

Writing comments in the *Validation Report*

By Angela Owens and Karen Swift

It is important that child care professionals take a proactive role in advocating for the quality of their practices during the Validation Visit. Many services understandably feel apprehensive and are perhaps unsure of their rights and responsibilities during the Validation Visit. However, it is helpful to recognise that Validators may also experience a degree of anxiety as they are visiting an unknown service, and working with unfamiliar people. Understanding this can help services to appreciate the important role they play in providing Validators with as much information as possible about their service and their practices.

The *Validation Report* discussion

Towards the end of the Validation Visit, the service representative will have an opportunity to review and discuss the *Validation Report* with the Validator. This time can also be used by the service to provide the Validator with additional information or evidence to support their practices. If the Validator feels that the additional information or evidence shows that a practice is occurring in the service, they may change the Validation of an indicator from 'not occurring' to 'occurring'.

Where the Validator does not feel that there is enough evidence to show that a practice is occurring in the service, the indicator will remain as 'not occurring'. If the service disagrees with the Validator, it is important that they write a clear, constructive comment in the *Validation Report*. This is particularly important for Unsatisfactory indicators.

What is an Unsatisfactory indicator?

An Unsatisfactory indicator can easily be identified by the watermark 'U' in the *Not Occurring* column. Any Satisfactory indicator will be considered to be Unsatisfactory if it is observed by the Validator as 'not occurring'. If the Moderator agrees that a practice is not occurring in the service, then the Principle within which the indicator sits will be deemed to be Unsatisfactory overall. As Unsatisfactory Principles can contribute to a Not Accredited decision, Unsatisfactory indicators should be the focus during the *Validation Report* discussion.

How do Moderators use the service's comments to make rating decisions?

Moderators use information from the service's *Self-study Report*, *Validation Surveys*, *Validation Report* and *Validation Evaluation Form* to determine typical practice in the service. Comments provided in the *Validation Report* by both Validators and service representatives give Moderators important information to help them to rate the quality of the service's practices. This is why it is crucial for services to provide clear, informative comments about the practices that have been observed by the Validator.

By writing clearly detailed comments, especially for Unsatisfactory indicators, services will assist the Moderator to develop a clear picture of service practice. The service may also wish to provide comments about indicators that have been rated as Satisfactory or higher once any Unsatisfactory indicators have been addressed.

Telephone a Child Care Adviser

Child care professionals are encouraged to telephone NCAC's Child Care Advisers for advice and information about all aspects of the CCQA processes, including Validation. Child Care Advisers can:

- Explain the intent of the indicators in the *Validation Report* and the related *Quality Practices Guide* preamble, and discuss the implications of this for service practice.
- Suggest possible strategies for services to pinpoint information that may be useful for inclusion in the *Validation Report* and/or *Validation Evaluation Form*.
- Explain the processes of Validation and Moderation, and the service's rights and responsibilities in relation to these.
- Provide services with information about due dates for the submission of the *Validation Evaluation Form* and other CCQA timeframes.

NCAC Child Care Advisers can be contacted by telephone on 1300 136 554 or 02 8260 1900.

Tips for writing effective comments in the *Validation Report*

The following tips will help services to ensure that their comments in the *Validation Report* provide the Moderator with valuable information:

- Re-read the indicator to ensure that you understand what it requires.
- If you want to clarify what an indicator requires, consider seeking telephone advice from a NCAC Child Care Adviser.
- Specify the indicator that the comment relates to by the indicator number.
- Provide specific examples of practices that describe how you meet the indicator(s), for example, include excerpts from relevant policies and procedures, programs or meeting minutes.
- Don't explain what you plan to do in the future, as Validators and Moderators can only consider the practices that were happening at the time of the Visit.
- If you plan to include comments on the *Validation Evaluation Form*, write a brief comment stating 'See *Validation Evaluation Form*'.

Clearly and accurately describe what practices were happening for the specific indicator at the service during the Visit. Using dot points can be helpful. See example to the right.

Including comments in the *Validation Evaluation Form*

Services may feel that they have not had enough time to write the necessary comments in the *Validation Report*, or they would like to add further detail after the Validation Visit. Services can include comments in the *Validation Evaluation Form*, given to them by the Validator at the end of the Visit.

Including comments in the *Validation Evaluation Form* can be a good strategy, as this gives the service time to reflect upon and discuss what was happening on the day of the Visit, and to write a carefully considered comment to support their practice.

Services have up to seven working days after the Validation Visit to return the *Validation Evaluation Form* to NCAC, and up to two double sided A4 pages of comments may be attached to the *Form*.

Services who request a copy of the *Validation Report* on the day of the Validation Visit will be given an extension on the timeframe for submitting the *Validation Evaluation Form*. These services will receive a letter with the copy of the *Validation Report* advising them of the revised *Validation Evaluation Form* submission due date.

The Validation Visit is often a mixed experience of excitement and apprehension. However, it is beneficial for child care professionals to embrace the opportunity to demonstrate their practices to another child care professional, and to be prepared to explain and advocate for what they do ■

Example of an effective comment

In a scenario where the Validator has observed that the QIAS Satisfactory indicator 4.5.3: '*Music is chosen because of its particular appeal to children*' is not occurring, the Validator has commented:

'4.5.3 A CD of mixed music was being played in the 4-5 year old room for children to play percussion instruments to. Among children's songs, there were several songs by contemporary, adult musicians.'

However, staff have included the contemporary adult music in response to several children expressing an interest in these particular songs.

An effective comment reflecting this might state:

- *4.5.3 Several children in the 4-5 year old room have shown an interest in the contemporary music to staff.*
- *When compiling the mixed CD, staff consulted with the children regarding the songs that they like to sing, dance and play instruments to.*
- *Many of the interests in the adult music came from children's experiences at home, so families were asked if they could share the music they play at home with the service to make up the CD.*