

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

**PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES TO SUPPORT
CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)?

Communities of Practice (CoP) are groups of peers who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

There are three key elements to a Community of Practice:

- **Domain:** a shared area of interest
- **Community:** members interact and learn together
- **Practice:** members are practitioners who develop a shared repertoire of resources (Goodhue and Seriamlu, 2021)



BENEFITS OF BEING PART OF A COP - ARACY

Short Term Value for Professionals:

- Help with challenges
- Access to expertise
- Better able to contribute to team
- Confidence in one's approach to problems
- Fun of being with colleagues
- More meaningful participation
- Sense of belonging

Long Term Value for Professionals:

- Forum for expanding skills and expertise
- Network for keeping abreast of field
- Enhanced professional reputation
- Increased marketability and employability
- Strong sense of professional identity

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce yourself to your small group:

- Name
- Workplace
- Role
- What brought you to the CoP today?
- What are you hoping to take away from the CoP today?

(5 minutes)



CONTENT

Developmental milestones from birth to five years.

What is developmental delay and disability?

Strategies to build stronger relationships with families.

Tips to effectively communicate concerns with families.

Where to seek support.



AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT

Discuss with your small group

What are the different areas of child development? (birth to 5 years)

2 minutes

AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT BIRTH TO 5 YEARS



- Physical development
- Social development
- Emotional development
- Cognitive development
- Language development

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- How the child's body grows.
- What they can do with their body.
- Fine and gross motor development
- Development through regular movement and activity.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Develops across our whole life.
- Takes a **long time** to develop.
- Healthy social development is good for mental health and wellbeing.
- Daily interactions teach children about social rules, practices and values.



EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ability to express and manage emotions.
- Begins at birth and continues into adulthood.
- Children learn to understand their emotions with the help of grown ups around them.



COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Development of knowledge, skills and problem solving.
- Brain development is part of cognitive development.



LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Express and understand feelings
- Think and learn
- Solve problems
- Develop relationships.





YOUR ROLE AS EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

Discuss in your small groups what you understand about the term 'developmental delay.'

5 minutes

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

Developmental delay is a term used to describe a delay in a child's development.

It means that a child finds it harder to do everyday things that other children their age can do, for example dress themselves, talk or walk.

It's important to remember that **all children develop in their own time.**

NDIS DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY CRITERIA

The NDIS may consider that a child has a developmental delay when the child:

- is younger than 6 years of age **and**
- has a delay that results in substantial reduction in functional capacity. This means that the everyday activities the child does or can do is at a significantly lower competency level or is substantially different when compared with children of the same age **and**
- requires support for more than 12 months from a team of professionals who work collaboratively.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

Global Developmental Delay (GDD) is when a person has significant delays in 2 or more developmental domains (for example gross or fine motor skills, speech and language, social and personal skills).

GDD is a diagnosis that psychologists or paediatricians can make.

Diagnosis is guided by the DSM-5-TR.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

People with GDD may have associated diagnoses that can also contribute to their overall delay in development, for example:

- neurodivergent diagnoses like autism and ADHD
- cerebral palsy
- Down syndrome
- foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)
- fragile X syndrome
- hearing loss
- intellectual disability
- language and speech disorders.

DISABILITY

Discuss in your small groups what you understand about disability.

