



The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc.

Section 4 Staffing

(reviewed and adopted Sep 2010 amended July 2014, reviewed and amended March 2018)

General rationale

Research into quality in early childhood services suggests that a high quality staff team is the primary indicator of a high quality program. Developing a high quality team is not something that just happens and it requires the centre to pay close attention to the recruitment of suitable staff, to the support of staff within their work, and to the long term development of staff skills and competencies. Both the Management Committee and the Director will have a central role in each of those factors.

Of particular importance is the recognition of members of staff as individuals with their own personal responsibilities outside the centre. Rainbow is in the business of supporting the families with children at the centre, and we also have to be in the business of supporting families with adults (staff) at the centre. That support may well take many forms and will be intended to give a clear message to all staff that they are valued and that the centre recognises that on occasions their personal needs and responsibilities may have to take precedence over their work responsibilities. As well staff need to know that the centre will support them at such times and that their position at the centre is not put at risk by their personal responsibilities.

In setting staffing policies that set out levels of support for staff which are on occasions above and beyond the support levels mandated by Industrial Awards, the centre management commits the Association to providing resources within the budget to allow those policies to be implemented. However staff also need to recognise that resource levels in a centre will always be limited by the need to maintain affordable parent child care fees. As much as the centre management may wish to provide certain support to staff, it may not always be possible. The provision of staffing resources will always be a balance between having sufficient resources and charging affordable fees. As part of that commitment the development of the Rainbow Children's Centre Enterprise Agreement 2010, setting wages and conditions of employment well above the new Modern Awards and National Employment Standards ensure staff continue to work with conditions established under the old NSW Awards and continue to receive wages that reflect the complexity and responsibility of their work.

It is considered best practice for staff in early childhood education programs to develop and maintain an educational program for all children. As per the centre philosophy, Rainbow has a commitment to providing a high quality program for children and therefore the centre expects its staff to provide that high quality educational program. As such, the centre also commits to providing time in the day for staff to spend time reviewing, revising, in-service training and programming to ensure that high quality program is possible. In order to meet that commitment, the centre also commits to providing sufficient numbers of staff to allow sufficient staff to be released from day to day primary duties to undertake training, review and programming duties as considered appropriate.

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a) Staff recruitment

Explanation In view of the importance of having a high quality team at Rainbow, a process needs to be developed that maximises the chances that when a staff position becomes available within the organisation we can recruit suitable people to join the team. From the first step, that process needs to send a message to potential staff about the organisation and its attitude to its team members. As well the process needs to be in line with our philosophy and mission as an organisation and ensure our team reflects the richness of Australian society. The organisation also needs to ensure that there are sufficient resources in the budget to allow the Director to manage and support staff appropriately.

Implementation

Review the position:

(1) From time to time, (e.g. following the resignation of an existing employee, due to an expansion of services or funding for additional staffing) more staff will be needed at the centre. The Director shall consult with the service Coordinator and other staff, the Committee Executive and the staff liaison office bearer about what options may be available to the centre. If time permits such consultation may also include a full committee meeting. Consultation should include discussion about the type of employee, level of qualifications, hours and rosters. It is important that this consultation goes beyond always merely expecting to replace a resigning employee with an equivalent. It may be that other arrangements, job share, extension of hours for existing employees, traineeships, consultants and so on may offer the organisation an improvement on the status quo.

(2) Ensure the position description is up to date: Following consultation, the Director/Coordinator and President or other committee nominee will develop written materials setting out the position, its duties, the essentials and desirables for the position and general information about Rainbow.

(3) Prepare a package of information for applicants: The package of information will be made available to all candidates for any position so that they are fully aware of the position prior to any selection process being implemented. The package will in effect be an invitation to prospective employees and will be developed as a positive process to encourage good applicants to apply.

(4) Prepare an advertisement or expression of interest: All long term, permanent positions will be advertised. Short term positions, including fixed term projects and maternity leave positions may be open to expressions of interest from existing staff or recruitment agency support. Advertising will identify the need for the applicant to contact the organisation to obtain a package of information which will include a position description as well as other relevant information. Advertisements will identify essential and desirable criteria related to the duties for the position, as well as any legal or mandatory qualifications or screening checks required for the position. The advertisement/expression of interest will comply with relevant anti-discrimination legislation.

