



Self Guided Learning Package

Orientation to Vacation Care



PsCTas is a program of Lady Gowrie Tasmania. The Australian Government through the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), funds the Professional Support Coordinator initiative as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.

Self Guided Learning Packages

Welcome to the ***Community Child Care Victoria** Self-Guided Learning Package.

Self-Guided Learning Packages offer an alternative to attending training sessions and can be completed at your convenience in your own time. They are also a valuable resource for Directors/Coordinators wishing to undertake staff training in-house. This series of Learning Packages aims to develop skills and knowledge which will be valuable to you in providing quality child care programs.

Self-help Questions

Throughout the Package there are self-help questions. These are designed to enable the reader to reflect on the learning which has taken place and to encourage further exploration of the topic if questions remain unanswered.

Support and Assistance

PsCTas is available to support you/your staff while working through the package. Should you require assistance with any of the tasks within the package, or further information on the topic, please contact PsCTas:

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Community Child Care Victoria
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Orientation to Vacation Care

You have chosen to complete the **Orientation to Vacation Care** Self-Guided Learning Package. The aim of this package is to provide information to new or potential Vacation Care Workers. It provides an introduction to the skills and knowledge that will be valuable in running or working in a successful Vacation Care Program.

Successful completion and assessment contributes to the following competencies from the nationally accredited Community Services Training Package:

SRCCRD007A Develop recreation programs

Element 1 Develop a recreation program plan

Element 2 Implement the program

And addresses the following learning outcomes:

- Identify issues to consider when planning recreational activities for children.
- Identify Duty of Care, supervision and safety requirements when working on a Vacation Care Program.
- Consider strategies to promote inclusion and participation.
- Identify strategies to contribute to positive team functioning.

Introduction

Vacation Care programs offer an important service for families within the community. Not only do they provide a safe place for children when parents are working or studying, they also provide a fun and memorable time for children during their holidays with opportunities to try out new activities, go to new places and meet new friends.

Vacation Care programs aim to:

- Meet the needs of parents who are working, studying or looking for work
- Provide quality programs which include supervised play and recreational activities appropriate for school age children
- Provide opportunities for children to develop skills, interact with others and play freely

The Vacation Care staff are the face of the program. They have the contact with the families and children and can ensure the children have an enjoyable and fulfilling time. Working on a Vacation Care program can be an exciting and rewarding job.

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Roles and Responsibilities of Vacation Care Staff

Vacation Care program staff have a vital role to play in ensuring children receive high quality care and experiences. They need to ensure the program operates effectively and safely, so staff and children have fun and enjoy themselves.

Vacation Care staff are responsible for the children while they are at the program and need to:

- Follow all rules and regulations of the service
- Establish and apply appropriate guidelines that encourage positive behaviour
- Guide and supervise activities and implement daily routines
- Ensure that all possible precautions are taken to avoid accidents
- Assist in planning, implementation and evaluation of a program to meet the needs of all children in attendance
- Communicate effectively with other staff

The National Standards

The National Standards for Outside School Hours Care (1995) outlines the minimum standards regarding ratios, qualifications of staff, space requirements and upkeep and maintenance of equipment and materials. All services should have a copy of the booklet. The National Standards should be followed closely in all Vacation Care and other Out of School Hours Care programs.

Ratios

Programs are required to follow the staff to child ratios as stated in The National Standards for Outside School Hours Care (1995) as follows:

- 1 staff member to a maximum of 15 children when at the program base however, 2 staff members must be in attendance at all times unless approval has been granted to operate as a single staff model (Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services)
- 1 carer to a maximum of 8 children when on excursions and away from the program base
- 1 carer to a maximum of 5 children when swimming or engaged in water activities

(The extra carers required when on excursions or swimming can be volunteer carers.)

