



Situations where there are differences

Sometimes, families will want different things for their children than you. Families may want their children to eat different food than other children at the centre service, to have a different routine or not participate in some activities. It is important to remember that parents know so much more about their children than staff and we need to be respectful of their wishes.

Some of the situations where there can be disagreements include:

- Toilet training – the ‘how’, the ‘when’ and sometimes the ‘who’ of toilet training.
- Eating – what and when the child will consume.
- Sleeping routines – the time parents want children to sleep, etc
- Readiness for transition to next room or to school
- Learning to read and recognising numbers, etc

To maintain a positive relationship with families, their wishes for their children must be respectfully considered. For staff, this may mean modifying some of our ideas and beliefs to accommodate the family. Understanding why the family has made this request can assist us in appreciating the importance of what the family is asking us to do.

Don't take family issues home. Accept that all families are different. Unless the child is being hurt, a different parenting approach to yours does not mean the child is not being well cared for... just cared for differently than you would do it!

Listen to the family request with an aim to come to a solution that meets everyone's needs. Share with the family what that might mean for the children; for example if they cannot play outside or participate in particular activities.

Together with the parent, tell the child what has been decided and what is planned for the child to do instead. This is important for the child to know the request has come from the family so it does not look like you are discriminating against the child.

With a request such as to begin toilet training, some of the following statements might be useful:

- ‘I haven't noticed (child) showing any interest here at the service but of course we are happy to start the process.’
- ‘Good idea. Let's see if the child has any interest in using the toilet.’
- ‘Sure, let's see if (child) is developmentally able to take on this task.’

These sentences give you the opportunity to bring up the situation again with a report. Maybe the child is not yet developmentally ready, or progressing at a different pace to others. It may be helpful, for example, to see if the parent wants you to continue or try again in a few months.

If a family wants the child to sleep less than you think they need, again respect the family's request. You are not in the house at night with a child who struggles to sleep.

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