Partnerships in Care 
and Education for 
Our Children

A resource to support the development of an 
Agreement to provide an Outside School Hours Care 
Service in Northern Territory Government Schools

January 2005
Contact Details

OSHC SERVICE NAME:

Location of service: 

Director/coordinator: 

Contact person in relation to the agreement: 

Contact telephone number: 

SCHOOL NAME:

School Council representative: 

Principal: 

Contact person in relation to the agreement: 

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Introduction

Children and families are a vital part of the Northern Territory’s society and its future. Government departments are increasing their collaborative effort to ensure well-coordinated services that enhance positive, healthy development of children and families within a community setting.

The Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and the Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) are two key government departments which play a pivotal role in the provision of quality services to children and families. Regulation and support for children’s care services is the administrative responsibility of DHCS, while responsibility for children’s education services rests with DEET.

Both departments acknowledge the value of good quality care and education services for children and families, and the important part these services play in promoting children’s healthy development and learning. To this end, the departments have formed a partnership that aims to involve families and communities in building a strong, vibrant Territory-wide network of services that are safe, stimulating and caring for children.

This resource has been developed as a tool to assist with the preparation of an agreement for the delivery of Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services in government schools in accordance with the Partnerships in Care and Education for Our Children policy.

For the purposes of this resource the term OSHC refers to care provided before school, after school, on professional development days and vacation care. Some services may provide all the programs or just one.

OSHC may operate from a school in a variety of management frameworks. The school council:

- may be the legal body receiving Government funds and employer of the OSHC staff.
- may agree to the use of the school facilities by a third party who operate and manage the OSHC service eg an independent contractor.

This policy applies equally in all situations

In the case of a third party operating the OSHC service on NT School property DEET requires that a ‘Licence To Occupy’ be completed and ratified. This ‘Licence To Occupy’ is to be completed in addition to this Agreement and is available from DEET through the school Principal.
The Partnerships in Care and Education for Our Children Policy

The Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) have agreed that when outside school hours care services are offered in NT Government school facilities, service sponsors, school councils and providers of services should ensure that:

- children and families receive the best quality service possible. This involves:
  - providing services for children that are responsive to the various and changing needs of children and families
  - facilitating collaboration between families and people working with children
  - supporting the inclusion of all children

- children experience smooth transitions throughout the day. Partners should therefore work together to:
  - plan and coordinate service delivery
  - maximise the use of resources.

The policy applies to all NT Government schools and OSHC services operating in an NT Government school, regardless of management and administration arrangements.

The ‘Partnerships in Care and Education for Our Children’ policy is premised on collaborative action to support children and families. Implementing the policy will involve the development of agreements between service providers, school councils and/or sponsors, that consider the following:

**In relation to children and families**

- be guided by the best interests of the child
- actively support the inclusion of all children
- meet the various and changing needs of children and families with appropriate programs and services
- promote positive interaction between children, staff and families and establish a shared and consistent approach to behaviour management, and
- establish effective communication arrangements with families, and among all those involved with children’s care, development and learning.
In relation to the operation of the service

- comply with NT minimum standards as set out in the Guidelines for OSHC Services, ( Territory Health Services, September 1999) and subsequent guidelines
- establish agreed operational policies and procedures between the school council and the OSHC service, and set out written arrangements for
  - financial planning and accountability
  - service quality management and accountability
  - complaints management
  - compliance with all relevant legislation including mandatory reporting of child abuse
  - ensure that families have the opportunity to be involved in setting fee levels, and
- ensure that rental charges reflect the actual costs associated with the use of the facility for the purpose of providing an OSHC service, and are not used as a source of revenue raising.

In relation to staff

- ensure that recruitment practices are consistent with DEET and DHCS requirements
- ensure that staff commencing employment have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children, and
- ensure that opportunities for sharing professional development are maximised.
Implementing the Policy

About this resource

This resource has been designed to support the implementation of the joint DEET and DHCS ‘Partnerships in Care and Education for Our Children’ policy using the elements of the policy as focal points for discussion and agreement. It has been developed to assist representatives from Northern Territory government schools and OSHC services identify the type of OSHC service they wish to provide. Amongst other things this resource encourages representatives from the school and the OSHC service to:

- define the relationships, roles and responsibilities between the OSHC service and the school
- create guidelines that will contribute to the smooth operation of the OSHC service within the requirements of Territory legislation and regulations
- define the tasks that need to be completed to ensure the provision of a quality service to children and families.

