

## SHORT COURSES FOR VACATION CARE WORKERS

### Course Number 7: Building Positive Relationships

Course Duration 1.5 hours

#### Aim

This course focuses on ways in which staff can assist children to understand that every person has the right to express themselves fully regardless of ability, gender, culture, race or ethnicity. This course will highlight the importance of forming positive relationships that communicate respect for individual children, their families and their social/cultural backgrounds.

#### Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will be given strategies on forming a positive relationship with children and be shown how to communicate with them on an ongoing basis.
- Participants will discuss how to respect similarities and differences among children and encourage children to respect these similarities and differences.
- Participants will be given strategies for effective supervision in line with Duty of Care.

### Building and enhancing relationships with children

Staff who are successful in vacation care work hard at building positive relationships with all children in their program. Relationship building starts the first time you interact with a child.

Effective communication between staff and children is vital for relationships to grow and flourish. It is important that:

- Messages to children are clear, realistic and appropriate
- Language used is age appropriate
- Children have the opportunity to ask staff questions and clarify staff decisions
- Children have a say in decisions that will directly affect them
- Children are informed about the daily routine, program and any changes at the centre
- Staff role model effective communication skills with each other
- Staff and children listen to each other
- Children are encouraged to express their feelings and ideas in a safe, non-judgemental environment
- Positive body language is used at all time - eye contact, facing children when you talk, smiling etc



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- When staff are working with children who are exhibiting challenging behaviour, they role model the behaviour they want the child to adopt. Role model new skills, new ways of dealing with conflict and difficult situations.
- Staff consistently assess messages they are giving children, both verbal and non-verbal.

## Strategies for Building Positive Relationships with Children

Relationships are built on basic foundations of respect, honesty and equality - treat children as you would like to be treated.

Establish trust - this means you don't make fun of children, you allow them to express their opinions and you keep information shared confidential

Attempt to give time to all children, not just those who are easier to deal with

Give time to finding out about children - their likes, dislikes, hobbies etc

Always remember that you are the mature adult - your behaviour is closely observed and sometimes copied, you are the role model.

Remember it's okay to have a sense of humour and to share it with the children, laughter is a great means of bringing people together

We can all have a bad day - tell children if you are not 100% and that it's not because of them, encourage them to tell you too

Remember that children's feelings are legitimate and they have the right to express their feelings with people who care

Make public the way you positively and warmly react with fellow workers

Remember to apologise if you need to, children appreciate it just as much as adults

Finally make it obvious that you like spending time with them and that it's not just a job to you

### Activity 1

What helps build positive relationships with the children in their care. For example, all staff know the children's names.

Think of some strategies that help build positive that you would like to implement at your centre.

## Respecting Differences

While school age children have many things in common, they are also different from each other.

They have different interests. They like to choose what they will do in vacation care. To support different interests staff need to provide a mixture of activities.

They have different abilities talents, skills and learning styles. Staff can help children make the most of their unique capabilities.

They come from different backgrounds. Children in vacation care program come from many different cultures, races and socio-economic groups. Each family represented in your program has its own beliefs, values, traditions and lifestyles. It is also likely that many different family structures are represented in your program. Some families are headed by a single parent. Others may be where both parents work outside the home. There may also be families headed by a foster parent or by a family member such as a grandparent or an aunt or uncle.

Remember diversity matters.

## Activity 2

Develop a brief profile of the children in your vacation care program, consider their ages, interests, abilities and backgrounds.

How are the needs of a diverse group of children met at your centre? Give consideration to children from indigenous communities, English as a second language, low socio-economic backgrounds, children or family members with a disability and sole parent families.

## Duty of Care

The Voluntary Code of Practice for Outside of School Hours Services in NSW (1993, page 3) states:

*“Taking a child into your care means you have, by law, to care for those children. The duty is one of supervising the children. Out of School Hours have no regulations that stipulate the duty of either staff or management. It is the responsibility of the employing body to establish guidelines, policy and practice based on a sound philosophy. Where possible staff should be encouraged to be involved in the development of policies, as they will have the main responsibility of implementing them on a daily basis. Policies and procedures should be regularly reviewed and updated if necessary.”*

The following guidelines, although they are only an indication of what is expected, should be observed:

- Supervision of children should be diligent and careful, however the law recognises that constant supervision of every child may be impossible
- Children should never be placed in a potentially dangerous situation, such as being asked by a worker to retrieve a ball from the roof
- All appliances and equipment used by the children must be maintained in a safe condition
- Staff should be aware of and prevent where possible situations where children may injure each other

Children must not be permitted to leave the boundaries of the centre during hours when they should be in your care unless otherwise arranged with parents

Staff should exercise particularly rigorous care with children when away from the centre

The bottom line is: YOU must be responsible not to place yourself or your colleagues in a position of possible neglect

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of all children and parents in their area of supervision. No staff member is exempt from knowing which children are in the centre on a particular day, observation of those children within their particular area of supervision and who collects those children from that area.

## Supervision

The amount of supervision children require lessens as they get older and more responsible. Your vacation care program may have policies for supervision based on children's ages.

The amount of supervision also varies according to the activity taking place. Children conducting a science experiment may require close and constant attention. While other painting or playing chess are less likely to have an accident. Staff can keep an eye on them from a distance and periodically stop to see if they need assistance.

## Strategies for Effective Supervision

Stand near equipment when it is in use and pay attention to the children

Provide constant, close supervision over active sports and games and activities using hazardous materials

Participate with the children, not in conversations with other staff members

If children are spread out in a large area, be sure one staff member can move from place to place to view the entire area and monitor what everyone is doing.

### Activity 3

What measures should staff take to see that they fulfill their Duty of Care?

Outline any policies your centre has (or could be implemented) for supervision taking into account children's ages and group size.

## Recommended Resource

*Vacation Care Training and Resource Kit* available from Network

## Useful publications available from Network

see Network's website [www.netoosh.org.au](http://www.netoosh.org.au)

*Accentuate the Positive*

*Play Rights and Responsibilities*

*Voluntary Code of Practice*

*National Standards for Out of School Hours Care*

*Harmony in OOSH*