5 minutes

DISABILITY



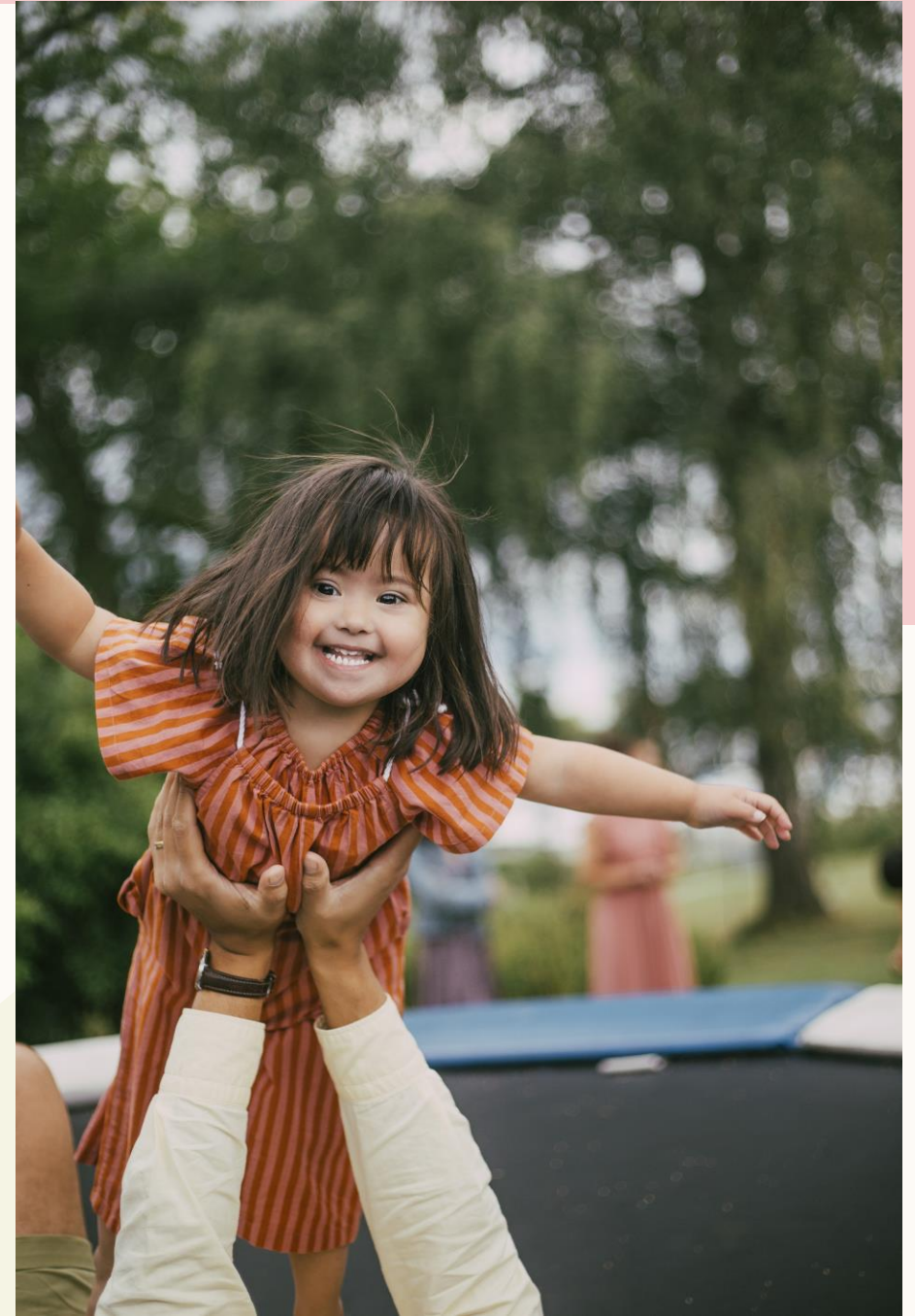
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) defines Disability as: Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions (The Disability Act 1992).

The Disability Act (1992) describes a person's impairment of body or function, a limitation in activities or a restriction in participation when interacting with their environment.

MEDICAL MODEL VS SOCIAL MODEL

In the **medical model** of disability, disability is seen as a health condition which needs to be remedied by medical professionals, like Doctors.

The **social model** of disability sees the environments and systems that people with disability live in as the problem, not the person with disability.



NETWORKING BREAK



BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

‘Children are much more likely to reach their full potential in life when their family and education and care service work together. These benefits are evident when families and educators exchange information regularly and collaborate on consistent approaches to daily routines, child development and learning.’

- The Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)



WHAT DOES PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES MEAN TO YOU?

Share your ideas in your small group.

EC Educators – consider how this relates
to the NQS quality areas.

(5 minutes)

Seven Quality Areas

- 1 Educational program and practice
- 2 Children's health and safety
- 3 Physical environment
- 4 Staffing arrangements
- 5 Relationships with children
- 6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- 7 Governance and leadership



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WHY ARE STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES IMPORTANT?

Share your ideas in your small group.

EC Educators – consider how this relates to the NQS quality areas.