Selection process:

Following consultation the Director and President will also agree on a recruitment strategy and make the necessary arrangements. If a selection committee is required it will consist of the Director/Coordinator (Convenor), another staff member and at least one Committee

member/parent. The panel will undertake the selection process and collect all necessary information from the candidates.

Applicants will be shortlisted based on essential and desirable criteria by all interview panel members. This process will be documented. Date/s for interview will be set and applicants for interview notified.

Interview questions will be drafted, documented and provided to the applicant on arrival for the interview.

- (1) Each applicant will be processed in the same way and asked the same set of questions, with ability to probe the applicant's answer if any difficulties or in line with anti-discrimination practices.
- (2) Confidentiality will be ensured regarding information about applicants and the interview process with information remaining within the selection committee.
- (3) A referee check will be conducted for the selected applicant/s by the selection committee convenor.
- (4) The Director will implement the selection decision and manage all necessary arrangements.
- (5) In the event that the vacant position is the Director's role, the President or another committee nominee will manage the recruitment process.

Advise applicants of the outcome: All interviewees, successful or otherwise will be notified. Each successful applicant will be entitled to a letter of appointment clearly setting out the position, conditions, rate of pay, starting date and finishing date if a contracted position. On engagement the prospective employee will be given an opportunity to discuss their work experience (both paid and unpaid) and any training and qualifications gained and that information will be taken into account in determination of the rate of pay to be offered. Records for successful applicants will be kept in the staff members file, however all other records of the selection process will be shredded for confidentiality. Orientation process:

Newly recruited staff will have an orientation to the organisation on the commencement of their employment.

Staff exit process: wherever practical and appropriate, an exit interview will be undertaken by a Committee representative and discussed at a committee meeting as appropriate.

b) Staff orientation

Explanation Staff orientation is an important process in ensuring that staff understand their responsibilities at Rainbow, understand their rights as employees and know how to find out information when they need it. An orientation needs to ensure new employees have a clear understanding of the service, its operations and the expectations placed on them by the organisation.

Implementation

The Director will develop a package of written materials for staff setting out all information necessary to inform staff about their work. The package will include at least position descriptions, Award and Enterprise Agreement entitlements, staffing policies and organisational philosophy and mission. A copy of the material in documents such as the Enterprise Agreement and Rainbow Policies shall be available at all times to the staff.

Whenever possible, the Director/Coordinator shall ensure the first day of employment for a new staff member is free from normal rostered duties. On that day the Director shall ensure an orientation to the service is provided to the new employee. The orientation will refer the employee to the staff information package, introduce the new staff member to other staff and will allow time for discussion and clarification of any matters the new employee nominates.

Where possible, the Director/Coordinator will assign a mentor who will support the new staff member during the first two weeks of employment. The mentor should provide support, be available to answer questions and advice, introduce the staff member to others and give feedback. Each new staff member will work through an Orientation checklist with support from the Director/Coordinator and mentor, if applicable. This should occur within the first month of employment.

When new casual employees are first employed, the Director shall endeavour to provide at least a minimal orientation.

Where allowed for under the Enterprise Agreement, new employees will usually be employed under probationary conditions. The probationary period will be considered to be a short period to allow the organisation and its new employee to ensure Rainbow Children's Centre is the right place for that employee to be working.

Within four weeks of starting and before the completion of any probationary period, the Director/Coordinator shall provide the new employee with a further consultation opportunity. This opportunity is meant to assist the employee to understand and deal with any issues that may have arisen since the start of employment in the organisation and give the Director/Coordinator an opportunity to clarify service requirements in any areas where uncertainty may exist.

c) Conditions of employment

Explanation Rainbow recognises that the early childhood education and care environment is most often focused on the needs of families and children. While those needs are very important, it is imperative we do not forget the rights of staff within the centre. Research suggests that neglecting the rights and conditions of staff in the end will impact on the quality of care and education available to children and families.

Hence the Committee makes a clear commitment to acknowledging that staff employed at Rainbow have a right to reasonable working conditions and reasonable wages. That commitment has led to the organisation developing its own Enterprise Agreement which has maintained most existing Award entitlements, formalised a number of decisions made by the Committee about over-award staff conditions and put in place a range of flexibilities that match staff expectations and wishes. The EA also puts in place formal mechanisms for determining wage rates each year rather than relying on external force to determine fair wage rates.