* See References and Resources sheet for further information

Safety and Supervision

Safety is a basic need for everyone. To feel safe is to feel welcome, comfortable and non-threatened. The Vacation Care environment should feel safe for the staff, children and parents. The safety of all children is of utmost importance. Staff must do whatever they can to ensure that the children are safe at all times. This can be a huge responsibility but if staff work together, supervise the children effectively, know what is happening at all times and follow the rules of the program they will drastically reduce the chances of accidents happening. The safety of the children can be affected by:

- The number of staff present at the program – ensure staff to child ratios are adhered to
- The level of supervision that the staff are offering
- The policies and procedures of the program and their enforcement
- The knowledge of the staff in relation to policy and procedures
- The state of the materials and equipment used within the program
- Using age appropriate materials and equipment

Self Help Question 1

Consider the safety procedures in place at the program you work at (or one you have visited). Place a Y (Yes) or N (No) in the box provided if the following occur.

Safety involves three main elements:

1. Continual maintenance of the indoor and outdoor environment to reduce and help prevent accidents and injuries.

- ❖ Are children's arrivals and departures monitored?
- ❖ Is there a daily check of the indoor and outdoor environment to remove hazards?
- ❖ Are equipment and materials used age and skill appropriate?
- ❖ Is the environment arranged to ensure clear traffic flow?
- ❖ Are children visible at all times to staff?

2. Adequate policy and procedures to help prevent accidents

- ❖ Do staff respond calmly and swiftly when a child is injured?
- ❖ Are emergency and parent phone numbers correct and regularly updated?
- ❖ Do staff understand and follow the centre's emergency and accident procedures?

3. Helping children remember and understand the expectations and guidelines of the centre.

- ❖ Are children involved in deciding the rules of the program?
- ❖ Are children reminded of the rules before games begin?
- ❖ Do staff immediately respond when children are in unsafe situations?
- ❖ Are children educated in the proper use of equipment and materials appropriate for their age/skill level?

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If you have answered No to any of the previous questions, devise an Action Plan to incorporate the action into the program.

Safety Element	Action	Who is Responsible?	Equipment Needed
Eg. Is there a daily check of the indoor and outdoor environment to remove hazards?	Checklist developed for staff to tick off when doing a morning check Staff roster implemented	Coordinator/Morning Staff	Gloves Broom Dust pan + brush

Duty of Care

‘Duty of Care’ is the legal responsibility of a staff person to look after and care for the children in his/her care. This involves the standard of care that is given to children.

If an incident does occur in the program and is taken to court, staff must prove that they did what was reasonably expected in the circumstances and that they had not been negligent in any way. The way a court of law decides this is to work out if a reasonable person would have acted in the same way. The court also takes into consideration the industry standards and the person’s knowledge and experience. Therefore, staff must ensure that their behaviour with, and supervision of, the children is more than adequate, that they follow the policy and procedures of the program and do everything in their power to make sure that accidents are prevented. Staff must ensure they take precautions to cover their own actions, as well as providing a safe environment where the chances of accidents are minimised.

Expectations/Guidelines

Rules provide children with guidelines of what is expected of them while attending the program. If children are aware of the boundaries and behaviour that is expected of them while they are at the program accidents and inappropriate behaviour can be minimised.

Expectations and guidelines of behaviour may cover such areas as:

- Respect for other's feelings and property
- Safety
- Clean up and other responsibilities

Children may not automatically remember the expectations and guidelines; therefore they will need to be reminded of them at regular intervals. This is very important in Vacation Care as there can be different children arriving every day.

Services should have a policy that explains the procedures of the program. This policy and procedures manual should be visible and available to all staff and parents using the program. There are many ways to remind children of the expectations of the program.

Self Help Question 2

How can you inform children of the rules and expectations of the program?

Supervision of Children

Supervising children involves observing the environment in which they are playing or about to play. It involves monitoring children's behaviour and actions as well as identifying possible risks and taking action to reduce or eliminate the risks. It is the staff members' duty to adequately supervise the children at all times. It is also important to acknowledge particular areas for staff to supervise. Even if staff are involved in a game or activity, they must make sure that they can see all the children at all times.

