



ACT
Government
Education

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE IN ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

INFORMATION HANDBOOK FOR
BEST PRACTICE RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN OUR SCHOOLS AND
SCHOOL AGED CARE PROVIDERS

2021

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INTRODUCTION

In the ACT, Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) services are an integral part of the lives of many school-aged children and their families.

OSHC mainly caters for children attending primary school (generally ages five to 12 years), although some providers may be able to accept enrolments for preschool children.

In many cases, OSHC is delivered on ACT public school sites, through out of school hours care services.

OSHC services can contribute to the healthy and successful lives of children. They provide recreational learning experiences that promote supportive environments where children can build independence and apply learning in social settings.

These experiences encourage children to interact with friends, learn life skills, solve problems, practice social skills, try new experiences, feel happy, safe and relaxed.

OSHC hours will vary depending on community needs, generally operating on weekdays as:

- > before school care 7.00am–8.45am (or until school start time)
- > after school care (including early school finish) 3.00pm–6.00pm (or from school finish time)
- > vacation care (during school holidays) 7.00am–6.00pm.

As with ACT public preschools, OSHC services are regulated under the **National Quality Framework**.

Contractual arrangements with OSHC services

The Directorate engages OSHC services at each school, with a Services Deed and Licence Agreement.

These agreements are contractual agreements between the ACT represented by the ACT Education Directorate (the Directorate) and the OSHC service, often referred to as the Provider and/or Licensor.

OSHC as an integral part of our community

Successful OSHC services are an integral part of many ACT public schools. They are highly visible within the school and the service they offer to children and families is openly acknowledged.

It is important for schools to consider ways to build a successful partnership between them and the OSHC service.

Strong, open and positive relationships between the two services will strengthen governance arrangements, improve communication and resolve issues together, and ultimately ensure families and children experience a more seamless approach to their education and care experience.

Strategies for building a positive relationship with your OSHC services are outlined on page 9.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL LAW

The *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011* (the National Law) is the legislation which has been developed to underpin the National Quality Framework (NQF) for early childhood education and care services, including ACT public preschools units.

The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (the National Regulations) are established under the National Law. The National Quality Standard (NQS) is a schedule to the National Regulations and sets out the quality areas, standards and elements.

The ACT Education Directorate (the Directorate) is the **approved provider** to operate ACT public school preschool units as education and care services under the National Law.

Refer to the **National Quality Framework – Information Handbook for Nominated Supervisors and Educators at ACT Education Directorate Public Preschool Units** for more information on roles and responsibilities under the National Law.

All approved providers are required to comply with the National Law. Consequently, ACT public schools and the OSHC services should conduct themselves to be compliant with the National Law.

It follows that one provider cannot ask another provider to break the law. In practice, it means that ACT public schools must not make rules or give direction to OSHC services that would place OSHC service in breach of their service approval under the National Law or their obligations under other legislation.

ACT public schools need to adopt inclusive partnerships with OSHC services to ensure that they do not impede or hinder any OSHC service provider, who they contract or engage to operate on their behalf, from meeting their obligations under the National Law and National Regulations.

Actions that may obstruct an OSHC service to comply with that National Law could be:

- The School would like to use the designated OSHC space for a meeting or function and has asked the OSHC service to relocate for that day. The OSHC service is relocated to a space that is not compliant with the National Law as there is no access to adequate toilet facilities and the proposed space is not large enough for the number of children enrolled.
- A child has not been picked up from school and the OSHC service is asked to include the child in the service until the child is collected. The OSHC service does not have any enrolment records or other information for the child and the inclusion of this child would have an impact on the required educator to child ratios.

To ensure that this does not happen, the school must:

- > provide adequate notice of at least five (5) working days of a change of location of the OSHC program to the temporary relocation area identified within the premises given under the Licence Agreement, and
- > make no requests of the OSHC service that would put them in breach of the National Law or place them in a position of breaching the National Law or their service approval.

QUALITY

Quality is an integral part of delivering programs under the National Quality Framework.

Schools and OSHC services should consider ways they can identify children's interests, strengths and areas for further development through collaborating with all educators. This would result in high quality programs for both services.

It is important to support inquiries in different environments to allow for the transfer of children's skills and capabilities across both services, and for their voice and agency to be developed and enacted.

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

It is important for ACT public schools and OSHC services to demonstrate a proactive relationship. A strong governance framework between the two services will strengthen this relationship.

Governance is also a requirement under the Services Deed between the Directorate and the OSHC service.

