

Whole of service approach



These tip sheets are designed to help all professionals who work with young children to promote respect and gender equity in their work.

Supporting children to have respectful and equitable relationships when they are young can help them grow into resilient, caring and well-functioning young people and adults and is a key step towards preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women. This involves nurturing children and helping them learn the skills to acknowledge and accept difference, resolve conflict and solve problems. It is also about challenging gender stereotypes, so children of all genders grow up feeling heard, valued and respected.

Taking a whole of service approach to promoting respectful and gender equitable relationships

In the school environment, evidence shows that taking a [whole school approach](#) is the most effective way to promote respectful relationships and gender equity. This means embedding respect and gender equity across the entire school, including systemic change in policies, practices and procedures, the social and physical environment, leadership and culture, and the community of parents, carers and families.

Here are some ideas on how professionals working with young children and their families can adapt and apply these principles to their work.



Culture and environment

- Ensure your service's vision, values and ethos reflect respect and gender equity
- Conduct an audit of your service's physical environment and facilities, to understand how well it supports respect and equity
- Review your service's policies and procedures to ensure they reflect and enable respect and gender equity

Community partnerships

- Connect with local community organisations that specialise in gender equity and preventing violence against women – they can offer suggestions and advice on how to promote respect and gender equity
- Ensure that families are informed about, consulted with and engaged in your service's respect and gender equity work – see our tip sheet on [Working with families](#)

Leadership and commitment

- Make sure the leadership team has a long term commitment to promoting respect and gender equity among young children to ensure this work is embedded sustainably
- Ensure leaders model respect and gender equity in their relationships and interactions within your service

Training and professional development

- Make training available for all staff in your service, including how to prevent violence against women and how to promote respectful and gender equitable relationships in their practice
- Provide ongoing support for staff who work directly with children, to continue building their skills to embed respect and gender equity into their practice



Support for staff, children and families

We know family violence and violence against women are prevalent in our community. It is important for your service to support professionals, children and families who may be affected.

- Ensure everyone working in your service has the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately and safely to disclosures or incidents of family violence and violence against women
- Connect with local specialist family violence services to create and strengthen support systems for people working within or using your service

Teaching, learning and play

- Review your service's materials, such as books, toys and equipment to see whether they promote or discourage respectful and gender equitable relationships. Some books, for example, may promote cooperative and caring behaviour while also containing some obvious gender stereotypes
- While you may want to replace some materials and equipment, remember you can use existing books and toys to start conversations with children about gender stereotypes and roles
- This series contains [further tip sheets](#) on promoting respect and gender equity in your teaching, learning and play with young children

City of Melbourne and DVRCV wish to acknowledge Associate Professor Kylie Smith (University of Melbourne) and the educators and families at City of Melbourne run children's centres, whose work these tip sheets are based on. You can find the other tip sheets in this series at www.partnersinprevention.org.au and www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/respectandequity