The following are basic supervision guidelines for staff:

- All children are visible to staff
- Staff need to face children when supervising, not have their back to a group of children
- If children are both inside and outside, a staff member must be inside and another staff member outside
- Intervene immediately if children are in a potentially dangerous situation
- Ensure children are supervised in the kitchen, storeroom or other areas where dangerous appliances and items may be kept

- Follow service procedures for children going to the toilet eg. children go in pairs, children tell a staff member before they go
- Plan the environment to minimise potential danger ie. separate ball games from quieter activities
- Create safety zones
- Perform regular head counts of children
- Perform active and constant supervision
- Participate and play with children

Accidents/Incidents

There are three main factors that cause accidents:

1. **Environment** – potential hazards
2. **Development** – developmental ages and stages of children
3. **Human Influence** – human error or negligence.

The Service's policy document should include specific procedures relating to accidents and incidents within the program. In all cases, details of the accident/incident should be recorded in an Accident Report Book and the Coordinator informed. All accidents however minor need to be recorded in this book and the record kept till the child turns twenty-four years of age for legal purposes. If it is a more serious accident the appropriate steps should be taken regarding first aid – contacting parents, doctor, ambulance etc. All records and information on children/families should be kept private and confidential.

When dealing with an injured or sick child, the staff member should request assistance from another staff member to continue to supervise the other children. Staff members are responsible for all of the children, not just the sick or injured child.

First Aid Qualifications

It is advisable for staff to have a first aid qualification when working in a Vacation Care program. The National Standards for Outside School Hours Care (1995, p7) state: –

“In the event of an accident or a child's falling ill, first aid equipment and expertise must be available.

Standard 2.5.1

A first aid kit must be maintained in effective order on the premises in a position that is inaccessible to children but readily accessible to child care workers in an emergency.

Standard 2.5.2

One staff member present shall be currently qualified in first aid ”.

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Self Help Question 3

1. How can you ensure that all children know the expectations and guidelines of your program?
(Remember that different children may attend every day)

2. Name five safety rules currently in use at your program.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

3. What steps can you take to minimise accidents occurring at your program?

Program Activities

As Vacation Care is all day care for weeks at a time it is important to have a wide variety of activities available for the children. Some children attend everyday for the entire program; others attend once or twice a week. The children that attend are all at different ages and stages of development as most programs cater for 5 – 12 year olds. So it is important to develop a program that caters for all children. Make sure that the activities reflect the cultural diversity, gender and abilities of all the children, as well as the children's individual interests. These can be gauged by regularly asking the children what activities they would enjoy doing and by surveying families at the end of the program.

A Range of Activities

Variety is the key to successful programming. Children enjoy trying new activities, learning new skills and practising skills they already have. Variety in the type of activities provided will allow children this opportunity. These can include:

- Drama
- Quiet games
- Reading
- Music
- Construction
- Creative play
- Sport
- Cooking
- Science
- Active games
- Art and craft

A Balance of Activities

Variety in the way activities are presented will allow for different learning styles as well as the times in the day when different types of activities are appropriate i.e. after lunch, before going home. A balance of activities may include:

- Active/quiet
- Group /individual
- A range of different environments
- Inclusive play/games
- Positive play between adults and children
- Large/small groups
- Adult directed/not directed
- New/familiar games
- A range of materials/equipment
- Cooperative games
- Indoor/outdoor

A Choice of Activities

It is important to remember that the Vacation Care program is not school. These children are on holidays and should be able to choose what they want to do. Choices and options should be available to children. Programs should have:

- A range of activities
- Alternatives for children who do not want to do the set activity
- Props and equipment set up to allow for free play
- Opportunities to learn and practice skills
- Variety to prevent children from becoming bored.
- Children's choice of activity

The Physical Environment

Does the physical environment welcome the child?

