

# My Time, Our Place



PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE  
PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL  
AGE CARE SERVICES AND SCHOOLS

Produced by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

ISBN 978-0-642-78285-4 [PRINT]

ISBN 978-0-642-78286-1 [PDF]

ISBN 978-0-642-78287-8 [RTF]



With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the Department's logo, any material protected by a trade mark and where otherwise noted all material presented in this document is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/au/>) licence.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the CC BY-ND 3.0 AU licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/au/legalcode>).

The document must be attributed as the *Promoting Collaborative Partnerships between School Age Care Services and Schools*.

# FOREWORD

The circumstances of modern Australian families mean that for many of them child care and education outside the circle of relatives and friends are a vital necessity. The situation has led to increased public interest in the programs and facilities available from a range of service providers. It has also generated a need for the development and strengthening of relationships between schools and school age care services.

As Australia strives to ensure our early childhood education and care facilities and programs are exemplary, those who lead school age care programs have a tremendous responsibility to make their own service the very best it can be. One significant step in achieving a high quality service is to build strong relationships with the school or schools where the children attending the service are enrolled.

The pressure on schools to demonstrate improvement in student's learning has never been greater than it is today. School staff can engage in a powerful alliance with school age care services to maximise the benefits and opportunities for children provided through participation in positive learning environments outside the classroom.

We recommend this resource to school age care and school leaders who wish to work together for mutual benefit and to provide an exceptional wrap-around service to families and children in the school community. It contains practical, achievable suggestions illustrated by case studies that demonstrate what can be achieved when schools and school age care services work in partnership to achieve great outcomes for their children.

**Robyn Monro Miller**

President

National Out of School Hours Services Association

**Norm Hart**

President

Australian Primary Principals Association



# INTRODUCTION

The Council of Australian Governments has developed *MyTime, Our Place—Framework for School Age Care in Australia* (The Framework) to assist educators to provide children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in life. In this way, the Framework will contribute to realising the Council of Australian Governments' vision that:

*“All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation.”<sup>1</sup>*

The Framework has been designed for use by school age care educators working in partnership with children, their families and the community, including schools. It represents Australia's first national framework for school age care to be used by school age care educators, and aims to extend and enrich children's wellbeing and development in school age care settings (COAG, 2011).

This guide has been developed to promote best practice in collaborative relationships and partnerships between school age care services and schools.

The adage still holds “It takes a village to raise a child!”

*Try to imagine what it must look like to a new parent, uncertain of how things work at schools nowadays. It's been such a long time since they were at school, and when they were they really didn't notice things like partnerships and teams and how well they functioned. To these parents, and that will be just about all of them, any separation between the services of school and school age care will seem artificial and downright unnecessary. They would rightfully expect a team approach.*

*(Churchwood, 2010)*

Collaborative relationships are partnerships that are essential to ensuring maximum opportunities for high quality outcomes for all school age children, both during the school day and their time in school age care settings.

*The cup of tea with the school age care Coordinator made the difference. With it I found a way to begin the task of building the partnership. It afforded the sharing of thoughts and ideas, asking, and being asked questions, as well as offering and being offered observations. I did a lot of learning in those morning teas. It was there that I realised that school age care is an extension of the school community. Indeed, it is an extension of schooling. For that to happen I had to help all school staff understand this position, and to reflect on their own attitude toward the service.*

*(Churchwood, 2010)*

---

<sup>1</sup> On 5 December 2008, State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education meeting as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, released the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.

Respectful partnerships between school age care services and schools provide the opportunity to enrich learning and optimise benefits for everyone involved. Strong partnerships can:

- strengthen social capital in the community through the building of trusting, respectful and sustained relationships;
- realise potential together that would be difficult to accomplish alone;
- avoid unnecessary duplication;
- ensure the diverse perspectives of children, families and community stakeholders are heard;
- provide opportunities for people to learn from each other and share resources and skills; and
- ensure efforts are grounded in community realities and relationships.

