



QUALITY AREA 1

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION FOR EDUCATORS

SCHOOL AGE CARE

This information sheet is designed to give practical guidance for educators in services educating and caring for school age children and young people to streamline documentation processes and reduce duplication while ensuring the legislative and quality standards are met.



This information sheet provides guidance on the educational program and practice documentation requirements for children and young people attending services educating and caring for school age children approved under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

School age care is not intended to be an extension of the school day, but rather complement the child or young person's learning at home and at school. The focus is on empowering and supporting children and young people's active participation and engagement in play, leisure and recreational opportunities through informing the educational program. Effective documentation in school age care involves recording, demonstrating, assessing, evaluating and making visible children and young people's wellbeing, learning and development as well as the intentionality of educators' decision making.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is no one way to meet documentation requirements under the NQF. Approaches to documentation should focus on children's and young people's wellbeing, learning, and development and authentically reflect the children and young people, families and communities of your service. It can also provide opportunities for educator learning and growth.

Children and young people in outside school hours care are encouraged to be actively involved in the development, format, content and evaluation of documentation relating to the educational program. They may also be engaged in the documentation process, sharing their ideas, interests and learning and may collaborate with educators and service leaders around decisions on the way documentation is developed, used and displayed.

Educators and educational leaders use this information and apply their professional judgment to choose methods that best capture the intent and purpose of this documentation.

SCHOOL AGE CARE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The NQS acknowledges middle childhood and recreational programs for school age children and young people as distinct from early childhood programs. School age education and care programs supplement children's formal schooling. The educational program is focused on active learning, social development, wellbeing, and recreational or leisure activities to support each child's continuity of learning and development as well as their wellbeing.

COMPLYING WITH THE NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS – WHAT SERVICES MUST DO

The [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) set out requirements for educational program and practice. The National Regulations define what **must** be done to comply with Section 168 of the [Education and Care Services National Law](#) but they do not prescribe how to do it or what educational documentation must look like. In collaboration with service and educational leaders, approved providers will make informed decisions on the best approach to documentation to maintain compliance, meet the [National Quality Standard](#) (NQS) and support educators to effectively deliver and document programs that enhance outcomes for the children, young people and their families.



The National Law and Regulations do not prescribe how much documentation is required or the method services must use to document.

Services must meet the following:

- ✔ **Regulation 73** – Have an educational program that contributes to the five learning outcomes of the approved learning framework ([My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia V2.0](#))
- ✔ **Regulations 325B (SA), 345A (Tas), 359A (Vic), 373A (WA), 289A (NT), 274A (NSW), 298A (Qld)** – These regulations apply in place of regulation 74(1)(b) – Programs for children over preschool age:
 - The approved provider of the education and care service **must** ensure that, for the purposes of the educational program for a child over preschool age, evidence about the development of the program is documented.
- ✔ **Regulation 74(1)(b) – ACT only – For a child over preschool age** – Document child evaluations including:
 - Evaluations of the child’s wellbeing, development and learning.
- ✔ **Regulation 74(2)** – Prepare documentation that is readily understandable by the educators at the service and the parents of the child. Services must consider:
 - the time children are being educated and cared for
 - how the documentation will be used by the educators.
- ✔ **Regulation 75** – a) Display information about the contents and operation of the educational program in a place that is accessible to parents, and **b)** have a copy of the educational program available for inspection on request.
- ✔ **Regulation 76** – provide parents, on request, with:
 - information about the content and operation of the program in relation to the child
 - information about the child’s participation in the program

a copy of the documents kept under regulation 74 in respect of the child.

DOCUMENTATION AND THE NQS

The NQS is a schedule of the National Regulations and documentation expectations are outlined in Quality Area 1 Educational Program and Practice, in particular Standard 1.3 Assessment and Planning:

1.3	Assessment and planning	Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
1.3.1	Assessment planning cycle	Each child’s learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child’s progress.

EVIDENCING DOCUMENTATION UNDER THE NQS – WHAT SERVICES MAY DO

In addition to the regulatory requirements, services will also need to consider how they meet the documentation requirements of the NQS. As the NQS is underpinned by the legislation, there will be alignment between practice that is compliant with the Law and Regulations and evidence of how service practice meets the aligning standards.

For example, a service may demonstrate children and young people’s wellbeing, learning and development through embedding the language of [My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia V2.0](#) (MTOF) within a written reflection of their educational program. This documentation method also captures children’s and young people’s engagement with the five outcomes outlined in MTOF. This practice may be considered against NQS Standards 1.1 (Program) and 1.3 (Assessment and planning), and Regulation 73 and 74, noting some states and territories have different documentation requirements for educational programs for children over preschool age.*

Service leaders and educators may use a range of documentation methods to capture children and young people’s play and leisure experiences informed by their pedagogical and philosophical approaches.

Careful consideration and reflection should inform decisions to promote practices that support quality outcomes for children, young people, families, and educators, and:

- align with the legislative and quality requirements
- reflect contemporary research and knowledge about children’s and young people’s wellbeing, learning and development
- respect children’s and young people’s privacy, dignity and rights, and their chosen level of participation in planned experiences
- ensure expectations/benchmarks of documentation practices are meaningful, sustainable, reasonable and achievable
- eliminate or minimise duplicative or unnecessarily onerous practices
- occur in consultation with children and young people
- empower educators and service leaders to build understanding, ownership and commitment to the purposes of the agreed documentation processes
- focus on the primary purpose of documentation; to inform the development, implementation and evaluation of the program
- ensure documentation practices complement (rather than hinder) engagement in valuable learning experiences and interactions with children and young people
- ensure that educators and service leaders have resources (including time and professional development) to successfully complete the documentation requirements
- recognise and value the diverse ways of documenting children’s and young people’s learning and align with the

planning cycle outlined in [My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia V2.0](#).

