

SHORT COURSES FOR VACATION CARE WORKERS

Course Number 2: Programming for Vacation Care

Course Duration: 1.5 hours

Aim

This short course provides an opportunity to learn more about what is required to successfully work in and provide an activity program for a vacation care service.

Learning Outcomes

- Participants will be given the opportunity to gain an understanding about how to create an environment that fosters play and leisure
- Participants will be given an understanding of how to plan and actively guide a program that facilitates children's play and leisure
- Participants will be shown how to actively encourage children to enjoy play and leisure

Using your space

Creating an Indoor Environment

Does your environment:

- Have sufficient space/appropriate equipment for group games and sports?
- Have separate spaces for active and quiet play?
- Have soft, cosy areas where children can play alone, read books and magazines, do homework, listen to music, daydream, or talk with a friend?
- Allow older children to create special places for their use only?
- Have sufficient storage space for children's personal belongings?
- Have interest areas near the resources, such as light and water, which are used in the area?
- Have storage space for long-term projects and works-in-progress?
- Have a separate staff/office area?

Many centres are operating in small, shared and old facilities. Whatever your space, are you making the most of it?

Careful placement of interest areas will make it possible for children to work and play without disturbing each other.



Some suggestions for interest areas are:

- Board and card games, puzzles, word games, crossword puzzles
- Quiet area near a good source of light for homework and reading.
- Inviting, comfortable, restful places where children can read, listen quietly to music or recorded stories, or talk with a friend
- Dramatic play area stocked with prop boxes that encourage play around a specific theme, eg travel agency, veterinarian's office or a television station
- Arts and crafts area located near the sink, a 'wet area' with a washable (rather than carpeted) floor, easels and table and chairs. Basic art supplies such as paper, glue, scissors, paint and markers within easy reach on a nearby shelf.
- Music area including instruments, music books, CD and tape player and CD's and tapes representing a wide range of musical styles, including music from different cultures. Can be stored in wheeled shelving unit.
- Make partitions with old bamboo blinds, egg cartons, Reverse Garbage material.
- Puppet theatre with large stand-in cardboard box from white goods appliance, eg fridge, washing machine.

Many centres have to share their space with other community groups or school classrooms.

Some suggestions that have worked for centres are:

- Large wheels on cupboards, shelves, room dividers.
- Use curtain blinds that roll or fold for room dividers or for display space.
- Materials stacked in baskets that can be moved easily. Use plastic stackable containers for children's belongings.
- Have large pillows or beanbags for quiet area.

Don't forget that school age children can help plan and organise their environment

Creating an Outdoor Environment

An ideal vacation care program allows the children to move between the indoor and outdoor areas, participating in activities of their own choosing.

There is not a set time to go outdoors, because the outdoor area is always staffed and available for children's use. If your outdoor area is not immediately adjacent to the building, you may have a set time when interested children, accompanied by staff, go outside and choose from a variety of activities or plan and carry out their own.

If at all possible, the outdoor environment should include the following:

- Easy access to and from the indoor space used by the program
- A bubbler for drinking water (or water container) and tap for attaching a hose
- Nearby toilets
- A storage shed for materials children can use to construct their own environment eg blocks, boards, reels etc
- Equipment readily available to be brought out for use, eg ropes, balls, hoops, racquets, goal stands, tennis on a string
- Soft materials under swings, slides and climbers
- A paved or hard-surfaced area for riding, skating and games
- A covered area for use in wet weather and sun protection
- Sunny and shady areas
- Places where children can have some privacy, to be alone or with one or two friends (boxes, tents, logs, bushes)
- Open grassy spaces for tumbling, running and sitting
- Ball fields for active and group play
- Places where children can play and interact with the natural environment

The outdoor area should be safe for children also offer some challenge. They need to be able to use the equipment without possibility of injury. They also want to test their skills at doing hard things.

A creative play area is not a fixed environment. It is a child's own place where he/she is in control, where he/she moulds, shapes and builds his/her surroundings into his/her own safe society.

What fun it would be to have space with trees, bushes, path, hills, ramps or steps, holes and play equipment with places to hide and to feel safe in, with water, dirt, old tyres and boards for a tree house.

If you share your outdoor space you will probably not be able to change the basic structure. Look at the possibilities, add moveable equipment as you can. Discuss with the staff and children of your centre how this outdoor space could be made more child friendly.