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Children	Families	Early Childhood Setting	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ greater consistency between home and education and care setting ✓ children's learning and development is better supported ✓ children can feel more confident and secure in new setting ✓ aids the attachment between children and staff at the service ✓ any concerns about the child may be shared and therefore appropriately supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ feel valued and respected ✓ better understand their child's learning and development ✓ feel supported and empowered in their role as parents ✓ are comfortable to ask questions or to express concerns ✓ understand more about the role of EC staff ✓ have increased confidence in the service and their own parenting skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ learn from families' skills and expertise ✓ information gained from families can be used to support children's learning and development ✓ understand some issues affecting families ✓ gain family feedback that helps staff to evaluate the effectiveness of their practices and overall service ✓ families understand your role better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ the setting becomes a hub for families within the community ✓ families can network and support each other through shared experiences and child rearing practices ✓ children can develop friendships with other children in their community ✓ promote awareness of support services available to families

Table 1: Benefits of working in partnership with families

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES?

Share your ideas, strategies and tips for developing strong partnerships with families in your small group.

Use the paper on your table to make notes of your discussion.

10 minutes

STRATEGIES TO BUILD STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES.



- Value each other's role in the child's life.
- Trust each other.
- Communicate openly and freely with each other.
- Share insights and perspectives about the child and engage in shared decision making.

HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILIES WHEN YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CHILD?

Share your ideas, strategies and tips for communicating with families in your small group.

Do you have an example when a conversation didn't go as well as you hoped? What happened? What do you think contributed to this?

Use the paper on your table to make notes of your discussion.

10 minutes

CASE STUDY

Read the case study on your table with your group.

Discuss:

How would you prepare for a conversation with the family about your observations of the child?

How would you initiate the conversation with the family?

What would you do if the family were not receptive to your concerns?

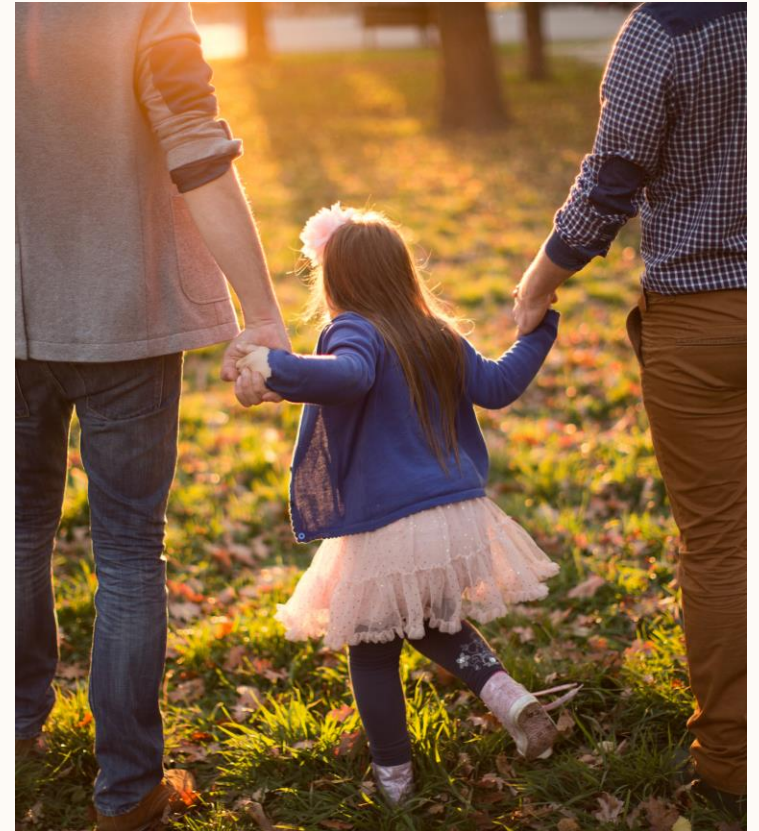
Select one person to share with the large group.



STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- Speak in a clear and considerate way.
- Find and share positives about the child.
- Be open and honest.
- Give accurate information about observations.
- Think before you speak.
- Ask for parent/carer's input.
- Let parents make informed decisions.

- Raising Children Network



STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Use a problem-solving approach:

- identifying the problem.
 - brainstorming as many solutions as possible.
 - jointly evaluating the pros and cons.
 - deciding on a solution to try.
 - putting the solution into action.
- reviewing the solution after an agreed period.

- Raising Children Network



PREPARING FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILIES - BEYOU

1. Get support from your team.
2. Ask the family what the child is like at home.
3. Use the **BETLS** (beetles) tool to shift the focus (behaviour, emotions, thoughts, learning and social relationships).
4. Give families time to reflect.
5. Assure families you are always open to further discussions.
6. Consider self care if the conversation becomes challenging.