Establish an Education and Care Committee

A requirement under the new Services Deeds, the school and the OSHC service must establish an **Education and Care Committee** (the committee).

The establishment of the committee is to open two-way communication between the two services.

The aim of the committee is to develop, implement and monitor policies and practices to support the governance arrangements between the school and the OSHC services to improve transitions for children between the two services.

The committee is also a vehicle for resolution of issues between the two services.

Membership of the committee is:

- > the Principal (as nominated supervisor of the preschool unit in a role that cannot be delegated)
- > the Director of the OSHC service (or another representative of the provider).

The Principal and the Director may invite up to two other staff/representatives to join the committee as observers.

The purpose of the committee is partnership and collaboration. No party can direct the other to do anything and decisions should be reached through consensus. Decisions should be made with the following considerations:

- > does this benefit children and families?
- > does this align with service and school values?
- > does this comply with both parties collective and individual policies?
- > Is there a financial impact? If yes it feasible?

Meetings of the committee are to be at least four times per year (once per school Term), or more regularly as agreed.

The committee meetings are to ensure:

- > open communication between the two services
- > collective governance arrangements are maintained between the school and the OSHC service
- > there is consistency of practice across the OSHC service and the school
- > any issues are first addressed by the committee.

Standard **management of the premises** is covered under the Licence Agreement. Good practice is for the committee to frequently discuss the use of the premises, and any changes that may arise in the future.

Complaints Handling Processes

As required under the Education and Care Service National Law, both the ACT public school and the OSHC service will have their own policy and procedures for handling complaints raised by children, families, community members and educators. This is important to ensure that each service is able to assist the needs of community and to ensure that all complaints and concerns are handled with due care. Further to direct complaint handling at the service level, both the approved provider of the OSHC and Education Directorate have individual complaints handling processes for when an issue may be escalated.

Should a complaint be received regarding the alternate service, it would be considered best practice to direct the complainant back to the service in which the concern has been raised, as a first step.

It is also important to remember, that both the approved provider of the OSHC and the Education Directorate have requirements to notify any complaints raised about the health, safety and wellbeing of children. For schools the notification is made to the Directorate's Education Support Office (School Improvement) which then notifies the ACT Regulatory Authority, Children Education and Care Assurance. For the OSHC provider the notification is made directly to the ACT Regulatory Authority, Children Education and Care Assurance.

There may be a time when complaints regarding the service delivery are raised between the approved provider of the OSHC and the Education Directorate. Every step should be taken by both parties to attempt to resolve these issues through clear and documentation communication. If an amicable decision is not able to be achieved, then the issue should be referred to the Education and Care Committee.

Management of Critical Incidents

Being prepared for and having a clear process for managing critical incidents across both the ACT Public School and the OSHC program is essential.

Both ACT Public Schools and education and care services are required to have policies and process to plan for and manage critical incidents within their contexts. In particular the National Law identifies the need to undertake a risk assessment of potential emergencies (Reg 97); and develop a policies and procedures for emergencies and evacuations, and incident, injury, trauma and illnesses (Reg 168).

It may be suitable for you to develop a collaborative managed plan for critical incident which shared process and procedures to minimise confusion and enhance practices for children across both services.

Issues relating to Mandatory Reporting

Child Protection in the ACT is legislated under the *Children and Young Peoples Act 2008*. Child Protection is managed by the Child and Youth Protective Services (CYPS) in the Community Services Directorate.

Both employees under the Education Directorate and the approved provider of the OSHC have legislative obligations as Mandated Reporters (*Chapter 11 CYP Act*). ACT Public Schools and the OSHC will have their own policies and procedures for making a report to CYPS that align with the *Keeping Children and Young People Safe: A guide to reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT*.

The *Children's and Young People Act 2008* provides reporters with certain protections when making a child concern report to CYPS. This includes protection of identity and prosecution. It is inappropriate to discuss reports outside of the immediate service, and further it is unnecessary for a provider to request another provider to be informed when a report is made.

Child Safety

Any service which operates on ACT Government property must ensure that their operation and behaviour ensures that children are protected from harm and hazard at all times. It is important that both the ACT Public School and OSHC service come together to discuss pedagogy and philosophical approaches to child safety.

OSHC services are guided by the National Quality Standard and the My Time Our Place curriculum document for children in grades K-6 and the Early Years Learning Framework for preschool children. In OSHC, services are encouraged to support children's leisure and challenge children through risk taking. This sometimes conflicts with the philosophical approach of the ACT Public School. It is important to consider the context in which the service operates and understands that OSHC services are required to meet obligations under the National Law.