(Roehlkepartain, 2007)

## ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP

As schools and school age care services begin building partnerships, it is best to start slowly, allowing the relationship to grow and develop over time. Early success can be important to the developing partnership. Simple projects or joint initiatives such as those articulated in this resource can lay the foundation for building a partnership that is ongoing and sustainable.

As the partnership evolves, opportunities to explore larger projects and joint initiatives will emerge.

This guide includes actual examples to support the key messages.

While this guide is primarily useful to schools and on-site school age care services, it may be useful for other school age care providers to have a relationship with the school and a communication protocol that addresses a range of shared issues, for example, supervision of children during transition times, arrangements if collection is not affected on time and action if children leave the area. This may include family day care providers and long day care services caring for school age children.

## OPERATING A SCHOOL AGE CARE SERVICE ON A SCHOOL SITE

Under the Education and Care Services National Law (National Law) and the Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations), an Approved Provider is responsible for the operation of an education and care service and for the management of staff in that service.

For services operated on school sites across Australia there may be different entities that are the Approved Provider of services. For example:

- an individual eg the school principal; the head of school campus;
- a partnership;
- a body corporate: the school council, a company that operates many services; or
- eligible associations.

Under the National Regulations in order to grant a service approval, the Regulatory Authority must be satisfied that the Approved Provider of the service is entitled to occupy the education and care service's premises. So in the case of a service being operated on a school site the Approved Provider would need to provide to the Regulatory Authority evidence (such as a lease or a letter) that indicates the service is entitled to occupy a part of the school premises.

## THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL LEADER

The legal site manager of the school (school leader) is ultimately responsible for all of the activities and events occurring on the school site. For this reason, school age care services that are located on school grounds will need to ensure informed consent is attained from the school leader.

# RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS

## COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Interpersonal communication is essential to effective relationships between school age care educators and school leaders. Basic principles of communication should be both understood and exercised well in developing strategies for effective communication. Such principles include listening to and really understanding the diverse perspectives and needs of each party. Communication should enhance the relationship through providing opportunities to explore each other's point of view and reach shared understanding and ultimately agreement. All communication should be open and respectful.

Other strategies for open communication channels should also be established so that messages can be communicated to either party when a face to face meeting is simply not possible. This may include email, memos, notes or voicemail messages, to name a few.

Effective interpersonal communication has many benefits, particularly in establishing mutually beneficial partnerships and participation/involvement in school/local community events including (but not limited to):

- newsletters;
- fetes;
- Open Days, orientation to school processes;
- shared policy review;
- advertisement—website, parent handbooks;
- Open Nights;
- celebrations;
- assemblies.

## MEET REGULARLY

Regular meetings can be scheduled throughout the year with a commitment to at least one formal meeting each term. Formal meetings can be planned ahead of time with a negotiated agenda and method for recording discussions and actions. Key stakeholders may be invited through negotiation between school leaders and school age care personnel when their input will enhance the discussion and relevant actions.

Informal meetings can take place on a day to day basis. These conversations can be beneficial to building positive interpersonal relationships. The variety and balance between formal and informal meetings will assist in building long term relationships and partnerships.

School leaders and school age care educators should be considerate of the times in the day that may not be convenient for informal meetings and use sound judgement in planning for times to catch up. The transition times between the school day and the service operating hours are challenging times for both parties and other times during the school day may be more opportune.

