Engaging multilingual families in the Child Information Sharing Scheme

About the Child Information Sharing Scheme?

The Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) enables the sharing of information between authorised organisations known as Information Sharing Entities (ISEs), to support children's wellbeing and safety. Long Day Care Services, Kindergartens and Outside School Hours Care services are all deemed to be authorised organisations under CISS. If you are not familiar with CISS, please find further information at the link provided or enrol in free online training via the Information Sharing and MARAM Online Learning System.

The aim of CISS is to support positive wellbeing and child safety outcomes through early identification of risk and implementation of intervention strategies. Collaborative partnerships with other professionals working with the child and family support continuity between services, ensure holistic approaches to children's wellbeing and safety.

Consent to share information under CISS

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) reminds us that developing effective partnerships with families is reliant upon an open, non-judgemental and honest approach. Wherever possible, CISS encourages us to engage the family when sharing information. There may be times when it is not safe, reasonable, appropriate, or in the best interest of the child to do so, and therefore, under CISS, consent is not required to share relevant information when the requirements for sharing have been met.

Engaging Multilingual families in CISS

Enrolment and orientation

The enrolment and orientation process your service undertakes with children and their families is a critical time to begin developing effective family partnerships. Understanding cultural and religious values, expectations and experiences of the family will all contribute to how you engage the family and build their sense of belonging to the service. For families with whom you do not have shared language, a free language interpreter service is available to eligible early childhood services to support this important process.

Effective orientation also ensures families understand the services policies and procedures. Introducing families to your Privacy and Confidentiality Policy (including CISS) is an important opportunity to outline CISS and the services obligations and responsibilities to support the best interest of the child. To support this conversation, the Department of Education has developed Child Information Sharing Factsheets in 20 community languages.

Developing strong partnerships with multilingual families

Every family, regardless of their background is unique. People from a particular cultural background or language group are not homogenous – they do not all share the same beliefs, values and hopes. Culture and language are not the only influence on a person's needs - age, gender, education, socio economic status, physical ability, health, and life experience all contribute. For this reason, it is important to take the time to understand each individual family.

Recognise the limit to your knowledge, do not make assumptions – talk to families directly to understand their family's cultural practices and preferences.

Strong relationships with multilingual families are essential for achieving quality education and care outcomes. Without these relationships, families may feel excluded, misunderstood, or distrustful of the information-sharing process, potentially leading to reluctance in engaging with services. When families feel respected and included, they are more likely to share valuable information that supports their child's education and wellbeing.

By prioritising trust, transparency, and inclusivity, educators not only enhance their practice but also contribute to a stronger, more equitable early childhood education system.

Educators can foster trust and understanding by:

- Reflecting on personal biases and how they impact relationship-building.
- Adopting an equitable approach by offering families the choice of English or translated information.
- Seeking professional development in culturally responsive practice.
- Providing translated materials and interpreters when engaging in CISS.
- Using visual aids and plain English to explain key concepts.
- Respecting cultural communication preferences.
- Creating welcoming environments that promote safety and respect.
- Offering regular interpreter-supported meetings and follow-ups to maintain trust.
- Hosting information sessions about CISS in multiple languages.
- Ensuring families understand their rights and addressing concerns respectfully.

Enacting CISS – communicating with families with whom you do not share a language.

Conversations about information sharing can be complex, particularly when families have concerns about privacy or government services. These discussions require sensitivity, patience, and understanding. Conversations with families about concerns for their child's wellbeing and safety can also be stressful for both parties. It is important to remember that stress can have a negative impact on communication effectiveness for all people. Families who may not have needed a translator in the past, may need one in a stressful or difficult situation.

Authorised professionals may also navigate challenges by:

- **Acknowledging and validating concerns**: "I understand this may be unfamiliar. I want to ensure you feel comfortable and understand how this supports your child."
- **Using active listening and open-ended questions**: "Can you share your thoughts or concerns about this process?"
- **Framing conversations around the child's wellbeing**: "Our goal is to ensure your child receives the best support possible."
- **Respecting cultural differences**: Adapting approaches to align with families' comfort levels.
- **Being transparent about confidentiality**: Clearly explaining who has access to information and how it is protected.
- **Offering alternative communication support**: Providing written materials in the family's preferred language if required and arranging interpreters when needed.
- **Remaining patient and open to follow-up discussions**: Allowing time for families to process information and ask questions.

Maintaining Relationships When Engaging in CISS

To ensure ongoing trust and cooperation, educators should:

- Engage families in open and honest discussions about CISS and its benefits.
- Respect family perspectives and address concerns with cultural awareness.
- Collaborate transparently with professionals, keeping families informed and involved.
- Reassure families about confidentiality and ethical information handling.
- Advocate for culturally appropriate services and support

Resources and Support Available

Early childhood educators can access various resources to enhance their relationships with multilingual families:

Translation and interpreting services (All Graduates Interpreting and Translating)	https://www.vic.gov.au/use-interpreter-early-childhood-education-services
National Quality Standard (NQS)	https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide
Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (2016)	https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-learning-development-framework-veyldf
Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) Practice Principles	https://www.vic.gov.au/practice-principles-teaching-birth-eight-years
Child Information Sharing: Information for families, carers, children and young people	https://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-parents-and-families
Child Information Sharing Factsheet in your language Resources	https://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-your-language
Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV): Child Information Sharing Scheme Capability Hub	https://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/children-youth-family/child-information-sharing-scheme/professional-resources
Department of Education: Engaging with Multilingual Families - Guide	https://www.vic.gov.au/supporting-cald-families-engage-kindergarten
fka Children's Services e-learning series: Engaging with Multilingual Families about Kindergarten (free)	https://fka.org.au/knowledge-hub/
fka Children's Services Professional Support	https://fka.org.au/professional-support/
Barriers to Active Participation in Early Childhood Education & Care, *fka* Children's Services (2023)	https://fka.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Information-for-EC-Professionals-Barriers-to-Active-Participation-in-ECEC.pdf
Department of Education CIS and MARAM training	Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms | vic.gov.au

References

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Victoria State Government. (n.d.). *Child Information Sharing Information for families, carers, children and young people*. Retrieved from Victoria State Government: https://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-parents-and-families

fka **Children's Services (*fka*CS) advocates for children's cultural and linguistic rights and provides support to education and care services in the provision of culturally rich environments that support a civil society.**
Contact us to discuss support: Ph: 03 9428 4471 or E: culturalinclusion@fka.org.au