

SHORT COURSES FOR VACATION CARE WORKERS

Course Number 6: Planning for Positive Behaviour

Course duration: 1.5 hours

Aim

This short course is aimed at giving vacation care workers strategies in organising their centres so that they promote positive behaviour between the children.

Learning Outcomes

- Participants will be shown how to set limits in activities.
- Participants will be given strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviours at their centres.
- Participants will learn how to encourage positive behaviour in the children at their centres.

Your Environment

When promoting positive behaviour at your vacation care centre one of the first steps is to look at the environment in which the children play. The centre if at all possible should have clearly defined areas where children can participate in different activities - art and craft, reading, sports, active rough and tumble play, cooking, etc.

Make sure that you are not planning too many activities for one or two small areas. Overcrowding will cause confusion among the children and staff and will also lead to arguments over space.

Remember that centres should be as home-like as possible and have quiet comfortable spaces for children to relax and engage in card games, reading, conversations etc.

Your Program

Remember that your program influences the positive behaviour at the centre. Ensure that the activities and/or excursions planned reflect the wide range of interests your children will have. Not all children enjoy the same things, take the time to learn from the children what they would like to get out of the program.

If children become bored with the program they will become restless, leading to possible behavioural issues.



Your program must also address the different ages at the centre. You will be enrolling children aged from 5 to 12 years old. Activities should be flexible enough to encompass all of these ages. If activities are specially designed for one particular age group then make sure you have another activity for the other children.

Do not force children to participate in activities, again this will encourage children to 'muck up' in an effort to leave the activity. Plan a couple of different activities or give more than one option if necessary.

Communication With Children

This area is vitally important in encouraging positive behaviours in the centre. None of us enjoy being spoken to in a rude manner, remember to show the children as much respect as you would like them to show you.

Tips for positive communication:

- ✓ Get the children's attention before making your request
- ✓ Be direct
- ✓ Offer choices only if you are willing to allow the choice
- ✓ Be clear
- ✓ Give reasons freely
- ✓ Give non-verbal reinforcement
- ✓ Show real interest
- ✓ Give specific praise ("I really like your picture of the rainbow" rather than "good girl" or "good boy")

Activity 1

List some situations in your centre that could cause inappropriate behaviour.
Think of ways that you could address these to encourage positive behaviour.

Six Key Elements of a Vacation Care Program

There are six main points that workers should be encouraged to remember when dealing with children at their centres.

1. Children's basic needs: recognition, attention, freedom from fear, autonomy and food.
2. Physical environment: traffic patterns room arrangements, furnishings and the way space is set up.
3. Activities and schedules: what is taking place and the duration and sequence in which it is taking place.
4. Social groupings: the size and composition of groupings and how the groups are formed.
5. Rules: the way expectations for appropriate behaviour are communicated (or not communicated).
6. Consequences: the way positive behaviours and undesired behaviours are (or not) reinforced.

(From Discipline in School Age Care. Dale Borman Fink. Nashville, School Age Notes (1995))

Activity 2

Think about the last time you saw children behaving inappropriately at your centre.

Were their basic needs being met?

Where did it take place - the physical environment of the centre.

When did it take place - the time of the incident?

A lot of times, by answering these questions, you may find a solution to curbing the inappropriate behaviour.

Rules and Consequences

There are a number of points to remember when communicating your expectations about appropriate behaviour:

- Be concise and positive

- Put rules in writing and post them prominently - remember to also use pictorial displays for the younger children who cannot yet read

- Ask parents to assist in clarifying important rules - make sure beforehand that parents have had input into the rules and agree with them

- Make only rules the staff plan to respect - again, have the staff give input to the rules while they are being developed

- Clarify your expectations immediately prior to activities

- Provide individual guidance for individual children if necessary

- Children are also excellent for giving advice on guiding behaviour. Involving the children in the decision making process about rules gives them "ownership" of the guidelines.

Address the Behaviour not the Child

Remember to use your language carefully when you are addressing inappropriate behaviour with children at your centre. It is very important not to make the child feel rejected or belittled by what you're saying to them.

"I like having you in my group Shelley, but I don't like it when you". This response is addressing Shelley's behaviour rather than attacking Shelly. Children who repeatedly get themselves into trouble often have received a great deal of negative feedback from adults and so do not think very highly of themselves. They may also have a hard time making friends.

- Be on the lookout for times when the child is behaving appropriately and show a personal interest.

- Let the child be the first to learn to use a new game or toy, and then introduce it to the others.

- Include the child in a small group activity in which you have hand-picked children who are likely to be accepting of him/her.

- Increase the number of mixed-age activities, children who are unpopular within their own peer group may do much better if mixed in with older or younger children.

Remember that the children are attending your centre for play and leisure. It is your duty of care to ensure that all children have the opportunity to experience this. By setting realistic boundaries and treating children, staff and families equitably you are well on the way to planning for positive behaviour at your centre.

Activity 3

Think about ways that you can

- make all children aware of your expectations regarding behaviour
- help an individual child with difficult behaviour

Recommended Resource

Vacation Care Training and Resource Kit available from Network

Useful publications available from Network

see Network's website www.netoosh.org.au

Accentuate the Positive

Play Rights and Responsibilities

Awesome Activities