*As the School Age Care Coordinator, Kim tries to be very strategic when communicating with her line manager—who is the Principal (school leader) of the school. She realises that school leaders are encumbered with a range of issues and while school age care is a priority for her, it is not always for her Principal. The two of them meet regularly, but in a number of different ways - to meet both their needs. Once per term they have a formally scheduled sit down meeting where they share issues and catch up on things. They also have quite regular 'hallway' discussions when they bump into each other and want to discuss things. The third type of communication typically happens when Kim has a more sensitive or difficult issue to deal with. In these cases, she makes an appointment because she is aware that he may be unprepared if she raises such an issue at short notice in an informal situation. Kim recognises that he has a lot of issues to deal with and also recognises that a scheduled appointment at a time which suits both of them is going to invite a more effective response on the issue, than if she approaches him on the spot, or if he is on his way out the door.*

## EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT

Supportive relationships of mutual benefit can promote each party within the relationship to external stakeholders in positive ways. Explore ways in which all parties can collaboratively contribute to projects and facilities, utilising each other's resources and expertise to promote better outcomes for children. A partnership approach to dealing with emergent issues can have many benefits such as ensuring the safety of children accessing school grounds across the entire day.

It is important to be flexible and maintain realistic expectations. Being objective enables a variety of perspectives to be considered and facilitates negotiations from a mutually beneficial position, seeking the best interests of all parties. This may mean making compromises for the benefit of the school community as a whole.

Consider a means to implement a reciprocal communication system between the school age care service and the school. This may include a communication book that can be kept at the office. Another opportunity would be providing information and links on the school age care and school websites which promote the professional relationship to external stakeholders.

*When the school age care service had a large influx of 5 and 6 year old children, the school age care educators identified a need for a junior play room—a purposeful environment where the younger children could indulge in rich creative play and not feel intimidated by the older children in the service.*

*The School Age Care Coordinator approached the leadership team at the school with the idea of setting up a play space within the school which could be utilised by the preschool, Junior Primary classes and school age care. Some classrooms next to the school age care service had recently been vacated due to the school's building program and the School Age Care Coordinator knew a shared space within the school was going to be more mutually beneficial than if school age care asked to take over the classrooms.*

*A committee was formed within the school comprising the Junior Primary Principal, the Director of the preschool, a teacher and the School Age Care Coordinator. The group collaborated to establish how the environment of the junior play room would be set up, including rules and resource selection.*

*The school now has an exciting play-based learning environment which is well utilised across the whole day. It has also has the added benefit of the school age care service becoming more included in the school.*



## SHARE INFORMATION

Develop opportunities to share information about the school and the service in reciprocal newsletters. Promote the strength, quality and unity of the relationship between the school and the service.

School leaders can ensure that school websites mention the availability of a school age care service and its positive contribution to the school.

## TAKE PART IN ORIENTATION FOR NEW STUDENTS

Schedule a time for the school age care service to actively participate and present at orientation and open days. School age care service providers should be prepared with a professional presentation that alerts new and existing families to the value of the relationship between the school and the service. It would be a good opportunity to include in this presentation the principles, practice and outcomes articulated in *My Time, Our Place—Framework for School Age Care in Australia*.

Schools can also include informative literature about the school age care service in new family enrolment packs. The content for this may be provided by the school age care service.

*The process for orientation is clearly defined for our families. Throughout the year the school has “Welcome Packages” that include information pertaining to curriculum as well as the school age care service. Families have the opportunity to complete the enrolment form during their formal enrolment process and the School Age Care Coordinator is invited along to meet the family at that time. Each October, for a period of three weeks, a transition program operates for our Preparatory students, who are enrolled in the school for the following year. While the children enjoy spending time in classrooms, their families are invited to join a series of workshops that include—Meet the Principal, Literacy and Numeracy Information and Introduction to the School Age Care Service. The School Age Care Coordinator is a speaker at this event and provides program information, handbooks, enrolment forms and general assistance for our families. All prospective families have the opportunity to obtain information about the school age care service from our school website, by telephone contact, email or calling into the school to see the Coordinator for assistance. The weekly school newsletter supports and promotes the before and after school program and the Coordinator provides monthly written and financial reports to our school council. The School Age Care Coordinator liaises with the before and after school program family sub-committee on a regular basis with scheduled meetings being conducted each term. The before and after school service educators liaise with classroom teachers, the wellbeing teacher and support networks to ensure that the orientation and transition is a supported and uncomplicated experience for our families.*

*Principal*

## BE RESPECTFUL

Develop a climate of respect through open communications and strong and supportive relationships. Try to consider an issue from all perspectives and work to a mutually agreed solution from an objective position. Understand that even though both parties may not necessarily always agree, there must be an open climate for respectful communication established.