Implementation

The centre will ensure staff are better off overall by developing and maintaining an Enterprise Agreement that sets wages and conditions for all staff. The Enterprise Agreement will be developed with reference to relevant minimum conditions set down by the Modern Awards while acknowledging that traditionally the NSW State Awards offered much superior wages and conditions. Management will ensure that they are aware of the appropriate conditions and keep up to date in relation to any changes to the Awards. Staff are encouraged to remain up to

date with their own wages and conditions and a copy of all relevant Awards and of the Enterprise Agreement will be maintained and made easily available to staff.

As a general rule, the wages and conditions of all staff will be as per the Agreement, although the flexibility clause allows individual staff to negotiate conditions that relate only to them.

However, the centre recognises that some over award wages or conditions may be provided at little or no cost to the centre while those “over award” entitlements will be considered to be valuable by staff. The centre encourages staff to seek support from management when such support may assist them in managing their own work/life balance.

The centre will implement an appropriate staff assessment process as a means to support and encourage staff to continually improve the quality of the child care at Rainbow. That staff assessment process will include an assessment of staff work performance highlighting both areas of strong work performance and areas where further improvements are possible. The centre will actively seek out methods of support to allow each worker to improve performance including support for and access to relevant training opportunities.

The centre will value a team approach to centre work, recognising that the efforts of each staff member as an individual and as a team member combine to enhance the centre’s program. As such the centre management will allocate jobs, rosters and tasks within the centre with regard to the need for all staff to have opportunities to improve and become more skilled in a range of roles.

The centre will value a professional approach to work by its employees. Families coming to Rainbow have a right to a high quality service and it will be expected that staff maintain a positive responsive attitude to families and recognise their duty of care to children. This may include:

- a) Recognising the implications of their duty of care to children and families as defined within the regulations
- b) Participation in staff meetings discussions and training opportunities
- c) Recognising and respecting the policies of the Association
- d) Respecting and valuing fellow workers and acting in a reasonable and co-operative fashion towards other staff at all times
- e) Respecting and accepting a staff assessment process and responding in an open fashion to its recommendations
- f) Recognising and respecting the confidentiality of any information about children, families and staff that is revealed through their work at Rainbow.

Staff are required to dress in a reasonable manner at all times, respecting the social mores of the community and the expectations of families and other staff. Staff will be provided with staff shirts and are required whenever possible to wear those shirts at work, enhancing recognition by parents of all members of the staff team. As well, staff will dress in a manner matching the requirements of the Sunsafe guidelines at all times while at work. The guidelines include: loose-fitting shirts or dresses with collars and sleeves (no bare midriff, low cut or singlet tops); trousers; or longer-style skirts and shorts falling at least to the knees; and broad brimmed or legionnaire hats.

Alcohol and other drugs (other than prescription and over the counter medications) are not permitted to be consumed on the premises. All care should be taken to ensure any medications brought to the centre are stored appropriately and out of the reach of children. With the danger of smoking and the importance of role modelling to children, smoking is not

permitted on Rainbow premises nor within sight of children near the centre. However, the centre acknowledges that some staff may be addicted to smoking and find it difficult to stop. Staff will be permitted to leave the premises for a few minutes during breaks to smoke off the premises and out of the view of children. Staff should not wear Rainbow shirts while smoking.

All staff are entitled to work within an environment free from personal harassment. Rainbow expects that staff will work as a team within a spirit of co-operative teamwork, respect for each other and normal good manners in the workplace. The centre will not tolerate the harassment, bullying or intimidation of any staff person and is committed to acting swiftly and decisively to eliminate any proven personal harassment. Any staff member harassing another person will be considered to have breached the standards expected of a Rainbow staff member.

Staff are entitled to access the facilities of the centre (e.g. phone, photocopier, internet, parking etc.) in the context of their work and may do so for personal reasons in a reasonable manner without impinging on the use of those facilities for work related purposes by other staff or management. Any staff member using a computer or internet facility during breaks or outside normal work hours must satisfy themselves that the equipment is not required at that time for directly work related activity.

