Family and Child Connect is an easily accessible referral point for professionals working with children and families who need support.

To enable Family and Child Connect to engage with families to ensure they receive the right service at the right time, new information sharing provisions are being introduced.

**Sharing information with consent**

Before sharing any information about a child or family with Family and Child Connect, the family’s consent should be sought.

If you are not a ‘particular prescribed entity’ (see below) you must have the family’s consent to refer or share information about a family with Family and Child Connect.

You do not need written consent to share information. It is advisable to document the conversation for your own records.

**Sharing information without consent**

From January 2015, certain professionals from particular entities prescribed under section 159M of the Child Protection Act 1999 can refer families to Family and Child Connect or support services without their consent to prevent a child from becoming in need of protection. This enables the professional to provide information about the child or their family to a support service that can help to assess their needs and offer help in a timely manner.

**Particular prescribed entities**

Professionals from particular prescribed entities who can share information with Family and Child Connect or support services without the family’s consent include:

- the chief executive or authorised officers of the department responsible for administering the Child Protection Act 1999
- delegated officers of government:
  - community services
  - corrective services
  - disability services
  - education services
  - housing services
  - health services
- the police commissioner
- the chief executive officer of the Mater Misericordiae Health Services Brisbane
- principals of non-state schools.

When information is shared in these circumstances, the family must give consent for any further information sharing with another Family and Child Connect or a support service.

For example, if Family and Child Connect makes contact with a family that was referred without consent, and the family remains unwilling to engage or consent to their information being shared, the service cannot then share this information with another Family and Child Connect or family support service.

Although the legislation allows information sharing without consent between professionals from particular prescribed entities and Family and Child Connect, it is important to recognise that better outcomes are often reached when the family gives their consent, or they are at least aware of the referral.
Sharing information about pregnant women and unborn children

Information about a pregnant woman and her unborn baby can only be shared with Family and Child Connect or a support service with her consent, regardless of whether the professional is from a particular prescribed entity or not.

If a pregnant woman does not consent to a referral being made for her unborn child but consents to a referral for herself and her other children, only the other children can be referred, not the unborn child.

Information sharing with Family and Child Connect

Information that is shared with Family and Child Connect or another support service when making a referral should assist in determining the needs of the family and any risks to the child, so that a family can be offered a service.

Types of information that may be shared with Family and Child Connect may include, but are not limited to:

- the progress of a child or family towards achieving the goals of the service you provide
- the views and wishes of the family members, including the child
- any known history of the child suffering harm
- any periods that the child has been cared for by other people
- any significant issues relating to the child’s siblings
- the child’s physical health, including any medical treatment and needs
- any psychological and emotional difficulties the child may have
- the child’s education, including any special educational needs
- any disabilities the child may have, including any special care they may need
- any known allergies and dietary requirements of the child
- any significant health problems of the child’s parents
- whether a parent has a mental illness, substance abuse problem, disability or a history of domestic and family violence
- whether a parent is receiving treatment or accessing support for any of the above issues and outcomes, if so
- information about a person who may pose a risk to the child.

Information sharing by Family and Child Connect

Family and Child Connect must have the consent of a family to share information about them with other agencies and organisations, with some exceptions.

Family and Child Connect may share information without consent with the Queensland Police Service and/or Child Safety, provided it is relevant to the functions of the Queensland Police Service and Child Safety. For example, Family and Child Connect can share information with police about a child who may be a victim of crime. Family and Child Connect can also share information with, or report to, Child Safety about a child who may be in need of protection.

Disclosing your identity

When referring to Family and Child Connect, the referrer’s identity is not legally protected; however, the service will keep it confidential unless disclosure is legally required, for example, by the direction of a court or tribunal.

Further information

For more information about sharing information, contact the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 3225 8740 or go to www.qld.gov.au/strongerfamilies