

ECEC Policy 36

Family Conduct Guidelines (Code of Conduct)

Approval
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Controlled Document

Version:	1.0	Date of approval:	August 2026		Date of next review:	August 2029
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Statement

The Family Conduct Guidelines works in conjunction with our *Enrolment Policy*, *Client and Stakeholder Feedback (including Compliments and Complaints) Policy*, *Privacy Policy*, *Family Handbook* and the *Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics*.

CatholicCare Wollongong recognises that when a child is enrolled, a partnership is established with their family. Strong partnerships between families and educators are essential to supporting children's learning, wellbeing and sense of belonging.

The Family Conduct Guidelines are in place to emphasise the commitment and ethical responsibilities each family adopts when enrolling their child/ren at CatholicCare Wollongong Early Learning Centres (ELC) and Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) services.

Purpose

This Code outlines the expectations of families to support respectful, safe and collaborative partnerships. The safety, rights and wellbeing of children are the paramount consideration in all interactions.

Aim

The aim of the Family Conduct Guidelines is to provide information to support families and the Service develop clear and effective methods of communication to support the building of genuine partnerships and adopt appropriate and expected behaviour for families and educators. This includes acting as an advocate for individual children and discussing more complex and challenging issues that call for careful consideration and mutual respect.

CatholicCare Wollongong is guided by the values of Dignity, Integrity, Compassion, Excellence and Solidarity. These values shape how we work with children, families and communities and guide the decisions we make every day.

We expect all members of our Education and Care community to respect and uphold these values through their interactions, communication and relationships, contributing to a welcoming, inclusive and child-safe environment for all.

Communication

We are committed to creating a welcoming environment where families feel a sense of belonging and are supported to engage meaningfully with the Service. It is expected that families will collaborate with their child's educator/s, working in partnership to support their child's learning, development and wellbeing. This partnership supports the safety, rights and best interests of each child, which are the paramount consideration in all practices.

Our educators understand that families lead busy lives and value opportunities to strengthen the connection between home and the Service. We provide a range of communication methods to support meaningful engagement and encourage family participation. Effective communication builds mutual respect, understanding and trust, and contributes to positive outcomes for children.

Building strong partnerships includes the ongoing sharing of knowledge and experiences to support a deeper understanding of each child. Families are encouraged to share relevant information with educators, such as changes in routine, wellbeing, significant events, or interests their child may wish to explore or share.

This information supports educators to respond to each child's individual needs throughout the day. Open and respectful communication is essential to ensuring children feel safe, supported and understood. Families will be asked to nominate their preferred method of communication, which will be reviewed and updated as required to support responsive and effective communication.

Meeting with Staff

It is not always possible or appropriate to discuss concerns or important matters at the time they arise. Much of the communication between families and educators occurs during child drop-off and pick-up times; however, these transition periods are often busy. Families may be time-limited, and educators are focused on supporting children's safe and smooth transitions between home and the Service. In addition, the educator who knows your child best may not always be available at these times due to rostering arrangements.

To support meaningful and respectful communication, families are encouraged to arrange a suitable time to meet with educators or leadership away from the learning environment. This allows for discussions to occur in a private setting, where educators can give their full attention and consider matters thoughtfully, ensuring decisions are informed, respectful and in the best interests of the child.

Respecting our Educators and Staff

Through open communication, shared decision-making and reflective practice, we aim to build strong, collaborative partnerships that support each child's wellbeing, learning and development, both within the Service and beyond.

All stakeholders involved with the Service are expected to demonstrate respectful and appropriate behaviour at all times. This includes showing respect towards educators, children, families and all members of the Service community.

Behaviour that is derogatory, disrespectful, abusive or intimidating will not be tolerated. This may include, but is not limited to, swearing at or verbally abusing staff, aggressive or threatening behaviour, harassment, intimidation, discriminatory remarks, hostile communications, inappropriate use of social media, or behaviour that compromises the safety, wellbeing or dignity of children, families, educators or visitors. Where the behaviour of a family member or visitor is considered inappropriate, threatening or places others at risk, the Service may take immediate action. This may include requesting the individual to leave the premises and, where required, contacting external authorities, including Police.

Complaints or Grievances

CatholicCare Wollongong welcomes feedback and is committed to resolving concerns in a fair, respectful and timely manner. In line with the CatholicCare Wollongong *Client & Stakeholder Feedback (including Compliments and Complaints) Policy* and *ECECP 23.1 Complaint Grievance Procedure*, families may provide feedback or make a complaint at any time, including in person, online, by phone or in writing.

Complaints aim to be acknowledged within 3 business days, with a resolution outcome aimed within 30 business days, where possible. Families will be kept informed throughout the process and supported to engage in a transparent and respectful manner.