School leaders and school age care educators must use positive language when referring to the school, the service, the role of educators and most importantly the children. This promotes the quality of the school age care service and professionalism of the educators to families and the wider community.

## BUILD CONNECTIONS

Mutually explore opportunities to develop relationships with all other school personnel including cleaners, teachers, grounds persons, ancillary staff and parents in leadership roles. A strong working network of these personnel will ensure seamless support for children across the entire day. You can use these connections to gain information, test ideas and consider a variety of perspectives.

## BECOME VISIBLE AND ADVOCATE TOGETHER

School leaders and School Age Care Coordinators can make their relationship visible to external stakeholders by promoting joint activities and ventures to other bodies. This demonstrates how effectively the relationship is working.

Explore opportunities to advocate together for the school age care service and the school. A joint approach with a united voice promotes the school age care service and school as being strong, efficient and likely to maximise the benefits of any support or funding provided. All stakeholders within the school community will benefit when school age care experiences are complementary to and enhance school life.

# PHILOSOPHY, PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

## ACKNOWLEDGE CHILDREN ACROSS THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Children benefit when school age care educators make links with their school day. One way this could be achieved is for school age care services to acknowledge children through awards at school ceremonies. This may include school nominations such as good citizenship and community leadership which include acknowledging children's active participation and positive contributions within school age care service. This process would need to be negotiated with the school leader.

## DEVELOP PROFESSIONALLY TOGETHER

Seek opportunities to jointly facilitate professional development. This can include child protection, transition to school, workplace health and safety, first aid and awareness of additional needs. Such strategies ensure all employees within the school community are receiving the same key messages at the same time and further opportunities for building relationships that will enhance communication (National Centre for Quality Afterschool, 2009).

*Our school strongly promotes professional development involving coaching and mentoring. The focus extends to the school age care team with the offer of training programs for both the School Age Care Coordinator and key staff members. The benefits are that the school age care educators are then able to apply their learning to the context of managing a children's service. This has been integral to the establishment of a great working relationship between the School Age Care Coordinator and leaders within the school community. As a result, there is always open discussion and consultation on documentation and processes.*

*The Coordinator demonstrates strengths in communication and an ability to be task focused and as a result of the professional development has been inspired to use coaching and mentoring as a positive approach to empower other educators in the school age care service. This contributes to building a skilled workforce, ensuring that the service meets the highest standards.*

*The School Age Care Coordinator also supports cluster schools within the region along with their service Coordinators with the view that everyone is on a shared learning pathway within the context of a professional learning community.*

*Principal*

## PLAN FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS TOGETHER

Effective communication is vital between the school leader and the school age care service to ensure high quality outcomes for children with additional needs are maximised. The school leader and school age care service may work together to develop programs for individuals through implementing a 'case management' process.

*Lisa came to the school in term 2 of the preparatory year. Due to her physical and health support needs, Lisa and her teacher were able to access additional support from the special education unit and health care team. As Lisa's family were accessing the school age care facility, the Coordinator of this service was invited to participate in these meetings to discuss an integrated school wide support plan. Together the paraprofessionals were able to discuss Lisa's needs and ensure that Lisa's entire school day was considered in the plan. This enabled a holistic and consistent approach to meeting Lisa's needs.*

## SHARED VISION

Develop shared philosophies collaboratively and ensure service/school specific policies recognise a shared vision and common values. Ensure the philosophy of the service and school are complementary and acknowledge the diversity in children's backgrounds and experiences. Focus on improving the outcomes for all children in the entire school community environment (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2006).