The centre acknowledges that personal communication devices are now used by most members of the community and they provide an important communication link for staff members. The use of such links during work hours is not forbidden as to do so would cut staff off from potentially very important communications. However, the centre maintains normal phone communication links and staff can be contacted via phone during work hours. Therefore, incidental and non-urgent use of communication devices during work hours is not considered acceptable. Staff should not regularly carry or respond to such devices during periods of primary duties, although in a period of emergency staff may carry such devices to ensure they can be quickly contacted if necessary.

Staff will be entitled to an orientation period when first beginning work in a contracted or permanent position at Rainbow and whenever possible at least one day's paid employment will be allowed as an orientation day without having standard roster responsibilities. Such orientation will include access to the staff information folder, which details various matters about the centre's operation.

d) Staff Evaluation

Explanation It is acknowledged by relevant peak bodies within early childhood education that a high quality staff team may well be the most important factor in providing a high quality early childhood service. In order for a high quality team to be developed at Rainbow, staff need to have a range of supportive policies, documentation and procedures. One important procedure will be a positive evaluation process to inform staff of the centre's expectations of them and assist staff to meet those expectations. It will involve a comprehensive, regular and positive staff evaluation procedure for all staff employed at Rainbow that provides feedback about each team member's work; acknowledges and records when their work meets or exceeds expectations; and supports them if and when their work fails to meet expectations. The aim of the staff evaluation process is to support the continual improvement of each employee as part of striving for the highest quality of child care for children and families at Rainbow.

Implementation

Rainbow shall develop staff job descriptions that clearly set out the expectations of each employee. Those job descriptions will be made known to all staff and copies will be made available for staff to read at the centre or take home if desired. The job descriptions shall be developed within the formal guidelines of relevant industrial awards, early childhood service regulations, other relevant legislation and compliance principles.

At least once each year each staff member will have the opportunity to meet with their direct supervisor to discuss their work.

That discussion will include:

- (1) reference to the employee's position description
- (2) acknowledgement of work areas where the employee is meeting expectations
- (3) highlighting of work areas where the employee is exceeding expectations
- (4) recognition of work areas where the employee's work needs to improve.

The discussion is meant to be a two way process in which the employee is first given an opportunity to self assess their work and seek input from the supervisor. If the supervisor believes the team member's self assessment is not accurate or appropriate, further detailed feedback should be given to the team member to outline why the supervisor does not agree with the assessment. In general the meeting should provide an opportunity for the employee to discuss their work in a non-threatening environment and act as positive reinforcement for the employee's work at Rainbow.

In the case of the Director the supervisor shall be considered to be a delegated representative of the Committee. In the case of all other staff the supervisor shall be the Director, or another senior qualified staff member if delegated by the Director.

If the Supervisor, the Committee or the employee requests it, the Staff Liaison Representative (Liaison) from the Committee shall be present at any meeting to discuss work performance. No reason needs to be given for any request for the presence of the Liaison, nor can any inference be taken from that request.

Following each meeting the supervisor is to write, date and sign a report of the meeting, setting out the matters discussed and agreements made as to the employee's work. The employee shall be asked to sign the report, and may also write any further comment on the report if desired. The report will be further shown to the Liaison who will also sign the report and place it on the employee's file. The employee shall also be given a fully signed copy of the report for their own records.

If the employee is not prepared to sign the report for any reason, they may seek a meeting with the Liaison to explain that decision. The Liaison may ask the employee to provide a signed, dated, written statement setting out their objections or if necessary may prepare such a statement during the meeting for the employee to sign. That statement shall also be placed on the employee's file and a copy given to the employee.

If the report indicates that the staff member is not meeting the job expectations in any work area, the report must outline areas where the employee is meeting expectations, as well as detail the work areas where the employee needs to improve. The report shall also set out what support the supervisor will give the employee to assist them to improve their work and strategies that the employee can undertake in making that improvement. This report may also

set out a timeframe for a further review of the employee's work, if the areas of concern are considered serious enough by the supervisor to warrant a follow up meeting.

In the event that a follow up meeting is required to discuss work areas of concern, The same procedures shall apply as for the first meeting. Any number of follow up meetings may be held at the discretion of the Rainbow Committee.

