

Let's Discuss - *Effective Staff Meetings*

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Effectively facilitated staff meetings are a powerful tool in supporting the staff team. It is through staff meetings that each member of staff has the opportunity to raise their concerns, express their opinions and participate in collaborative decision making which has the effect of empowering them and leading to increased job satisfaction.

Effective staff meetings lead to increased job satisfaction

Staff meetings are also the forum for actively involving staff in identifying quality assurance issues and discussing any changes that need to take place to resolve problems and continually improve the quality of the service provided. They are also an excellent way to transfer information quickly and keep all staff well informed about operational issues, training opportunities, new government or legislated requirements and any other important information.

In small services such as Outside School Hours Care services, where the staff team may comprise of only 2 people, it may be suggested that staff meetings are not needed. However, even where there are only 2 of you, it is still important to have a scheduled time when staff can interact with each other, without having the children present, so they can focus on issues, address concerns, listen to each others ideas, and collaboratively agree on a way forward.

It is always best to have an Agenda of items for discussion. There will be some items that should be discussed at every meeting. You will find a sample Staff Meeting Agenda over page, with some suggested Agenda items.

Each meeting should also be accurately minuted with action statements in regard to WHO will take responsibility for the agreed actions, and timeframes indicating WHEN tasks should be achieved by.

Take accurate minutes and note who will take action

A good staff meeting will:

- ◆ Promote genuine discussion.
- ◆ Address issues of concern or that will impact on the staff or the service provided.
- ◆ Allow staff a degree of control over the agenda.
- ◆ Be timely and efficiently run.
- ◆ Follow an agenda and stay on track
- ◆ Allocate time for each agenda item
- ◆ Be scheduled at a convenient time and place.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for social interaction.

Ask yourself:

- ◆ Do staff own their meetings and spend time discussing issues that are important to them?
- ◆ Do you look forward to meetings and show your enthusiasm to others?
- ◆ Do you know the purpose of your staff meetings?

Some key points:

- ◆ Hold staff meetings regularly.
- ◆ Try alternating who will chair meetings, and who will write the minutes, so everyone has a turn and the opportunity to hone their skills.
- ◆ Make sure meeting times are adhered to—remember everyone has a life outside the centre!
- ◆ Circulate the Agenda prior to the meeting so everyone can add agenda items if they wish.

Know why you are meeting.

Review the purpose of your Staff Meetings at the beginning of each year with the whole staff team.



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Staff Meeting Agenda

1. Present

List the names of those in attendance at the meeting.

2. Apologies

List the names of anyone who has advised they are unable to attend the meeting.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- ◆ Discuss any matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.
- ◆ Have the actions agreed at the previous meeting been achieved?
- ◆ Are there any progress reports?

4. Occupational Safety & Health Issues

- ◆ At every staff meeting there should be an opportunity for anyone to raise issues or concerns about health and safety in the workplace.
- ◆ Identified hazards and reoccurring injuries should be discussed to ensure appropriate actions to eliminate hazards have been taken.

5. Quality Assurance

Discuss issues related to:

- ◆ Communications with children
- ◆ Communications with families
- ◆ Programming, children's learning and activities
- ◆ Children's protection, health and safety
- ◆ Nutrition and children's wellbeing
- ◆ Management of the centre

Discuss one principle at each meeting to ensure you are staying on track—this can be part of your continuous improvement plan

6. Updates from management

Opportunity for staff to be informed of current issues for management and to raise their questions or ideas related to centre management.

7. Training and development

Information for staff about upcoming training and professional development opportunities.

8. General Business

Other items may be added to the agenda here to address specific issues raised by staff members or other current items for discussion.

9. Next Meeting

- ◆ Set time and date for next meeting.
- ◆ Decide who will chair and who will take the minutes for the meeting.

Common problems

Not starting on time

- ◆ Make sure everyone is aware of the starting and finishing times; start on time regardless of whether everyone is there, so that those who have arrived on time are not waiting around for the latecomers
- ◆ Ask anyone that is leaving early if they have any comments to make about the rest of the agenda items

Meetings are too long

- ◆ Set time limits on agenda items and speakers—have a time keeper
- ◆ Distribute the minutes of the previous meeting before hand so you don't have to allow time for participants to read the minutes during the meeting—this also helps to remind people of the previous meeting agenda and whether they have any tasks or feedback for the next meeting
- ◆ Distribute the agenda, any written reports or information that is to be discussed at the meeting, prior to the meeting so that participants can prepare themselves for the meeting

Interruptions and distractions

- ◆ Find a venue for the meeting that is free from outside distractions
- ◆ Have a break if people are getting restless during the meeting
- ◆ Ask people having side conversations if they would like to share their ideas with everyone—explain that people miss out on the main discussion when they take part in side discussions

Some people dominate

- ◆ Ask people to speak through the chair not discuss ad-hoc
- ◆ Chair to stop people from repeating the same argument, and point out when someone seems to be dominating the discussion
- ◆ Use strategies such as going round the group and asking each person for their comments on the issue in hand; small group discussions; and brainstorming to encourage quieter members to participate

Lack of enthusiasm

- ◆ Hold a team building session where you spend time looking at the successes of the team and its achievements
- ◆ Ensure you have enough food and refreshments to keep up energy levels
- ◆ Find out if there are any specific issues that are creating tension or apathy with the group or at the centre

Set dates for your staff meetings at the beginning of each year so that everyone can put the dates in their diaries—make a large copy for the staff room