Resolve issues

A requirement under Services Deed and Licence Agreement is the school and the OSHC service must undertake the steps to resolve issues, conflicts or difficulties.

Issues should be addressed by the Education and Care Committee in the first instance.

Where an issue is not resolved by the committee, either the school or the OSHC service should give written notice to the other about the details of the issue. Once the written notice is served, both parties should endeavour to promptly resolve the issue in good faith.

If the Education and Care Committee is not able to resolve the issue, conflict or difficulty by consensus, the dispute may then be referred by either party to the Chief Financial Officer for a final determination.

Share policies and procedures

Policies and procedures between your school and the OSHC service should be consistent.

As a requirement under Services Deed, the **Education and Care Committee** must agree on and implement a policy to support access to the OSHC service for:

- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- > Children with additional needs, and
- > Children experiencing disadvantage.

If children have specific development or learning needs, the committee must ensure that this information is shared between the school, the OSHC service and other agencies¹. For example, individual children's learning plans, positive behaviour plans and observations.

Policies and procedures should be developed and endorsed by the committee and are to be made available to families if requested and can be published on the website of the school and the OSHC service. Policies and procedures may be reviewed by committee as required.

Joint policies and procedures could cover:

- > enrolments
- > delivering and collecting children
- > nutrition

¹ Within the parameters of privacy and consent requirements

- > food safety
- > use of computers and electronic/social media
- > guiding children's behaviour
- > sun protection.

Ensure seamless transitions of children

As a requirement under the Services Deed Licence Agreement the Education and Care Committee must agree on and implement a **Transition Plan** that supports the daily transitions of children between the school and the OSHC service.

Transitions between the school and the OSHC service can represent big changes in a child's day. Effective transition strategies between settings is an important aspect in promoting children's learning and wellbeing. Research on effective transitions highlights the importance of continuity between settings, including continuity of pedagogical approach and the impact of coordination and relationship building between services. Systematic approaches to effective transitions which provide continuity of knowledge about a child's development, between OSHC staff to school staff, also improve a child's confidence in managing change.

Safe pick-up and delivery arrangements of children should be developed and shared across both services and with families, to meet duty of care responsibilities of both the school and the OSHC service.

Delivery arrangements should be clearly articulated for all grade levels and shared with all educators. This information can also be added to information given to relief teachers so that routines remain consistent, and all children are accounted for in different circumstances.

A policy or procedure around the care of children who have not been collected from school and are not enrolled in the OSHC service should be developed and agreed to by the committee. Responsibilities for notifying families should be made clear, and supervision of children who have not been collected or who thought they were booked into the service but were not.

If preschool children are enrolled in the service and the session does not occur in the designated preschool space, a specific procedure for their collection should be established to ensure their sense of belonging is nurtured in the different location.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Successful OSHC services are an integral part of many ACT public schools. They are highly visible within the school and the service they offer to children and families is openly acknowledged.

The **ACT Regulatory Authority**, Children's Education and Care Assurance, considers that when there is a positive and strong partnership between an ACT public school and OSHC service, these services operate best for children and families.

ACT public schools should consider the following strategies to improve relationships and communication with their OSHC service.

Sharing learning environments

Think about how learning environments and resources can be shared between your school – including preschool – and the OSHC service.

OSHC services located in the preschool rooms can greatly improve continuity for children attending both the school and the OSHC service.

Utilising preschool rooms allows children to further build their sense of belonging, being and becoming within a familiar environment. Learning experiences can be further explored and provocations shared with children who may not have interacted with each other during the preschool session. Establishing processes that facilitate this sharing enhances the community of practice and taps into the expertise and insights of all educators.

Sharing spaces and resources maximises outcomes for children and provides a cost-effective use of school space. Children can build on and reinforce skills learnt at school when they attend the OSHC service, such as using computers and library resources. When educators have information related to learning that is happening in the classrooms they are better able to extend children's thinking and understanding. This could be done through sharing term overviews, unit planners and through collegial discussions. This information can also be shared with parents on collection, facilitating further parental engagement.

Ways to collaborate

Consider how staff members from your school, preschool and the OSHC service can collaborate to decide how these services can best support each other to maximise outcomes for children.

Active representation and participation by staff members from all services is important.

This could include engaging with transitions conversations, guiding children's behaviour, work health and safety meetings, and the Education and Care Committee.

Regular communication between your school's leadership team and the OSHC service staff is essential. For example, sharing of meeting minutes of the Education and Care Committee, sharing of information through newsletters, group emails and displays.