This resource shows the links between the ‘Partnerships in Care and Education For Our Children’ policy, the standards as described in the ‘Guidelines for Outside School Hours Care in the Northern Territory’ and the Quality Areas in the Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance System (QA). All these frameworks work together to contribute to quality OSHC services.

Why complete this Agreement?

A fundamental component of the ‘Partnerships in Care and Education for Our Children’ policy is the provision of quality care to children and families, through cooperation and agreement. This resource supports the formation of an agreement. This agreement provides a means to describe and define how this OSHC and school community will work together to provide quality care for the children and families who use the OSHC service.

This Agreement can be beneficial in:

- orienting families, staff, and new management members to the OSHC service,
- supporting the OSHC service communicate with the school and the broader community,
- establishing a clear basis for good working relationships among all concerned.
How should this Agreement be completed?

The Agreement should be completed collaboratively by the people who have a role to play in the management and operation of the OSHC service within the school. You may like to involve the Director of the OSHC service, School Principal, representatives from the School Council and OSHC management group, and a parent/community representative in these discussions. The children at the school and OSHC may also make appropriate contributions.

A proforma agreement has been provided to record the results of the discussion. To assist in completing the details required on the agreement, a checklist has been created to guide areas that should be discussed and where agreement is needed about how the OSHC service and the school will work together.

The details required on the proforma include the name of the OSHC service, the name of the school, an explanation of what the school and the OSHC service agrees to, what each party is responsible for, and the names of those involved in developing this agreement. For example the school may agree that the OSHC can use a specific area of the school, while the OSHC service agrees to use this area only and agrees to pack up at the end of the day. The school would be responsible for ensuring the area is safe for the children to use, ie there are no health and safety hazards while the OSHC service would be responsible for providing adequate supervision and appropriate activities.

Shared responsibilities in relation to this Agreement

Each party in relation to this agreement is responsible for:

- developing and maintaining positive collaborative relationships
- providing professional services
- meeting the terms of the agreement

How often should this Agreement be reviewed?

This agreement should be revised and updated at least once each year. Regular revision of the agreement will ensure that the service continues to operate in a manner that meets the changing requirements of children, families, staff and management.
The Link between NT Standards, Quality Assurance and the Policy

As mentioned earlier, all these frameworks interrelate and connect to support the provision of a quality OSHC service. While they all work together they each have a slightly different focus.

Guidelines for Outside School Hours Care in the Northern Territory

This outlines the minimum NT standards which an OSHC service should meet. The standards address areas such as

- Buildings and the Physical Environment,
- Safety, Health and Hygiene Practices
- Staffing
- Operating Procedures
- And includes a Charter of Rights and Protocols for Managing Complaints

The Quality Assurance System

The Commonwealth Government has introduced an Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (QA) System. The aim of the QA system is to provide a framework for OSHC services to review and improve their practices and plan for continuous improvement, to provide the best possible outcomes for children. QA addresses areas such as

- Respect for Children
- Staff Interactions and Relationships with Children
- Partnerships with Family and Community Links
- Programming and Evaluation
- Play and Development
- Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing
- Protective Care and Safety
- Managing to Support Quality

Partnerships in Care and Education for Our Children

This policy promotes a way of working together, of working in cooperation and clarifying roles and responsibilities.
As an example of how the frameworks ‘fit together’ the following table examines the policies required under the NT Standards and the QA system (at the Satisfactory level required to be Accredited) and where consideration of the policy elements should occur.