At the conclusion of any such second or subsequent meeting, the supervisor, the Director (if not the supervisor), and the Liaison shall indicate in writing to the employee if the failure to meet work expectations is of a serious enough nature to put the employee's continued employment at Rainbow at risk. If continued employment is at risk, a formal dated report, signed by both Director and Liaison, needs to be given to the employee outlining all areas of work as per the job description and nominating work areas where the employee is meeting expectations as well as all areas where the employee is not meeting expectations. The report must clearly state that if work performance does not meet expectations by a reasonable set date, the employee's position at Rainbow shall be terminated.

That report must set out a plan to assist the employee to improve work performance in the areas of concern, including:

- (1) the improvements required,
- (2)suggested strategies for the employee to make that improvement,
- (3) available supports for the employee from Rainbow
- (4) a clear timeframe by which the improvement is to be made.

If the employee fails to meet the expectations of Rainbow by the set date the Liaison and Director may, by mutual agreement, terminate the employee's position at Rainbow. The employee has the right to appeal any such dismissal to the Committee in writing or by attendance at its next meeting.

At any and all steps of this evaluation process, an employee may seek to have a support person present at any meeting. The support person shall have access to all documents. The support person may be any person deemed suitable by the employee and may be a Union representative if desired.

e) Grievance procedures

Explanation Staff have a right to raise concerns, suggestions and complaints and be assured that their grievance will be listened to and a reasonable response made by the centre. As well, they must be assured that they will not face any adverse consequences in their employment as a result of having raised a concern. We aim to maintain a positive working environment for staff by having clearly stated expectations and policies and through addressing all work related problems, complaints or concerns as quickly and effectively as possible.

Implementation

Any staff member with a grievance is asked to attempt to resolve their issues through informal discussion and negotiation in the first instance. Such informal methods may involve personal approaches, staff meeting discussions or seeking the assistance of other fellow workers to resolve the matter.

If the matter cannot be resolved on a personal basis or the staff member does not believe it is appropriate to be raised in that way, more formal methods will be used. The matter may be

raised with the Director or if that is not appropriate, with the Committee's staff liaison person or the Committee President. The Director or if applicable the Committee Liaison or President will determine a suitable system for addressing each grievance taking into account the nature of the grievance and the individuals involved. Staff meetings and and/or committee meetings provide regular opportunities to raise and discuss general issues or concerns about the centre. More private discussions will be conducted in a confidential manner and involve only relevant persons. Only when all parties agree a benefit may be gained, should the discussion broaden to involve children and/or parents as appropriate.

If necessary a formal mediation meeting may be arranged and at that meeting the Committee will ensure the facilitator is acceptable to all parties involved in the grievance. At any formal grievance resolution meetings all parties are entitled to invite a support person to attend, who may provide input to the meeting and/or offer support and advice to their party during the meeting. A confidential written record of the outcome of the meeting will be given to all participants who are to acknowledge their agreement by signing the record. A signed copy will be kept with staff files.

Any grievance may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice to the staff member who raised the grievance. However where the grievance raises issues of concern, management may choose to continue to investigate those issues in a more general way. Management will ensure the outcomes or conclusions are taken into account by inclusion, if suitable, in job descriptions or centre policies as appropriate.

Persons directly involved in a grievance process will be expected to continue to conduct themselves at and around the centre in a professional manner.

Any party to a grievance, if unhappy at the outcome may appeal to the full Committee.

Nothing in this policy should be taken to discourage or limit any staff member's right to seek outside assistance in resolving any grievance or from taking the matter to some other relevant authority.

f) Staff training and development

Explanation An adequate and appropriate staff evaluation process will lead to identification of areas where staff skill and knowledge levels can be improved. That improvement requires the centre to provide support for staff undertaking ongoing training and development. We aim to provide staff with the opportunity, encouragement and support to further their skills in the early childhood field and to allocate sufficient budget to allow that to happen.

Implementation

Staff appraisals, the availability of courses and the centre requirements will be used to plan training needs. Where possible a yearly training plan will be made, including dates, staff attending and costs. The Director will inform the committee of the training and development needs of the staff so that sufficient funds are available to implement the plan.

The Committee shall ensure that sufficient funds are made available in the budget for staff inservice, training and development.

The Director shall ensure that all training opportunities are made known to staff and ensure that all staff are given the opportunity to be involved in training each year. Such training may

include external workshops or seminars, short courses, internal workshops or meetings, meetings with other centres, time for staff to review available resources and conferences.

Staff are encouraged to share with other staff and families any relevant skills and knowledge obtained from training. (i.e. staff meetings, staff workshops, newsletter articles etc.).