Families are expected to raise concerns through appropriate communication channels and to maintain respectful interactions with educators, staff and management throughout the process.

If families have concerns regarding an incident or situation, they are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Centre Director or Responsible Person. Families are asked to be mindful when discussing sensitive matters and to avoid raising concerns in front of children or other families in order to maintain confidentiality and a respectful environment.

Families may choose to submit feedback through CatholicCare Wollongong's formal feedback and complaints channels, including via the CatholicCare website. Where concerns remain unresolved, families may escalate the matter to the ECEC Leadership team or Approved Provider. The relevant CatholicCare Wollongong representative will acknowledge the complaint and work towards an outcome that supports the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child.

Families are expected to work cooperatively with the person managing the complaint. Inappropriate behaviour during the complaints process will not be tolerated and may result in further action, including formal meetings with management.

All complaints are managed in accordance with privacy and confidentiality requirements. Where a complaint relates to a notifiable matter, including child protection concerns or suspected fraud, CatholicCare Wollongong is required to notify relevant authorities in line with legislative and regulatory obligations.

Concerns relating to Child Care Subsidy (CCS) should be directed to the ECEC Fees Coordinator in the first instance. Families may also contact the Department of Education directly via the online contact form. Suspected misuse of Child Care Subsidy may be reported through the Department of Education's official reporting channels.

Confidentiality

In accordance with *CCW Policy 14 – Privacy*, confidentiality and privacy must be upheld at all times. CatholicCare Wollongong is committed to ensuring that personal and sensitive information is managed lawfully, respectfully and securely. Families and educators share a responsibility to protect the privacy of all individuals within the Service.

Families are expected to ensure that management is kept informed of any relevant parenting arrangements, including parenting orders or agreements under Family Law, where applicable, to support the safety and wellbeing of children.

Personal information, including addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses, will not be disclosed without prior consent, except where required by law. Families must not share personal information relating to other children, families or staff members with others, including within the Service community.

Families must not share or distribute images, videos or information obtained through the Service, including via the Service app, social media platforms or at special events, without appropriate permission. This includes publishing content on personal social media accounts.

Staff are also bound by strict confidentiality obligations and are unable to share information regarding other children, families or staff members. Families are expected to respect these boundaries. In addition, families are not to engage with staff on personal social media platforms, except through authorised Service communication channels.

If families have concerns regarding their child, they are encouraged to speak with their child's educator and arrange a suitable time to meet in a private setting. Where concerns remain unresolved, families should escalate the matter to the Nominated Supervisor and arrange a follow-up discussion.

Child Care Subsidy Obligation

CatholicCare Wollongong does not have control over the administration of Child Care Subsidy (CCS), including eligibility decisions, assessment outcomes or the timing of payments. These matters are managed by Services Australia.

At enrolment, families are responsible for providing accurate and complete information required to support CCS processes. This includes the correct Customer Reference Number (CRN) and date of birth for both the child and the parent/guardian linked to the enrolment.

To be eligible for CCS, families must apply through their MyGov account and complete all required steps, including the Child Care Subsidy activity test. The Approved Provider and family will enter into a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA), which outlines the agreed care arrangements in return for fees.

Once the Service submits an enrolment notice, families must confirm the enrolment through their MyGov account and also confirm their CWA in the Xplor Home app. CCS entitlements will not be applied until these steps have been completed.

Families are responsible for notifying Centrelink of any changes to their circumstances within required timeframes, including within 14 days where applicable, as changes may impact CCS entitlements and may result in adjustments or debts.

Policies and Procedures

CatholicCare Wollongong's ECEC policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, in response to legislative changes, and through ongoing critical reflection to ensure they remain current, effective and aligned with best practice. The policies are available to families to view any time on the CatholicCare Wollongong website.

Families are encouraged to contribute to the review and improvement of policies and procedures. Feedback from families supports continuous improvement and helps ensure that children's safety, wellbeing and best interests remain the paramount consideration.

Breach of Family Conduct Guidelines (Code of Conduct)

All members of the Education and Care community share responsibility for contributing to a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. Where parents, carers or family members are unable to meet the expectations outlined in these Guidelines, the Service may take appropriate action following review by the Nominated Supervisor and/or Approved Provider.

Any action taken will be guided by procedural fairness and the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children. In circumstances where behaviour is serious, ongoing, or negatively impacts the safety or wellbeing of others, CatholicCare Wollongong may determine that continued enrolment is no longer appropriate and therefore reserves the right to suspend or terminate a child's enrolment.

Policy created/ Reviewed

Date	Major, Minor or Administrative	Description of Revision(s)
August 2026	Major	New policy.