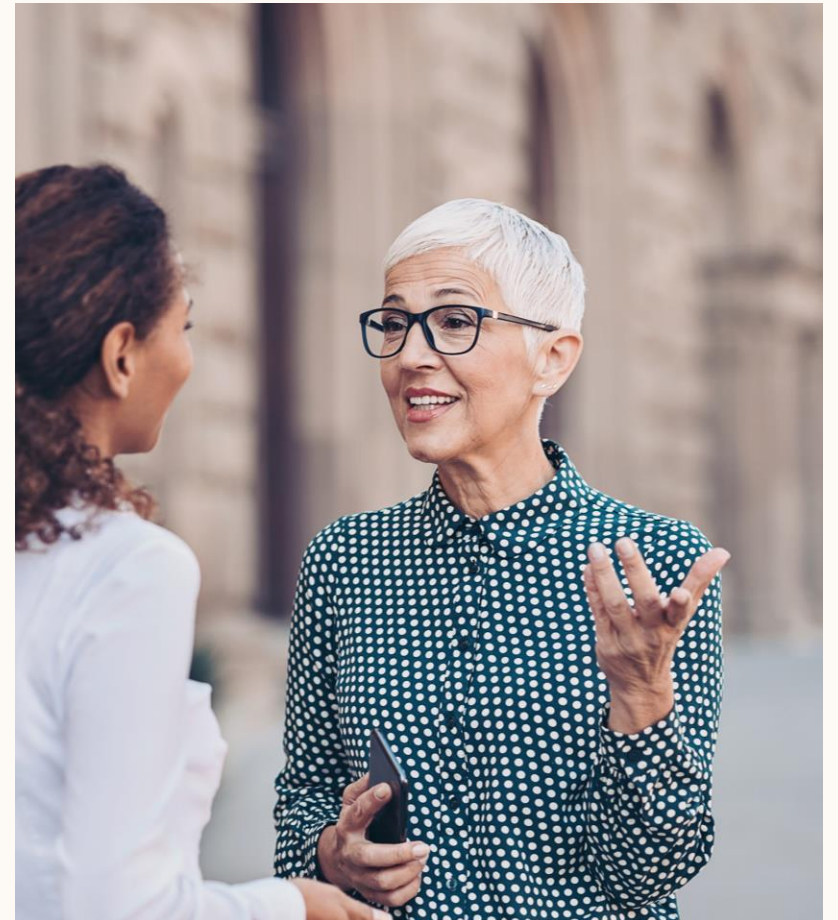
SCRIPT WRITING ACTIVITY

In your small groups, write down some examples of scripts you have used/could use when initiating a conversation with a parent or carer about their child.

Example:

I've noticed that (child) has (name observation/s).

Is this something you have noticed at home too?



COMMON BARRIERS FOR FAMILIES

1. Readiness
2. Capacity
3. Cost
4. Wait times
5. Time and competing priorities
6. Residency status and citizenship



COMMON BARRIERS FOR FAMILIES

Strategies to respond:

1. Listen
2. Be respectful
3. Educate yourself about programs, initiatives and supports available in the community that families can engage with.



WHERE TO SEEK SUPPORT

Ask

Ask your supervisor or leadership team for advice.

Contact

Contact the Inclusion Agency for advice and support.

Refer

Make a referral to EACH with parent/carer consent.

Do you have concerns about a child's development?

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Observe the Child

Make some observations of the child's play, communication and behaviours. Consider completing a Developmental Milestones checklist to go alongside your observations.

Remember:

A child under 6 years does not need a diagnosis to receive supports from EACH

Talk with the parents or carers

Talk with parents or carers about your observations and concerns. Ask the family if they have noticed anything about their child's development. Remember the family know their child best.

About EACH

When the family is ready, share information about EACH. EACH can support a family or carer to understand the child's needs and recommend what early connections are best for the child.
<https://www.each.com.au/service/early-childhood-early-intervention>

What is a Developmental Concern?

Developmental Concerns are concerns about a child's development, compared with other children their age. This may include how they:

- Play and move around;
- Do things to take care of themselves;
- Socialise with other children;
- Communicate what they want.

