Introduction

As early childhood professionals we need to regularly assess our practice to identify our strengths and areas where we can make improvements. Once we have determined an area we would like to improve or develop it is important we plan to work towards this. This is where goal setting comes in.

The National Quality Framework requires all services to evaluate their current practices through self assessment against the National Quality Standard and identify the practices they can or should improve.

THOUGHTS ON GOAL SETTING:

“If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.” Yogi Berra

“Goals are the fuel in the furnace of achievement.” Brian Tracy, Eat that Frog

“Some people make things happen, some watch things happen, while others wonder what has happened.” Gaelic Proverb

Why do we need to think about goal setting?

- Goals provide a plan for moving forward.
- Give us a clear vision or direction for the future.
- Goal setting gives you something to aim for.
What type of goals should we be setting?

- Goals that relate to the educational program.
- Service related goals (policies and philosophy), corporate governance.
- Goals for children’s learning for both individuals and groups of children.
- Professional goals for educators.

These goals may be:

- **Short term**: to be achieved in the near future eg days, weeks, three months.
- **Long term**: to be achieved over a longer period of time eg, 12 months – 5 years or longer.
- **Visionary**: Goals that lead to the service’s vision being achieved – should relate to the service Philosophy.

Who needs to be involved in goal setting?

- Children
- Families
- Service stakeholders as appropriate
- Educators
- Management
- Local community

How do we get started?

- Reflecting on our practices as individuals and as a team is a good place to start.

> “Questioning how and why certain practices occur is the most effective way to begin critically examining service practice.”

(Guide to Developing a QIP page 6)

Where do we record the goals we have and our progress towards these goals?

- Each service is required to develop a Quality Improvement Plan as part of the NQF. This document will need to be submitted to DEC prior to the service’s Assessment and Rating visit.
- The service’s QIP must be a living, working document, where achievements and progress towards goals is recorded evaluated and new goals are added.
Tips to Help You Set Purposeful Goals

State each goal as a positive statement

- Express your goals positively.

Be precise and specific

- Set precise goals, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement.

Goals should answer questions such as:

- What do we want to accomplish? Who is involved? What is the purpose or benefit of accomplishing this goal?

Set priorities

- When you have several goals, give each a priority.
- This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by having too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.

Write goals down

- This makes them visible and gives them more force.

Keep operational goals small

- Keep the short term goals that you’re working towards small and achievable.
- If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward.

Set realistic goals

- It’s important to set goals that you can achieve.

Consider:

- Is this the right time? Does the goal match our other needs?

Sourced from mindtools.com

DID YOU KNOW?
The Guide to Developing a Quality Improvement Plan (4) has information on the self assessment process which is helpful.
Suggested Ideas

Suggestions for ongoing review of QIP goals

- Add to agendas of meetings, including staff, team/room, management committee/parent meetings.
- At times of change at the service, to staff, management, new enrolments.
- After the Assessment and Rating visit based on recommendations given.

How often should we review the goals? How do we note our achievements? When do we set goals?

The NQF requires services to review their Quality Improvement Plan at least annually. This is a minimum requirement. It is recommended that the service develops a plan of action to ensure goals are reviewed and discussed regularly, not just at the annual review.

REMEMBER

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

WHAT DOCUMENTS CAN WE REFER TO?

- The National Law and National Regulations
- The National Quality Standard
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics
- Service philosophy
- Service policies and The Early Years Learning Framework
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

NQF will have changes legislated in October 2017, to come into effect February 2018. We will provide updated resources and guides to help you take advantage of the changes.