

Accessing relevant information from recognised authorities

By Angela Owens

Accessing appropriate information to support the development of policies and procedures can sometimes be challenging.

For some areas there may be varying or conflicting information available from several different sources. It is the responsibility of child care professionals to exercise careful judgment when determining which information is most current and which is most reflective of best practice.

Many of the Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) standards refer services to the use of information from recognised authorities when developing policies. A recognised authority provides information and advice on a specialist area, based on recent research, current thinking, and/or legislation. They may be a government department or an independent organisation with specialist expertise.

The Internet can be an effective tool for accessing information for policy development. However, child care professionals need to ensure that the information they obtain is current and appropriate.

The following strategies may assist services to determine the quality and/or relevance of information to their individual service:

- Consider who is providing the information. For example, is it from a well known organisation such as a children's hospital, a government based organisation such as Food Standards Australia New Zealand, or a non-profit organisation such as SIDS and Kids?
- Determine whether the information provided may be influenced by an organisation's or individual's commercial interests
- Ascertain whether the information is provided by a state, territory or national organisation. Some recommendations, particularly in the areas of health and safety, may only be relevant to a specific state or territory
- Check the currency of the information by verifying the date it was published or when the website was 'last updated'
- If available, consult a number of authorities to determine which practices are most commonly recommended ■