

COMMUNITY CHILD CARE

STAFF ORIENTATION AND INDUCTION

Staff are the backbone of a service, so it is important that they are well prepared, presented and informed. Staff induction is the process by which you introduce a new staff member to their physical surroundings, responsibilities and relevant people.

The Education and Care Services National Law and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* require all new employees to be introduced to the workplace through an induction process, where the requirements and expectations of the centre-based children's service and the organisational structure can be addressed. This should be an enjoyable process for a new staff member, where opportunities to engage with the service are established to ensure a smooth transition into the workplace, with consistency for existing staff, children and families utilising the service, and for service delivery.

Is staff induction the same as orientation?

Orientation and induction are generally carried out together, and there is often confusion about how they are different. You can design policies and checklists to assist you in properly carrying out this process, and maintaining a record that will later become a valuable tool during appraisal.

Orientation is generally the informal information. Provide staff with an orientation package that will allow a new staff member to explore what their role will be within the service, and provide them with reference material on employment conditions, job description, grievance procedures and any other relative service information. Include a staff handbook with policy and procedural information that covers items relating to the staff members position. Design a checklist of items to address during orientation that will ensure you don't forget anything. This may consist of such items as:

- ▶ Introduction to other staff members, management etc.
- ▶ Philosophy, policies and expectations of the service
- ▶ Facilities/layout (area utilised by the service)
- ▶ Lunch/tea breaks
- ▶ Pay arrangements (award, day, bank transfers, deductions)
- ▶ Encouraging ongoing communication
- ▶ Questions (who to ask, how to ask, confidentiality).

Induction is the more formal training and service requirements of the staff member to complete in the early stages of employment. Once again, designing a checklist of items to address will ensure that all areas have been covered, and will assist in maintaining adequate staff employment records. This may contain items such as:

- ▶ Education and Care Services National Law
- ▶ The National Quality Standard, and approved curriculum frameworks, including the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF); and the Framework for School Age Care (FSAC)
- ▶ Children's service policy and procedures
- ▶ Relevant legislation
- ▶ Health and safety
- ▶ Determination of fit and proper persons (if applicable)
- ▶ Administration.

These lists are by no means exhaustive, as it is important to address items that are individual and important to your education and care service for children and express your unique workplace culture.

What are the benefits of the orientation and induction process?

For the new staff member:

- ▶ it assists staff to adapt more easily to their new working environment
- ▶ it encourages a positive approach to the new position and workplace through modelling the service's approach and ideology
- ▶ it facilitates more effective performance.

For existing staff members:

- ▶ Co-workers have fair and realistic expectations of the new staff member
- ▶ Encourages better staff relations.

How do we achieve these benefits?

Outline for a new staff member anything that may be required before commencing employment. Set realistic timelines and follow up towards the end of the induction period. There may be key areas of the staff handbook, or policy and procedure document that staff are required to read before beginning to work with children. Providing the new staff member with a checklist of these requirements, and having them sign off once completed is an effective method of ensuring that a new staff member is ready to work directly with children. Keep this document on file as an employment record to use as a tool for induction assessment and appraisal, where key areas can be clarified.

- ▶ Provide new staff with the time and opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns about the service and its operation
- ▶ Provide new staff with access to the policies and procedure manuals of the service
- ▶ Introduce new staff to the members of the management committee/team and other staff at the venue
- ▶ Introduce staff to the broader community by writing a short description of their skills and training background for the news letter
- ▶ Provide an opportunity for feedback and information through staff and committee meetings
- ▶ Ensure that new staff are given access to information regarding their position, environment, training and changes to the sector.

What information should be presented to newly appointed staff?

- ▶ Position description and duty statement
- ▶ Pay rates and awards
- ▶ Grievance and disciplinary procedures
- ▶ Employment agreement
- ▶ Tax declaration form
- ▶ Superannuation enrolment form
- ▶ Personal information form eg emergency information, current phone numbers and address
- ▶ Staff rosters
- ▶ Staff meeting dates and venues
- ▶ Access to a copy of NQF support documentation
- ▶ Policy and procedure manual and staff handbook
- ▶ Staff representative information eg Unions,
- ▶ Occupational health & safety representatives
- ▶ Emergency and evacuation procedures.

Is this process for everyone?

Whether you are welcoming a coordinator, a director, an assistant, a bookkeeper, a cleaner or a volunteer into your children's service, **everyone** needs orientation and induction to integrate the new person/s and create a relationship with the community that is being provided through the service.

How long does orientation and induction go for?

There are a number of items that need to be addressed in the first hour on the first day. At this time, you are establishing a working relationship between a new staff member and the children's service (staff, children, service delivery) and also creating an impression during this process, providing new information to assist the integration of a productive member to the staff team.

During an induction period, team up a new educator with an experienced educator 'buddy' who can help clarify roles and responsibilities and oversee the work being done. This may last up to a couple of weeks, depending on the demonstrated work performance, and hours of work.

Develop and make available an induction plan with timelines for a new staff member, including any items they need to be familiar with, such as policies, and allow a reasonable amount of time for this, depending on the level of accountability and authority within the children's service.

What happens next?

Towards the end of the induction period, arrange to meet with the new staff member for a brief induction assessment. This is where they are provided with the opportunity to clarify key areas of their role, and provide feedback on responsibilities and expectations. This is also an opportunity for staff to seek additional support, and identify personal goals. Document this interview and use this record as a performance appraisal tool, including goals and any general comments.

Professional development may also be negotiated during this interview. The job description may provide insight into the areas of professional development that the service has previously identified but were not initially required for immediate employment such as first aid and food handling certificates.

And after all of that?

Once you have an integrated and active member in your staff team, it is time to review the current service recruitment, orientation and induction process as a whole. There may be changes you need to make after having identified them through the process being recently carried out. Any changes will need to be transferred to the staff handbook and policy documents, and communicating these changes to existing staff members will ensure all staff team members are included in the review of service operations, and are aware of current service practices.

Community Child Care

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CCC provides leadership, advocacy and support to build the capacity of the children's services sector and promote public support for community owned, not for profit services.

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