For example, both the NT Standards and the QA system require OSHC services to have a written philosophy. In developing or reviewing an existing philosophy, the policy elements 1.1 be guided by the best interests of the child and 1.3 meet the various and changing needs of children and families with appropriate programs and services should be included in the discussions. Not only will this result in an agreed service philosophy, it will also result in the requirements of the 3 systems being met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidelines for Outside School Hours Care in the Northern Territory</th>
<th>Quality Assurance policies and procedures (at the satisfactory level required to achieve Accreditation)</th>
<th>Partnerships and Care and Education for Our Children policy elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>Philosophy and goals information is in the orientation information for staff and families Policies and practices reflect the statement of philosophy and goals</td>
<td>• Be guided by the best interests of the child • Meet the various and changing needs of children and families with appropriate programs and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration</strong></td>
<td>Policies and procedures reflect legislated requirements</td>
<td>• Establish agreed operation policies and procedures between the school and the OSHC service, and set out written arrangements for  - Compliance with all relevant legislation including mandatory reporting of child abuse  - Financial management and planning  - Service quality and management  - Complaints management</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Staffing** | • Staff handbook or orientation  
• Procedures to report Occupational Health & Safety issues  
• Procedures to raise issues with Management  
• Recruitment process  
• Job description | • Establish effective communication with families and among all those involved with children’s care development and learning  
• Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines  
• Ensure recruitment practices are consistent with DEET and DHCS requirements  
• Ensure staff commencing have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children  
• Ensure that opportunities for shared professional development are maximised |
| **Facilities** | • Systematic procedure for checking safety of building, grounds and equipment | • Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines |
| **Equipment** | • Systematic procedure for checking safety of building, grounds and equipment | • Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines |
| **Health and safety** | • Nutrition  
• Food handling and hygiene procedures  
• Controlling the spread of infectious disease  
• Supporting children with health needs, ie administration of medication and for dealing with sick or injured children  
• Evacuation and emergency procedures  
• Sun Protection | • Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines |
| **Programming** | • Evidence of regular evaluation  
• Programs are displayed for children, families and staff to view | • Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines |
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</table>
| Fees | • Ensure that families have the opportunity to be involved in setting fee levels  
• Ensure rental charges reflect the actual cost associated with the use of the facility for the purpose of providing an OSHC service, and are not used as a source of revenue raising |  |
| Parent participation | • Family information package  
• Orientation process  
• Grievance and complaints procedures for families and children | • Establish effective communication arrangements with families and among all those involved with children’s care development and learning |
| Cultural relevance | • Reduce bias and prejudice in the service | • Actively support inclusion of all children |
| Children with a disability | • Reduce bias and prejudice in the service | • Actively support inclusion of all children |
| Excursions | | • Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines |
| Reporting child abuse | • Protective Care that reflect legislative requirements | • Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines  
• Establish agreed operation policies and procedures between the school and the OSH-C service, and set out written arrangements for  
  - Compliance with all relevant legislation including mandatory reporting of child abuse |
| Interaction and behaviour management | • Behaviour support for children | • Promote positive interaction between children, staff and families and establish a shared and consistent approach to behaviour management  
• Comply with NT standards as set out in the guidelines for OSHC services Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines |
Partnerships in Care and Education for Our Children Agreement Checklist

To complete the proforma agreement, discussion and development of an agreed response to the following policy elements should occur. The questions under each of the policy elements are only suggestions to guide discussion, you may extend discussion further than suggested in response to the needs and characteristics of your local situation. Once agreement is reached about a particular policy element place a tick to indicate there is agreement about this. You may also like to record exactly what was agreed in a policy document or other written statement.

1. In relation to children and families

1.1 be guided by the best interests of the child

One of the overarching principles of care and education services for children is consideration of the rights of the child. Is there agreement about

- how the best interest of the child will be considered in the OSHC services policies and practices?

1.2 actively support the inclusion of all children

Inclusion means actively developing a culture of acceptance, belonging and encouraging participation in the service and its activities. Is there agreement about

- how the participation of all children and families will be actively encouraged?
- what changes (if any) to equipment, facilities or the program need to be made?
- who will make these changes?

1.3 meet the various and changing needs of children and families with appropriate programs and services

Utilisation of an OSHC service and therefore its viability is influenced by the service’s ability to provide what the community needs and wants. Is there agreement about

- how children, family and community needs will be identified?
- who will be responsible for this?
- the OSHC services aims and objectives?
- how this information will be used to guide the OSHC service provided?
1.4 promote positive interaction between children, staff and families and establish shared and consistent approach to behaviour management

Positive interaction forms the basis for any good relationship. Positive interaction between people is based on the mutual respect and understanding, shared decision making, acknowledgment of individuals uniqueness and abilities, mutual trust and open communication. Is there agreement about

- how positive interaction between the school and the OSHC service will be supported, including between OSHC staff and school staff?
- how positive interaction between OSHC staff and children and their families can be supported?

Children do and are expected to behave differently when undertaking different activities, ie attending a class and playing socially. What is expected in one situation may not be appropriate in another, but the basic principles and understanding of acceptable behaviour remain the same. Clear and consistent expectations and ways of managing behaviour are fundamental to effective behaviour management. Is there agreement about

- the principles of behaviour management and behaviour management policies?
- how consistency with behaviour expectations will be addressed?
- how children will be supported to display appropriate behaviours?
- how differences in behaviour expectations will be acknowledged?