## SHARE COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDREN

In 1996 Hilary Clinton made famous the ancient African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child". The proverb is from Igbo and Yoruba regions of Nigeria and the basic meaning is that raising a child is a communal effort. It is taken to mean that responsibility rests not only with the parents, but also with the extended family and in some cases the community.

When we apply this to the relationship between the school and the school age care service we observe and acknowledge the shared responsibility that connects schools, services and families (Morris, 2006).

Take a shared approach for accountability to all stakeholders. Share in the responsibility of providing a service and be jointly accountable for the decisions and choices made (Cartmel, 2007).

*The School Age Care Coordinator is included in meetings with the school leader, teacher and family when a child participating in school age care is being supported with behavioural issues. This ensures clear lines of communication for all involved, enabling a consistent strategy towards a mutually agreed goal. This also means that there are consistent expectations of the child across the day. The school leader extends further support to the school age care service by providing the option of time in the school's reflection room during the day as a consequence for serious inappropriate behaviour in school age care.*

## ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO HAVE A SCHOOL/LEISURE BALANCE

Each and every child's day needs to be filled with a balance of work and fun. School age care programs must essentially be complementary to children's schooling. In today's climate, it is essential to teach children creative thinking and leisure skills and to encourage a 'life' balance which includes time for engaging in play and leisure activities to inhibit stress and provide an outlet for expression. Social and emotional wellbeing builds strong, resilient, happy children with a healthy outlook on life.

## DEVELOP A SENSE OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Children's rights are internationally acknowledged through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 4: Protection of rights and Article 28: Right to education. At the same time, school age care services and schools can often teach that with rights come responsibilities and together support children to actively take responsibility for their own decisions, choices and actions by supporting these concepts through their interactions.

*The school age care service adopted the behaviour conduct policy of the school in addition to their own behaviour guidance strategies which enabled the service to work in unison with the school community as a whole. The policy and associated strategies support families, children and staff to work together and actively take responsibility for their own decisions, actions and choices.*

## VALUE PLAY AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Children in school age care learn through engaging with their environment in multiple ways. Play is the natural way for children to explore and develop skills and school age care services are in an excellent position to support children's learning through engagement and interaction in a socio-cultural setting. Play is instinctive, voluntary and spontaneous. It gives satisfaction and a sense of achievement. Children's play is purposeful and meaningful and promotes physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31 states that, "every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts" (1989).

School leaders can enhance children's learning by advocating with staff that play enhances cognitive development (Lester & Russell, 2008) and that school age care programs provide rich play environments for children. Negotiated use of school facilities such as playgrounds between the school age care service and school leader will assist in realising this important form of learning.

*When building plans were being explored at the school, the School Age Care Coordinator saw the opportunity for their shared space to become a unique play-based learning environment which could be used by different groups throughout the school. At the same time, she was also concerned that they might lose the space altogether. The School Age Care Coordinator took her vision to the Junior Primary teachers to seek their support. She also promoted her vision to the Principal, advocating that this could be an opportunity for the school to position themselves as leaders in integrating play-based learning with more traditional schooling approaches. In the end, all parties could see the benefits of enhancing the school age care environment and making it accessible for various activities such as lunch club, the Junior Primary classes' creative play time and the social skills program. The teachers, school age care educators and school leadership team collaborated to create a stimulating play environment based on many of the principles of the play-based approach. In the end, the children were the biggest winners.*

## EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTRA-CURRICULAR AND COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS

Opportunities may exist where the service can support the school community by offering supportive and complementary extra-curricular programs. This may be before school, after school or during vacation care. Such program opportunities may include specialised instruction in music, dance, drama, art, cooking and sporting activities.

## MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL STANDARD

It is important that school leaders appreciate and acknowledge school age care educators as professionally skilled staff (Bisback & Kopf-Johnson, 2010). To achieve this, school age care educators can ensure they exercise professional discretion and maintain a high ethical and moral expectation of themselves and each other. They can also take responsibility for maintaining professional currency and contemporary practice, which may include accessing and using information provided by governments and peak bodies.

# DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## COLLABORATE IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The school age care service requires a significant number of policies and procedures to support its operations and compliance with many instruments of legislation, governance and operational requirements including the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* (National Quality Framework) and *MyTime, Our Place - Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. In addition to these, a number of school policies may need to be implemented and supported by the school age care service. By collaborating with the school on policy development, shared language becomes possible and effective implementation occurs. Each party is able to gain a better comprehension of the other's strengths and limitations.

*The school leaders and school age care educators intentionally collaborated in the development of their behaviour support and anti-bullying strategies. This process enabled the service and school to establish a shared vision for areas where they felt students needed clear and consistent messages. The outcomes of the implementation strategy empowered educators within the school age care service to participate in a consistent 'whole of school' approach. For children, the messages were clear and boundaries apparent.*

## DEVELOP FACILITIES AND OPERATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Under the National Law and National Regulations, the Approved Provider is responsible for meeting the physical facilities requirements on the school site. In order to ensure compliance an agreement around the use of premises and facilities must be negotiated so they are beneficial, acceptable and meet the needs of all parties.

Regulatory frameworks and requirements should be acknowledged in any agreement as being the basis of what must be upheld as a minimum standard for providing safe and suitable environments for children. The agreement should further articulate who will be responsible for aspects such as cleaning, maintenance and repairs. Consideration may also be given to financial arrangements and more significantly the value that the service adds to the school community.

*On an annual basis, the committee and coordinator of the school age care service meet with the school leader to revise the Memorandum of Understanding between the service and the school. This includes discussing and negotiating the needs of all parties. The school is informed of the Service Approval requirements of the National Law and National Regulation which need to be addressed appropriately by all stakeholders.*

## DEVELOP REPORTING PROCESSES

School age care services may explore opportunities to develop a regular written reporting process which professionally articulates aspects about the service beneficial to the school leader (Young, 2009).

The report may include aspects such as:

- attendance patterns;
- the service's engagement with *My Time, Our Place - Framework for School Age Care in Australia*;
- staffing arrangements (qualifications, experience and continuity);
- relevant information relating to the National Quality Framework, for example the service rating or assessment visit;
- strategic planning initiatives;
- policy and procedure updates; and
- budgets and financial data (where this is relevant).

The school age care service can provide to the school leader an overview of the organisational structure and role definitions. This can be reciprocated by the school leader with particular emphasis on the points of contact between the school age care service and the school. This practical and visual tool supports each party to the relationship in understanding the scope and limitations by which decision making is bound and identifies appropriate persons for reporting issues.

*The coordinator of the school age care service provides a regular report to the school leaders which is presented formally at meetings or sent via email if a face to face meeting is not possible. The report is clearly formatted with consistent headings to those identified above.*

## SHARED INDUCTIONS

School age care services are required under the National Quality Framework (Standard 7.1) to conduct an effective orientation and induction process for all staff which includes information about the school and school age care relationship, communication process, workplace health and safety and other collaborative initiatives and premises expectations.

This can be extended to provide opportunities for appropriate school leaders, teachers and school age care educators to participate in each other's induction processes to support a shared understanding of their reciprocal roles and responsibilities.

## PLAN STRATEGICALLY

School leaders can invite School Age Care Coordinators to participate in school planning and provide professional recommendations for school age care within the broader community. Opportunities exist in areas such as marketing and promoting the school, responding to enrolment trends and planned changes in school structure and arrangements.

