

July 2004

Childcare and children's health

An information sheet for parents

Child care services are community centres

When your child attends a child care service you are provided with a unique opportunity to be supported in your parenting role as well as have your child in care. This support occurs when:

- the carers at the service are very aware of the importance of the early years for a child's development, health and well-being,
- there are strong links between the child care service and other agencies and professionals within your community that also support families and children, and
- carers take seriously the role they can play in helping families to access other services that they need to support their child rearing.

The importance of the early years for a child's development

The carers in child care services are aware of the importance of the early years for a child's development, health and well-being and are committed to providing the best possible opportunities for your child to enable him or her to develop to their full potential. Having a sound understanding of early childhood development and recognising the importance of this stage in a person's life is critical to enabling high quality programs to be offered within a service. Carers combine their understanding of what children need and their discussions with you about your hopes, concerns and priorities for your child and try to offer experiences that support each child's development and learning.

As a parent you should feel comfortable to ask questions and raise issues about how the service delivers programs that are designed to support your child's health and development. When carers share general information with you about child development and other areas, and when you and carers share information about your child, you are supported in your role as a parent. Carers also benefit from your insights and perspectives.

Links between child care services and other agencies and professionals that support families and children

Child care services cannot work in isolation and do a good job supporting you as parent. They need to have links with a broad range of family and child focussed agencies and services. These links help carers to do a better job in their service, and also enable them to help you connect with other appropriate professionals who can assist you. These connections can make your parenting role more rewarding and enjoyable. When you feel supported as a parent you will feel more empowered and will undertake your role in a more positive manner. Carers can give you advice about what is available and how to access these services, agencies and professionals. so just ask.

Talk to your child care service about what you need as a parent in addition to good quality child care. This information will give your child care service the basis for developing further links to address the broad range of family and children's needs that you and other parents identify. Build on your partnership with the service. Child care services have become a trusted part of family life and are vital community centres.



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