Is it comfortable, well equipped and age appropriate?

The way the environment looks can make the centre more interesting and enticing to the children. Inviting children to participate in decision-making and in the way the environment looks. Invite the children to decorate and design the layout of the space so that it becomes "their place". Also invite them to decide where to store materials and equipment to make them feel comfortable and in control of their surroundings. Creating different spaces for different activities gives each activity a home.

- Where will the craft/ activity area/table be?
- A table to keep finished and unfinished work
- An area for board games and puzzles
- An area for quiet play/reading

Remember: The program environment should be inviting and encourage participation

Within any week, there may be some activities, events and excursions that have been pre-planned and some times where you will be required to organise and run some of your own activities. The coordinator may be able to provide the equipment ie. cooking ingredients, art and craft supplies, if required.

At other times, it may be necessary to fill in a few moments keeping children occupied when no props are available, such as waiting for the bus, filling in time between other activities. It is a good idea to have a repertoire of activities to use in any of these situations.

Self Help Question 4

1. What specific skills and interests do you possess that may help you to run activities?

2. Where can you find out and learn about new activities that might be of use in your program?

3. How will you store and file information about activities and games that you will want to remember?

4. Write down and briefly explain three quick and easy activities that need no or little equipment and preparation?

a.

b.

c.

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Excursions

Excursions are an exciting part of a Vacation Care program. They offer a break from the service and provide an opportunity to widen children's experiences. As excursion destinations are often unfamiliar territories for both children and staff, extra care should be taken to ensure all expectations and guidelines are understood and the boundaries are clear. Safety on an excursion is vitally important.

Guidelines for Taking Children on Excursions

Before the excursion:

- Check the service's policy and procedures on excursions
- Remind parents via a note or word of mouth, the departure and arrival times of the bus or transport.

Before leaving the centre:

- Make sure each child has a signed permission slip to attend the excursion
- Explain the guidelines, boundaries and expectations to the children

Things to take with you include:

- Emergency details, contact phone numbers, the roll of names (leave a copy with an emergency contact person as well)
- A first aid kit and sunscreen/hats
- A mobile phone

On transport:

- Children must be seated at all times
- Staff should be spaced evenly throughout the vehicle
- Head counts of children getting on and off the vehicle

Walking to and from the centre:

- Revise road safety rules and expectations before leaving the centre
- Children should walk in pairs
- Positioning of staff evenly throughout the group – always have a staff member at the head and at the end of the group of children
- Perform regular head counts

On an excursion:

Depending on the destination and venue:

- Each staff member can take responsibility for a small group of children throughout the day.
- Staff need to do head counts at regular intervals, especially when moving from one area to another.
- A communal meeting spot can be arranged where children will meet for lunch or can return to if separated from their group
- Call the roll regularly

Remember: Specialists or activity instructors or guides contracted by the program, are not responsible for the safety of the children unless specific arrangements have been made. Staff are always responsible for the children.

Self Help Question 5

1. What expectations and guidelines would you go through with children before leaving for an excursion?

2. How could you easily identify children in your group on an excursion?

Inclusion and Participation

Inclusion is about creating a sense of belonging for children, families and staff where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and participate. Although in the past, the term 'inclusion' has been used to refer to those with a disability; it is actually a very general term that can be applied in a variety of ways.

Although many children are growing up in diverse communities, they may not necessarily be aware of this, or the benefits of diversity. Staff need to not only draw attention to the diversity in their lives, but how they are enriched by it.

This can be done in a number of ways, by combining unfamiliar or new materials and activities with those the children are already familiar with, such as singing a familiar song in a different language, or eating familiar food with chopsticks. This is non-threatening and promotes the idea that things are not necessarily 'better' or 'worse', but simply different. It is also important that staff model a non-biased, inclusive approach where all children, regardless of gender, culture, ability, appearance, religion or family situation are treated equally and with respect.

