

# Communication



## Good communication creates a shared understanding of your child's needs and abilities

In addition to the more formal communication through the Program Support Group meeting once a term, you should also have ongoing communication with the kindergarten teacher.

### Working with the Program Support Group

All members of the Program Support Group must have a good understanding of your child's needs and abilities.

While you will have formal meetings together as a group, you may also have informal contact with each of these people on various issues.

Working together means listening to all points of view but you should feel comfortable to question anything you are unsure about.

### Regular communication

The Program Support Group should communicate regularly so that there is a co-ordinated approach to your child's program.

A regular Program Support Group meeting once a term is an opportunity to share important information about your child. This is in addition to the quick chats you have with the kindergarten teacher.

Find a quiet moment before each meeting to write down the things you want to talk about. If you want to take a friend or advocate with you for support, make sure you tell the other members of the group beforehand.

## Effective communication

Parents of a child with a disability often communicate and work closely with the kindergarten teacher.

Before the start of the year, set up an arrangement for communication that suits you both.

It is good to have more than one way of communicating for the times when you can't wait, or need to discuss something in private or in more detail.

### Quick catch-ups in person

You will be as keen as other parents to hear about your child's day. If you are able to wait with the other parents who want to speak to the kindergarten teacher, you can get feedback straight away.

### Phone calls and email

Scheduling a phone call at the end of the day or sending each other an email can let you communicate without the hustle and bustle of drop-off and pick-up times.

### Communication book

A communication book is a notebook that travels between home and kindergarten in your child's bag.

Both you and the kindergarten teacher can leave messages for each other in the communication book every day, or as needed. A communication book can work well if you both remember to check it regularly. Others, such as Early Childhood Intervention Service providers, may use the communication book as well.

Make sure you keep the kindergarten staff up to date with what is happening for your child at home.

## Keeping kindergarten staff up to date

You can use a communication book to update the kindergarten staff on significant family events, your child's progress at the Early Childhood Intervention Service, and changes at home.

## Issues and concerns

If you have any issues or concerns, speak to the kindergarten teacher first. Your concern should be treated with respect and managed in a professional, positive and constructive way.

Talking with the kindergarten teacher will help you figure out the best way to resolve the issue. You can also ask them for a copy of their complaints and grievance policy.

It may also be helpful to have support from your Early Childhood Intervention Service provider who will have a good understanding of your child's needs.

Take a few minutes beforehand to make sure you are clear on what the issue is and the outcome you seek. Stay focused on getting the best outcome for your child.

Listen to what others have to say but be clear about the things you feel strongly about. Also be prepared to consider reasonable compromises.

If you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been dealt with, contact a Children's Services Adviser at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development regional office.

**"I got the kindergarten's email address so that I could email the kindergarten teacher about any issues that came up during the year. This was good because it allowed both of us to make thoughtful comments rather than trying to have hurried conversations at drop-off or pick-up times."**



## Parent advocacy

Being an effective advocate can be one way to work towards getting the best outcomes for your child and family

It isn't easy being an advocate for your child. Sometimes emotions take over. Advocacy can also be exhausting!

But with persistence and the right support, parent advocacy can help you get what you and your family need.

To be an effective advocate:

- Be clear about what you want
- Find out who is responsible or accountable for the decision and action you seek
- Listen to other people's points of view
- Think about the points that others may raise and how you might respond
- Don't always expect conflict but be prepared with a positive strategy if you do strike conflict
- Be open-minded, others might suggest solutions that you may not have thought of or suggest different ways of doing things that may be just as effective
- Draw on strong emotion if you need to
- Ask a friend or professional to help you with advocacy if you need some support

## The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission can help people resolve complaints by offering a conciliation process that is confidential, impartial and free.

## Association for Children with a Disability

Our Parent Support Service provides free telephone support for families of children with a disability. If you need a language interpreter to access our service, call the Translating and Interpreter Service on 13 14 50.

## Regional Parent Support Workers

Our Association works in co-operation with a network of Regional Parent Support Workers who can give you information about services and support in your local area.

For contact details of the Regional Parent Support Worker in your region, contact the Association office on 03 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers) or visit [www.acd.org.au](http://www.acd.org.au)

## For more information

**Office for Children and Early Childhood Development**  
[www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au](http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au)

**The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission**  
Phone 9281 7111 or 1800 134 142  
[www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au)

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## Association for Children with a Disability

This series of Kindergarten Inclusion Tip Sheets was developed by the Association for Children with a Disability in partnership with the Victorian Government's Office for Children and Early Childhood Development.