Activity 1

- Your outdoor area may not provide all of the above options. What is available? What ideas do you have for your outdoor environment?
- List some ways that the children in your program can help organise their environment.

Program Planning Checklist

1. Does your centre provide:

- A range of activities
- Indoor games
- Outdoor games
- Creative activities
- Drama, dance and music
- Environmental activities
- Construction activities
- Excursions
- Life skills
- Opportunities for unstructured play

2. Remember to have a balance of activities:

- New/familiar
- Active/quiet
- Need adult supervision/does not need close supervision
- Group activities/activities that can be used by one or two children
- Alternative plans for wet or hot days
- Different environments to cater for special needs and cultures

3. The centre's program needs activities to suit different ages and stages of child development:

- Young fives
- The 9+ kids
- Opportunities to learn and practice new skills
- Activities that provide challenge
- Alternatives for children who don't want to do planned activities

4. Planned and organised space and materials

- Space organised to allow all children to play without interference
- New activities tested out before presentation

- All materials collected and activities set up in advance
- Opportunity to use a variety of different materials

5. Time to play

- Adequate uninterrupted time for children to play and develop own ideas
- Enough time for completion of activities and to allow everyone who wants a turn to have one
- Remind children about taking turns and sharing

Activity 2

- What are the most important points to remember when setting up and running activities.
- Refer to list above and check what your centre does and if needed what you can do to improve your procedures.

Planning for the Week

You need to have a plan for the week but also think about your program on a day-to-day basis as not all children attend every day.

When planning your daily program remember to think about:

- How do you want to greet the children
- What kind of play environment do we want them to experience
- Is there something special that we could do at snack time
- Should we have snack in one large group, break into smaller groups or should children be able to eat individually at their own leisure
- How many choices are we offering children today
- How many structured activities are we planning? Are we also creating opportunities for self-direction?
- How can we facilitate clean-up as an active expression of children's responsibilities?

When planning your weekly program remember to think about:

- How do you start off the week?
- Do you have a wide range of activities?
- Do we have activities that will progress throughout the week?
- What can we do midweek to keep the energy level up for children and staff?
- If we have a weekly theme how is this connected to our daily program?
- How can Friday be a specially end to the week?
- How can we create anticipation for next week's activities?

(Adapted from *School Age Theory and Practice* by Steve Musson. Addison-Wesley Publishers Ltd. Canada. 1994.

Implementing the Program

Points to consider when setting up and running activities

- Collect the materials and equipment, You may like to have a planning afternoon with older children for your next vacation care. They may help to prepare a shopping list or may even like to be involved in the shopping or collection of materials. Some materials may be on hand at the program, some could be gathered from home or from a storage cupboard.

- Review the instructions - usually included in activity books, magazines, or your own idea file. Make numbered recipe cards to illustrate how to do the activity. Use pictures so children with beginning reading skills can follow along. Cover with clear contact paper.
- Make the activity open-ended. For example, in a tie-dyeing activity children can choose where to place the knots, what size to make them, what colours to use, what fabric or article of clothing to dye.
- Adapt the activity to address the needs and interest of children you expect will participate. Organise the activity so children can complete one step at a time at their own pace.
- Set up the activity near the resources children will use. For arts crafts activities have materials where children can see and reach them and where it is all right to make a mess.
- Prepare in advance, or with children's help. If children are involved in setting up, use this time to explain what you will be doing during the activity.
- Observe children's involvement. Can the children follow the directions? Do they seem activity involved? Do they need a lot of help from you?
- Allow children to participate in activities in their own way. Avoid telling children the "best" way to do things, instead let children make and carry out their own ideas and plans.
- Give plenty of notice before clean-up time so children can finish what they are doing or each an appropriate stopping point. Some activities are completed in a day, others carry over to the next or even longer
- Make packing away an integral part of the activity. Have clearly specified places to return equipment and materials too and have cleaning materials readily available. Plan for storage of part completed projects.

Activity 3

- What are some of the considerations you need to think about when planning activities for children aged from 5-12 years.
- Think of an activity for older children. Why would they enjoy it?

Recommended Resource

Vacation Care Training and Resource Kit available from Network

Useful publications available from Network

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

How to Keep Going

Creative Planning