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I have always believed families are unique and no one size fits all. With the 30 years of varied experience I have had in secondary school, long day care, before and after school care, vacation care and family day care (22 years) my philosophy has always included the importance of listening and learning from families. Children are central to my focus and I believe my role is to improve children's lives, assist and help them. I strongly believe families are the child's first educator and think it is about asking lots of questions and allowing families to give you information. I also realise that I don't have all the answers and that a part of my role is to refer families when needed. To develop relationships with families I think you need to be engaged, interested, ask lots of questions, acknowledge your lack of knowledge and understand that there are many different approaches to child rearing. When I was younger I thought I was being rude if I asked questions about culture. Now I know that, by asking, it shows the family I am interested in them. Families like to be treated as individuals and it's important to get to know them. The families' stories of why they travelled to this country are rich with information. I don't have all the answers so I will ask lots of questions but I also know at what point not to ask, for example, a refugee family who has fled a war-torn area or a family who has just lost a family member. I respect what they don't want to share as well. Once you build the relationship with the families they are more likely to talk to you and ask questions—being respectful is the key. I also think it important not to give all the policies and information at once to the families.

In terms of the family day care environment building relationships with families can sometimes be problematic for the educators. The families generally relate with the family day care educators and the relationship does become personal. Now with the National Quality Framework carers have a title of educators. So it is about helping the educators understand this and establish and negotiate appropriate professional boundaries. To help educators with building professional relationships with the families we do run training programs for our new educators. These are not accredited but cover issues around communication (with children, families, staff and the wider community). We cover issues such as setting limits with families (i.e. what is okay and not okay about picking up late, requesting after hours, payments etc). This is not easy, especially when the families have high expectations of the educator. This is where we train the educators to understand that this is a business and it is not about being friends with the families—especially if the family is trying to take advantage of the educator (this can be more of an issue when they are from the same cultural background). We empower the educators and help them to learn from experience. We all make mistakes and sometimes we have to be burnt to realise we will do it differently next time. One of our educators lost \$900 to a bad debt and now she is hard about fees. This is her business and that is a lot of money for her to lose. It is a fine line between payments and care and some families can get offended when asked for their fees.

Other issues are things like the birthday party. For example, how do you say no to the 27th birthday invitation? It is about establishing boundaries and limits in a professional manner. We have several policies that support educators in developing professional relationships with the families. Policies, such as our confidentiality and privacy policy, help guide educators' conduct. We don't have a policy on professional boundaries as this is up to the individual educator. If they call the coordination unit we talk them through the issue they are facing. One issue we have noticed is the use of texting between educators and families, for example, paying fees or other issues they might feel uncomfortable to discuss face-to-face. We encourage educators to always talk to the families, not to text. As we have a diverse group of families and educators we also train them around being respectful of identity and cultural backgrounds.