Time spent by staff during work hours attending training courses approved by the centre shall be considered to be time at work. The centre will cover the costs of all such training.

Under the Enterprise Agreement breaks are “crib” breaks for many staff. Staff are paid for such breaks and as such can be asked to remain on the premises and to undertake other duties during that time away from their normal duties. While staff will not always be required to undertake other duties during breaks, they may be asked to do so at the discretion of the Director. Staff are required to remain on the premises and hence be available to assist with the children in any emergency. Staff, with the permission of the Director, may leave the centre for a short period during breaks, as long as license staffing ratios can be maintained despite their absence.

Time spent by staff during work hours attending training courses which they have been asked to attend by the centre shall be considered to accrue time in lieu which will be added to annual leave entitlements. The centre will cover the costs of all such training.

Staff are welcome and encouraged to undertake training or skills development in any area or skill which may in some way advantage the services of Rainbow Children's Centre. Staff are welcome to apply to the centre for such training to be approved as work related. The centre will pay the course costs of any training that is approved as work related. Time spent by staff outside normal work hours attending such training courses will not normally be considered to be time worked or to accrue time in lieu. However, the centre may approve, on an individual basis, that such time will be considered to accrue time in lieu to be added to the employee's annual leave entitlement. Employees should not assume that approval will be granted on any particular occasion.

Staff will be encouraged to upgrade or renew their qualifications by undertaking formal external training courses. Normally such coursework and any costs involved will be a personal matter for the staff member concerned. However, the Committee, on an individual basis, may at its absolute discretion approve support for the employee e.g. payment of part payment of course fees, access to centre resources, time away from normal duties, study leave etc.

Staff shall be encouraged to undertake all necessary steps to ensure they can meet the requirements to undertake positions as nominated supervisors and responsible persons. The centre shall provide admin support, course fees, application fees and any other support necessary or required. Rainbow management shall monitor all staff to identify those who may be suitable to take roles as nominated supervisors and/or responsible persons and shall monitor sector training and development opportunities as appropriate to assist team development. Rainbow management shall also monitor any changes to Regulations or government requirements to ensure Rainbow services remain up to date re all requirements.

g) Programming time

Explanation Programming time by its nature is a compromise. Time spent by a staff person undertaking programming assists and supports the long term quality of the program. On the

other hand taking some staff away from direct primary contact with children for that time may diminish the program in the short term. We have to find the right balance.

The issue of programming also raises a significant ethical issue for the centre. Best practice programming should draw upon the skills, knowledge observations and experience of all staff, not just trained teachers and qualified child care workers. As well, the depth of the programming records held on each child is significantly enhanced if those records draw on observations made by all staff each day. However, the centre acknowledges that the employment conditions and wages of staff who do not have formal qualifications in child studies or early childhood education do not demand involvement by such staff in programming. Hence while we can invite such “unqualified” staff to play a part in programming, we cannot demand or expect such involvement as a matter of course.

The nature of out of school hours care also creates a challenge in programming. Such services are by their nature recreational as the children involved will be enrolled in formal school and the OOSHC services are provided at times when the children are not “in school”. Children need such recreational times to maintain well rounded personal physical and emotional development. However the programs provided by the centre can be structured in such a way that while their focus is recreational, their implementation can be done in such a way that children’s learning is enhanced by involvement in the program – fun is learning and learning is fun!

Implementation

The centre will employ sufficient staff to ensure that from time to time staff can be rostered to attend to programming duties and the centre will still maintain its normal staff:child ratios. The staff rosters will include provision for staff programming time. All full time or part time staff working as primary carers will be allocated time to undertake programming duties. Such time will include at least two hours each week free from duties in working directly with children. Staff designated as room leaders will have longer periods of programming. While the centre accepts that the minimum amounts of programming time set out in the Enterprise Agreement allow appropriate opportunities for staff to program, where possible the Director and room leaders are expected to allow longer periods for staff programming as long as such rostering does not impinge of appropriate levels of everyday care and education. The centre will provide a range of resources for the use of staff including computer and internet access as well as a library of resource materials and access to journals and publications from various peak and professional bodies within the sector.

h) Staff meetings

Explanation An adequate and appropriate staff meeting process will lead to better communication between staff, better understanding of work requirements and improved cooperation in the workplace. Meetings are also an essential part of the work at Rainbow in providing opportunities to discuss, debate and improve work processes, procedures and practices..