Self Help question 6

Apart from the examples listed above, how could you combine familiar and unfamiliar materials in an activity?

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Participation

Encouraging participation involves more than just providing equal access. Many staff comment that all children are allowed to play with any of the equipment, but we need to actively involve children, particularly those with diverse backgrounds. We can do this in a number of ways:

- Spending one-to-one time with children to reassure them and offer assistance when necessary.
- Accessing support services if necessary
- Providing familiar play materials.
- Becoming aware of cultural issues which may affect the child, such as discipline, food, religious beliefs.

Self Help question 7

What are some of the ways we can raise awareness of the cultural diversity of the children attending our program?

Positive Leadership

Positive leadership involves being a good role model for the children in your care. Staff can make the difference between a child having a fantastic time or an average time. How an adult responds to a child is vitally important in the way the child relates back to the adult. Being enthusiastic, creative and positive will encourage the same behaviours from the children. Children have the same needs as adults to feel significant and important. They also require security and a sense of belonging. The following points may assist you to provide the supportive environment that is paramount for children to feel confident, to try new skills, to meet new friends, to enjoy themselves and above all to show respect to one another.

- Provide a fun and active program
- Provide choices
- Be enthusiastic
- Speak to children as equals
- Learn the names of all children and call them by their name
- Establish a relationship with each child
- Acknowledge and respect children's' feelings
- Avoid making judgements or labeling children
- Involve yourself in games and activities
- Encourage the children to play and participate
- Bring a sense of humour

The children are on holidays and deserve to have a great time. If the program is variable and exciting and the staff are enthusiastic, fun and sensitive to the needs of individual children, there is

a good chance they will have a good time. If the children are enjoying themselves it is more likely that the staff will be having a good time too.

Self Help Question 8

1. What kind of a play environment do you want children to experience?

2. How can you make a positive influence in a child's day?

Working in a Team

Working together as a team can be a very rewarding experience; as staff look after each other. Employment on a Vacation Care program can mean long hours, few breaks and a lot of loud, noisy children, day after day. This type of work can be exhausting. If staff work together and welcome each other's company, time at work will be much more enjoyable. Below are three ways to contribute to a positive team environment in a Vacation Care program.

1. Communication

Possibly the major key to working successfully with others is communication.

- Participate in regular staff meetings
- Meet with staff prior to the program to plan
- Listen to other staff members
- Discuss any issues after the program and away from children and parents
- Incorporate "ice breakers" with staff and children to introduce new staff members to the program. "Ice breakers" are quick games that encourage involvement and provide a relaxed environment for people to get to know and feel comfortable with each other. They could include activities such as "Name Games", warm-ups, circle activities, initiative activities etc.

2. Support and Acceptance

Staff need to work together and help each other.

- Encourage other staff members
- Assist other staff ie. Offer to take the games while a staff member is setting up an activity inside
- Utilise the strengths of all staff

- Be consistent when dealing with breaches or behaviour guidelines
- Offer to plan and run activities

3. Responsibilities

- Know what your responsibilities will be prior to the program. If you are not informed of any specific roles make an effort to ask the coordinator.
- Carry out your specific responsibilities. If you can be relied upon to do your tasks without being reminded you will make things easier for the other staff members.

- **Aim to:**

- Arrive at the program on or before time
- Show initiative
- Be enthusiastic
- Help other staff members when needed
- Ensure all staff are consistent in the treatment and guidance of children
- Attend and input in staff meeting
- Know your strengths and weaknesses

Self Help Question 9

1. What do you consider to be your strengths when working in a group situation?

2. What do you consider to be your weaknesses when working in a group situation?

3. You have seen a staff member do something that you think is inappropriate. How do you handle this situation?

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References and Resources

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Now that you have completed
this Learning Package you may like to try :

Building A Winning Team (OSHC)

Partnerships with Families and Community Links (OSHC)

Developing Policy for Your Service (OSHC)

also available on this website. PsCTas welcomes your
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