1.5 establish effective communication arrangements with families, and among all those involved with children’s care, development and learning

Effective communication comprises several elements, including trust, respect, empathy and active listening. Schools and OSHC services should provide both formal and informal arrangements for communicating with families and with each other. Is there agreement about

- how the school and OSHC will ensure effective communication between themselves, families and the children?
- how the school and OSHC will ensure effective communication with other professionals involved in the care and education of children with specific needs and their families?
- how relevant information about children (with permission), including both day to day issues and long term arrangements will be communicated between the school and the OSHC service
- how the OSHC service will promote itself to the wider community?
2. In relation to the operation of the service

2.1 comply with NT minimum standards as set out in the Guidelines for OSHC Services, Territory Health Services, September 1999 and subsequent guidelines

Compliance with the stated OSHC standards and DEET requirements are often compatible, for example exclusion practices for infectious diseases. Development of joint procedures and consistent implementation of policies will support staff, children and families using both services understand and comply with the policies developed. Is there agreement about

- how the OSHC will meet the standards as set out in Guidelines for OSHC Services, Territory Health Services, September 1999, and who will be responsible for this?
- the areas of the school the OSHC service may use?
- the school resources the OSHC may use and the OSHC equipment the school may use?
- how the OSHC equipment and resources will be stored?

2.2 establish agreed operational policies and procedures between the school council and the OSHC service, and set out written arrangements for

One of the key management tasks of the management group of the school and the OSHC service is the development of policies. Policies should reflect the philosophy and provide clear, agreed and consistent ways of working in order to achieve the stated goals.

- financial planning and accountability - Is there agreement about
  - who is responsible for preparing and monitoring the OSHC budget?
  - how and when budget expenditure will be reported?
  - who is responsible for ensuring all funds are acquitted correctly?
- service quality management and accountability - Is there agreement about
  - how the school and OSHC will ensure a quality OSHC program?
  - the roles the school and the OSHC will play in the OSHC Quality Assurance System?
- complaints management - Is there agreement about
  - how complaints between the school and the OSHC service will be managed?
  - how staff grievances will be managed?
  - how complaints and issues of concern from children or families will be managed?
- compliance with all relevant legislation including mandatory reporting of child abuse - Is there agreement about
  - who is responsible for managing compliance?
  - how concerns about child abuse will be managed?
2.3 ensure that families have the opportunity to be involved in setting fee levels
OSHC services, school councils and families should contribute to the setting of OSHC fees. Is there agreement about
- how families can contribute to the setting of OSHC fees?
- what the fees will actually be and what that covers?

2.4 ensure that rental charges reflect the actual costs associated with the use of the facility for the purpose of providing an OSHC service, and are not used as a source of revenue raising
Whilst the fees for the OSHC service must be adequate enough to ensure operational costs are met, under this joint DEET/DHCS policy, the OSHC service is not to be treated as a source of revenue raising (eg levying rental charges) for the school, except where there is mutual benefit and agreement. Is there agreement about
- the level of fees the OSHC service is required to pay to the School Council (if any)?
- what these charges actually cover?

3. In relation to staff

3.1 ensure that recruitment practices are consistent with DEET and DHCS requirements
A critical element in the provision of quality care and education services is the Staff. All recruitment processes must be consistent with DEET and DHCS staff safety screening and recruitment practices. Is there agreement about
- who is responsible for the hiring of OSHC staff, and ensuring correct screening processes are adhered to?

3.2 ensure that staff commencing employment have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children
Careful consideration of recruitment and staffing issues will contribute to the quality of the staff employed and potentially retention of staff at the service. Is there agreement about
- the processes used to assess a person’s suitability to work in the OSHC service?
- who is responsible for orienting new staff to the school and the OSHC service?
- who is responsible for the daily supervision of OSHC staff?

3.3 ensure that opportunities for sharing professional development are maximised
Skilled and knowledgable staff both in the school and the OSHC service contribute greatly to the quality of care and education provided. The best interests of children can be better addressed when all people involved with the care and education of children have opportunities to exchange information and if possible attend professional development activities together. Is there agreement about
- how the professional development needs of OSHC staff will be supported?
- how school staff and OSHC will be able to share information and expertise?
Contact Information

If you have any queries please contact:

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