Implementation

The Director shall ensure Planning & Evaluation meetings involving all staff are held at least twice each year outside the normal hours of the centre services. While the centre does not, and should not, normally expect staff to attend the centre out of normal work hours, attendance at infrequent planning meetings is considered the only way in which all staff can attend a meeting at the same time. These meetings will allow all staff to be involved in the overall planning, evaluation and goal setting of the centre program. The centre shall provide a meal

during the meeting for all staff who attend these meetings and will provide time in lieu for the extra time worked. Such time in lieu will be added to annual leave entitlement. The Director may invite regular casual staff to attend such meetings and such attendance will be paid at normal hourly rates.

The Director shall ensure that Rainbow meetings are held during work hours at least each two months involving staff from all areas rooms and services in the centre. Such meetings will provide an opportunity for staff to address everyday logistic and procedural matters that arise in the course of their work. These meetings will be attended by at least one representative of each room or service within Rainbow.

The team leaders of each service provided by Rainbow shall ensure that room or service meetings are held on a regular basis during the year during work hours. Such meetings will allow ongoing evaluation and planning of the room services as well as ongoing review of everyday practices and procedures within the room. These meetings should involve all staff working within the room whenever possible.

Rainbow and room meetings are held during work hours. Under the Award conditions of teachers and child care workers, all daily breaks are crib breaks and staff are paid for these breaks and can be required to work during the break so long as the work is not a continuation of ordinary duties in their roster. While Rainbow will not normally require staff to undertake duties during breaks, they will be required to do so on days when meetings are organised.

i) Staffing management

Explanation The employment of staff at Rainbow needs to be managed to ensure the centre always has available a properly skilled and motivated staff team. Research indicates clearly that the quality of the staff team is the most important indicator of the quality of child care offered to children at the centre. Hence Rainbow intends that its management of staff occurs in such a way that staff are supported in their work and have opportunities to learn new skills. As well the “staff team” needs to be considered to include all employed by Rainbow when the number of primary staff are not sufficient to meet the needs of families and children at any time or within any service.

Implementation

The centre will employ sufficient staff to ensure at least the number of staff required by the license are rostered to work each day. However, the centre will aim to exceed the number and type of staff, by qualification, required under the license in order to aim for higher than minimum standards of care and education.

All staff employed on an ongoing basis with regular rostered work will be employed as permanent members of staff, except where a contracted employee is employed to replace a regular staff member on leave or employed under a grant received for a limited time frame.

The centre, in acknowledging staff as individuals with personal needs, will consider a range of employment options for staff. Those options may include part time work, job share and agreed periods of reduced hours or days of work.

The Director will implement a rostering system, which informs staff about their shifts, duties and start/finish times at least two weeks in advance. Those rosters will be developed to ensure

the centre complies with Regulations while being fair and equitable in the allocation of the various shifts and times of work.

Staff rosters will also be arranged to provide a reasonable balance between multi-skilling of staff, continuity of care for children and variety and challenge to individual staff members. The Director will evaluate staff capabilities, take into consideration qualifications, consider numbers in each room and consider personal preferences of each staff member.

The number of equivalent full time primary contact staff employed by the centre will be at least one more equivalent full time position than the minimum required by license. The extra employee will provide a float position so that the absence of any one staff member on leave or in training does not require a replacement. This strategy is intended to provide higher levels of continuity for children by reducing the number of casual staff required.

The Director will be expected to work with children when possible and will ensure their work include time in each room and both early and late shifts.

The centre will develop a list of regular relief staff to be employed on a casual basis to fill short term vacancies or cover staff absences. A regular list will ensure consistency for children, parents and other staff. Relief staff will be rostered to receive regular work in order to maintain a rapport with children, families and are aware of work changes and new procedures as necessary.

Where possible the Director will provide a modified induction to the centre for relief staff, with a tour of the centre, introductions to staff, a copy of the staff handbook, code of conduct and copies of relevant policies. The Director will ensure that they are fully aware of their duties and the centre's expectations.

In any decisions made about staff training opportunities, the centre will consider providing training to regular relief staff.