- support of children’s and young people’s right for play, recreation, and both active and passive leisure.



HOW AUTHORISED OFFICERS GATHER EVIDENCE

To support services to best understand how documentation may be evidenced, it is useful to know how authorised officers gather evidence that is assessed against the NQS, National Law and National Regulations during assessment and rating. The [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#) is a useful tool that explains how authorised officers may observe, discuss or sight evidence.

This is not a prescriptive or exhaustive list, but it provides some examples of how authorised officers may:

- **Observe:** service practices and interactions. For example, they may observe:
 - educators being intentional in the strategies they use to plan leisure-based experiences to support children’s and young people’s learning, development and wellbeing.
- **Discuss:** why and how particular practices occur at the service. For example, they may discuss:
 - strategies used by the service to encourage children and young people to take a leading role in designing the program and organising routines and transitions.
- **Sight:** documentation provided as evidence to support practices at the service. For example, they may sight:
 - policy documentation outlining routines and the written program, including examples of how educators plan programs that are maximising opportunities for learning.

Authorised officers **will**:

- empower educators and service leaders in the process of collecting evidence, so it is important to think about what to show, talk about and what documentation to make available at assessment and rating.
- use effective and efficient ways to collect evidence to assess against the NQS and underpinning legislative standards through a combination of the observe, discuss and sight methods.
- use the [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#) and [My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia](#) to determine ratings and compliance.

Authorised officers **will not**:

- expect to see copious amounts of photographs or videos.
- determine the documentation, templates, apps, tools or approaches to be used.

ARTICULATING EVIDENCE ABOUT DOCUMENTATION

Being able to articulate the how, why and what of your documentation is key to evidencing how you meet the requirements under the NQF.

Educators and service leaders are encouraged to consider strategies to support their teams to articulate the thinking and planning that informs documentation. For example, it may be helpful to discuss and share thoughts about:

- what theories or philosophical approaches inform decisions about documentation
- how professional judgment is used in deciding the most appropriate strategies for documenting the various stages of the planning cycle
- how the documentation process reflects the related requirements of the Law, Regulations and NQS
- how the My Time Our Place (MTO) Framework is embedded and how information about children's and young people's learning and development is shared in a way that is readily understandable for educators and families
- how the documentation is used to support each child's or young person's meaningful participation, engagement and progress towards the MTO outcomes and is informed by each child's and young person's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests
- what ideas could be/have been drawn from the [National Model Code – Taking images in early childhood education and care](#) that are relevant to inform decisions made about the use of photos and videos in documentation
- how children's, young people's and families' views and ideas have informed the documentation processes
- how the documentation identifies responses to barriers that some children and young people face, including attitudinal and practical barriers, to support all children's and young people's inclusion.

Additional examples are included in the [Guide to the NQF](#).

DOCUMENTATION CAN TAKE MANY SHAPES AND FORMS

There is a variety of documentation practices that services implement to reflect children's and young people's learning, thinking, voices and ideas. Educators and service leaders are empowered to collaborate with children and young people to choose a range of strategies that meet the legislative requirements and work for the individual circumstances and preferences of the service, educators, children, young people, families and community. Recognising the variety of learning styles, approaches and preferences, it is likely you will choose a range of strategies to capture the rich learnings and interactions occurring for children and young people and demonstrate implementation of the cycle of planning.



REFLECTING ON DOCUMENTATION AND ITS PURPOSE

These reflective questions may assist in informing thinking and decision making about documentation processes, policies and procedures. Educators and service leaders may choose to discuss these questions amongst their teams when making informed decisions about how and what to document, and how to share documentation.

The amount of documentation	The purpose of the documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are documentation processes duplicative in any areas? • How are children and young people involved in deciding the amount of documentation collected on them, why and how it is used? • Can documentation be reduced without compromising quality? • Is the process for documentation impacting on the quality time of interactions with children and young people? • How do you use your professional judgement to make informed decisions about how much documentation your service requires? • How do you use professional judgement to align documentation with the amount of time a child is being educated and cared for? • If using templates, are they flexible, adaptable and capture relevant information used to further plan for wellbeing, learning and development and/or share with families? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does documentation align with the planning cycle? • Are there opportunities to streamline or reduce documentation while continuing to meet the requirements of the regulations and the NQS? • Could documentation be more concise or used for a dual purpose? • How do you empower children and young people to take a leading role in planning, documenting and delivering the program? • How does your approach to documentation represent your specific context, including children, young people, families, schools and the community? • How does your approach to documentation reflect the diverse range of individual literacy levels and styles for educators and service leaders at your service? • How does the service work with families and schools to support a consistent learning approach for children and young people?
The rights and privacy of children	Sustainability of processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you explored if there some (or all) of the approaches to capturing evidence for documentation that could be drawn from the National Model Code – Taking images in early childhood education and care? • If using digital technologies or platforms, is the information stored securely and is it inaccessible by others? • How do you ensure children’s and young people’s rights and preferences about being photographed or videoed are maintained? • If sharing children’s and young people’s photos or learning online or on digital platforms, how are you seeking permission from the family and maintaining the privacy of the child or young person? • What processes are in place to ensure children and young people are aware of their rights? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are documentation processes ensuring the most effective use of available time? • Can your processes for documentation be reduced, removed or combined to be more sustainable in the long term? • What processes are embedded to ensure critical reflection informs quality improvement in documentation processes? • Are there other strategies that could be explored to build in or use time in the work day to effectively and concisely document, that don’t impact on children’s and young people’s learning, supervision or wellbeing?