Programs across services

Consider how your school can create opportunities for collaborating with the OSHC service on programs for positive development of children – including identifying, planning and documenting them.

There are many benefits of OSHC programs complementing children's learning at school. This includes linking curriculum and pedagogy including any assessment, across services to provide consistency and continuity for children.

For example, planting, maintaining and harvesting vegetable gardens and establishing natural habitats for native wildlife, such as installing frog ponds or planting butterfly gardens, can be utilised by all services within the school community and provide many learning opportunities.

Communities of practice for staff

Working across services helps staff from both schools and the OSHC service acknowledge and understand the different programs offered.

An effective staff team constantly questions and reflects on their work practice to be sure that they are meeting the needs of the broader community. Providing opportunities for the preschool team and OSHC team to share their respective Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) and identify synergies between priorities and actions allows for sharing of strategies and resources.

The Education and Care Committee should encourage staff from both the school and the OSHC service to critically reflect together in a 'community of practice' on pedagogy and practices that improve outcomes for children and strengthen and maintain relationships developed with each other.

Exploring the school and service's philosophy allows all educators to see the connections between our beliefs and actions. It further supports children and families to understand what is important to everyone in the learning community.

While acknowledging it is tricky to timetable, collaborative professional learning sessions ensure collective understanding in meeting all children's needs.

Often the behaviour or responses in one setting translate to other settings, so sharing pertinent information and evidence-based responses allows all educators to build their confidence and capacity in supporting children's needs. The care and education of children is the responsibility of all educators so having a shared understanding of how this is done is fundamental to each child feeling successful and connected to the setting.

Schools should also consider ways their staff and the OSHC staff can be encouraged and allowed to work in the different services across the school.

Partnerships between your school and the OSHC service

Strong positive partnerships between schools and OSHC services mean **better experiences** for children and families. Here are some ideas for building strong partnerships with your OSHC service:

- > Share the philosophy and goals of both the school and the OSHC service between the school principal and the OSHC Director to encourage support for the educational, social and developmental opportunities of children
- > OSHC and school staff should be familiar with any agreements/memorandums of understanding that are in place between the OSHC service and the school by ensuring that these are distributed and discussed with all staff.
- > Make calendars available of key school events and OSHC events to all staff, to avoid possible duplication of events and double booking of facilities or additional expenses for families
- > Beyond the Education and Care Committee, meet regularly with the Director or Coordinator of the OSHC service to discuss how the arrangements are going
- > Invite staff at the OSHC services to the school's special events such as the Open Day or Christmas Party, or invite the OSHC service to set up a stall at the Twilight Fair showcasing their program
- > Develop, adopt and implement common guidelines and rules for joint activities with the school and the OSHC service
- > Look for joint professional learning opportunities and share relevant resources
- > Co-sponsor health initiatives or parenting workshops
- > Hold a joint function to recognise support and assistance for each other at the beginning or end of each year
- > Look for ways of offering added value to both services – are there particular programs that can be offered to students? Is there a special needs focus that may assist students? Can you cater specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?
- > Consider how you harness the expertise across all educators. Sessions where educators share successful strategies, observe practice and provide feedback is valuable professional learning
- > Include OSHC staff photos with school photos – even include the OSHC service on photo day
- > Include OSHC information at the start of the year welcome presentations for families

Parent/Carer Consent Form for Sharing Information about Children

This sample form can be used by parents and carers to provide consent for the sharing of information about their child between their school and out of school hours care (OSHC) service.

Information sharing provisions between schools and OSHC services support better outcomes for children in a variety of ways. These include:

- continuity of learning and transitions between the settings of the school, the OSHC service, and home due to positive and professional communication;
- collaborative and enhanced support for each child’s wellbeing, learning and development through the sharing of relevant information and clearly defined responsibilities; and
- a stronger sense of belonging to the broader school community for all stakeholders.

When children feel included, respected, and safe, their ability to engage with learning experiences and their peers is increased. Positive and considered transitions and the sharing of critical information between families, OSHC educators, school teachers and staff ensure that each child can feel supported and included with continuity throughout their whole day.

I **[insert name]** as the parent or carer of **[insert child’s name]** give my consent for **[insert name of school]** and **[insert name of OSHC service]** to exchange any information that they reasonably consider to be related to the safety, health, wellbeing, or development of my child.

This information may include details of attendance, medical management plans, behaviour support plans and incidents which may pose a risk of harm to my child or others.

Signatures

Parent/Carer

Representative of School Representative of OSHC Service

.....

Print Name

.....

Date

.....

