observations they are encouraged to write comments in the *Validation Report* and/or the *Validation Evaluation Form*, clearly describing how they believe the practice occurs. It is neither professional or appropriate for staff or

carers to harass a Validator if they disagree with the decision regarding the validation of service practice.

Services are encouraged to telephone an NCAC Child Care Adviser on 1300 136 554 for support where they experience difficulty or concern during the *Validation Report* discussion ■

Effective Comment Writing

Comments written by services in the *Validation Report* and *Validation Evaluation Form* should clearly describe *how* the service believes it demonstrated the practice was occurring during the Validation Visit.

Some useful tips for writing comments include:

- 'paint a picture' for the person reading the comment so that they can visualise what was occurring and what the Validator observed during the Validation Visit
- clarify the intent of the indicator you are commenting upon to ensure that you have a clear understanding of the service practices requiring explanation. This may be done by re-reading the indicator and/or relevant *Quality Practices Guide* preamble, discussing the indicator with colleagues or contacting a NCAC Child Care Adviser
- describe the practices that were occurring in your service during the Validation Visit accurately and truthfully
- provide specific examples of practices that show how your service met the indicator(s). For example, provide excerpts from written policies and procedures, refer to specific programs or meeting minutes. Quote aspects of these that support your service's practice
- avoid referring to what you are planning to do in the future to improve practice, for example, 'We have booked maintenance to repair the latch on the door to the nappy change area to prevent children's access'. Validators and Moderators can only consider the practices that were occurring in the service during the Validation Visit- they cannot account for practices which were not occurring during the Visit