*The School Age Care Coordinator was invited to contribute ideas in a whole of school planning day with key school leaders and members of the parent committee. The planning day was facilitated as a focused conversation, where each stakeholder was invited to contribute their ideas, considering both the current and future needs of stakeholders within the school community. From this discussion evolved a five year strategic plan for the school which included consideration for future growth of the school age care service and the opportunity for enhanced linkages between school and school age care activities.*



## MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

It is a requirement of the National Regulations under sections 181 and 182 to keep information confidential. Information can be exchanged to the extent necessary for education and care or medical treatment of a child (Australian Government, 2011). It is important to understand that as an employee within the school community, school age care educators are often privy to sensitive information. This information should be treated with respect, maintaining privacy and confidentiality as is required by law.

There may be times when it is unclear if the sharing of information is lawful or not. Schools and services will need to understand relevant legislation when they consider improving their strategies. An example of this is seeking written consent from families permitting the exchange of day to day information about children, families and their needs.

School age care educators and school leaders can establish a means of lawfully communicating around sensitive issues such as custody, child protection and administering medication before issues arise. In line with legal and regulatory requirements a plan can be developed to manage sensitive issues together and understand each party's role and responsibility in progressing the issue to resolution.

## SHARED MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Never make unplanned statements to the media. Should the school or the service be receiving media attention then a protocol for communicating and responding is necessary.

Services for children are often a focus of the media. Many school age care services have been contacted by the media for interviews for television, radio and newsprint. Media interviews and reports should be approached with caution, ensuring that permission is granted by the Approved Provider and any other key stakeholders including leaders within the school community.

A shared approach to media management between leaders in school age care and schools can avoid any unintended consequences of media contact.

## DEVELOP PROTOCOLS FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Critical incident management protocols of the service and school should be consistent to ensure that children and staff do not become confused by conflicting procedures. Crisis management, evacuation and emergency protocols should be practiced by the service and the school regularly. It is therefore important for the school age care service and school to collaborate on the development of these protocols.

## DEVELOP A GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

To ensure maintenance of positive relations between the school age care service and the school, any arising issues and grievances should be dealt with swiftly and objectively using established procedures, which have been collaboratively developed. This should be articulated in the overall agreement between both parties.

## CONCLUSION

The intention of this guide is to enhance opportunities for effective partnerships between school age care services and school leaders through establishing sustainable relationships. It highlights successful strategies and practices from partnerships from across Australia.

Developing and maintaining partnerships is a reciprocal process and equal responsibility for this is shared between the School Leader and Approved Provider of the school age care service.

This guide must also be interpreted in light of the various legislative frameworks in each State and Territory.

Great outcomes for children and families can only be achieved when schools and school age care services take a sincere approach in working towards an effective and rewarding partnership.

# REFERENCES

- Bisback, K and Kopf-Johnson, L. (2010). *An Introduction to School Age Care in Canada 2nd edition*. Toronto: Pearson.
- Australian Government. (2010). *Education and Care Services National Law*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Australian Government. (2011). *Education and Care Services National Regulations*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Cartmel, J. L. (2007). *Outside School Hours Care and Schools*. Brisbane: Centre for Learning Innovation.
- Churchwood, P. (2010, October 19). *Developing Partnerships between school and OSHC*. Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.
- COAG. (2011). *My Time, Our Place - Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Lester, S. & Russello, W. (2008). *Play for a change Play policy and practice: A review of contemporary perspectives*. London: Play England.
- Morris, K. (2006). *Once a Year Day*. Brisbane: Jabiru.
- National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2006). *Leading After-School Learning Communities—What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do*. Alexandria: NAESP.
- National Centre for Quality Afterschool . (2009). *A Practitioner's Guide Building and Maintaining Quality Afterschool Programs*. Austin: SEDL.
- Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2007). *Developing Partnerships for Service-Learning: Starting Points for Community-Based Organisations*. Brandeis University: ETR Associates.
- Young, P. G. (2009). *Principal Matters, 101 Tips for Creating Collaborative Relationships Between After-School Programs and School Leaders*. Nashville: School-Age Notes.