Resources:

- Early Childhood Approach: EACH Resources for families and communities
<https://www.each.com.au/ecei-resources-for-families/>
- A potential observation tool you could use can be found BeYou website:
<https://www.beyou.edu.au/resources/betls-observation-tool>
- The Australian Parenting Website supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/>
- The Developmental Milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards
https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2015/developmental-milestones.pdf
- THRIVARY app provides guidance, information and learning on all things early childhood development and early intervention (0-8yrs), <https://thrivary.com.au/>

Refer to EACH

With consent from the family refer to EACH, or support them to self refer:
<https://each.snapforms.com.au/form/ndis-referral-to-early-childhood-partners>

EACH is the NDIS Early Childhood Partner in ACT, Greater Ipswich, South West Sydney and Southern NSW. We deliver the Early Childhood Approach for children aged 0-8 years with a disability or developmental delay. We work together with parents, carers, and families to support children to have the best possible start in life.

each

REFLECTION

In your small group, share:

1. One idea/strategy/concept that has 'stuck' for you today.
2. One thing you will take away and try out in your practice.
3. One thing you would like some more support with.
4. Exchange emails/phone numbers with someone at your table. This person will be your buddy between now and the next session.



HOMEWORK

From now until the next CoP on 25th June:

- Reflect on your learnings from today.
- Choose one new idea/strategy/concept to try out.
- Take notes on what worked well, what didn't work so well, what strategies you used, the outcome of your actions.
- Check in with your 'buddy' over email, text or coffee! Offer support, suggestions and your professional expertise to your buddy.
- Bring your reflections and case studies back to the next CoP to share, gather feedback and case conference with group members.

EACH IS HERE TO HELP

EACH online referral form (with parent/carer consent): [Referral to Early Childhood Partners \(snapforms.com.au\)](#)

[EACH Resource Page for Families and Communities](#)

[EACH Early Childhood Approach Facebook Group](#)

EACH Early Years Specialist (if the family is already engaged with EACH)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

[BeYou – Preparing for difficult conversations with families](#)

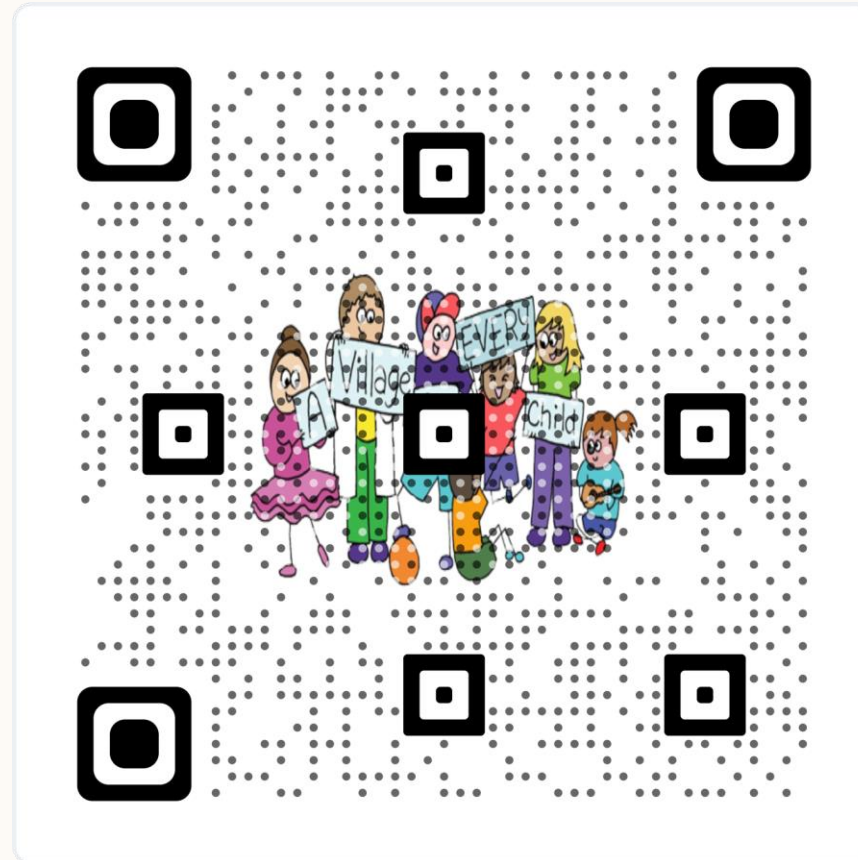
[NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency](#)

[Effective communication with parents and carers: for professionals](#)

[Global Developmental Delay Factsheet – Big Fat Smile](#)

[Building strong partnerships with families - ACECQA](#)

SESSION FEEDBACK





**THANK
YOU**

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