While staff are not normally expected to attend committee meetings, they are welcome to do so. In the interest of having staff understand and appreciate the decision making process at committee meetings, the Director may invite a staff representative to attend the meetings on an occasional basis and such invited attendance shall count as time worked. Of course staff may choose to attend meetings in their own time if they wish and such attendance is welcomed and encouraged.

Staff who qualify for long service leave (LSL) after ten years employment are entitled to 9 weeks LSL as per the Enterprise Agreement (EA). The centre supports LSL as a necessary substantial break to be taken by long term staff to support their continued employment in the centre after working for ten years. As such it is important LSL is used and not just saved up to be paid out as untaken leave on retirement or resignation. However the EA does not set out conditions of taking LSL. The NSW Long Service Leave Act implies that a staff person becoming eligible for long service leave should take such leave once it is due. The Act sets out that employers can roster employees on long service leave once it is due. In the interests of ensuring that staff do take LSL soon after it is due, staff who complete sufficient service to accrue LSL will be informed that they have LSL owing and asked to submit a plan to the Committee for when they will take the leave. That plan should include that the LSL is to be taken within three years of it becoming due. Where an employee does not submit a plan and take the leave within three years, the Committee will roster the employee to take any LSL leave owing. The Committee may, at its discretion, extend the three year limit if the employee's

plan indicates a need to take the leave at a later date, but the Committee is not obliged to extend the date limit in any case.

j) Volunteers, students and visitors

Explanation Rainbow Children's Centre Inc., encourages volunteers, students and visitors to participate in the program. We believe that anyone and everyone can contribute to the program and the learning experiences of the children. Rainbow takes pride in offering students from high school, TAFE and university a place to learn about early childhood and the child care education industry. At the same time we need to ensure the safe and proper care of children at the centre by monitoring everyone who has contact with the children and having clear guidelines for any person who enters the centre or is involved with the children in any way. When required by law, of course, all such individuals will be required to undergo a working with children check or equivalent.

Implementation

i. Volunteers

- All volunteers must be interviewed by the Director before they will be able to participate in the centre. Volunteers who are willing to accept direction from centre staff and make a regular commitment to attending the centre will be welcomed
- All volunteers will be required to complete the Working With Children Check (WWCC)
- A job description detailing clearly the roles, responsibilities, expectations and duties will be supplied to all volunteers and the requirements discussed with the volunteer before any work in the centre.
- All volunteers will be required to sign on and off.
- Volunteers will be informed of the confidentiality requirements of working in a centre and that they are bound not to disclose any private information gained through their work at Rainbow.
- Volunteers will not normally be included in staff meetings due to the confidential nature of discussions that occur and are not to discuss issues with parents
- All volunteers will be assigned to work closely with one staff member and will be asked to shadow the work of that team member. As they will always work with that staff member, they will never be left alone with children.
- Volunteers should not be routinely used to do tasks that the employed staff normally do.
- Volunteers will be supernumerary when calculating basic staffing ratios, except on excursions.
- Volunteers will be invited to take part in social activities at the centre.

ii. Work experience students

The centre welcomes the opportunity to host school students who wish to gain work experience as part of a school program. It is considered important for the centre to respond to the community and be seen as an open and welcoming community facility.

Students will be informed of the confidentiality requirements of working in a centre and that they are bound not to disclose any private information gained through their work at Rainbow. Students will not normally be included in staff meetings due to the confidential nature of discussions that occur and are not to discuss issues with parents.

All students will be assigned to work closely with one staff member and will be asked to shadow the work of that team member. As they will always work with that staff member, they will never be left alone with children.

Students will not be routinely used to do tasks that the employed staff normally do.

Students will be supernumerary when calculating any staffing ratios.

iii **Practicum students**

The centre values the input of students from local registered training organisations, including TAFE and university. Such students bring new ideas to the centre and importantly provide opportunities for the centre staff to rationalise and review practices and procedures in the centre.

All student placements will be negotiated through the Director and placement will be at the discretion of the Director on issues such as the staff team's ability to supervise and be able to assist the student in their work.

Students will be provided with guidelines identifying their roles and responsibilities, expectations and code of conduct while at the centre

Students will be informed of the confidentiality requirements of working in a centre and that they are bound not to disclose any private information gained through their work at Rainbow.

Students will normally be included in staff meetings and are not to discuss children's development or other issues with parents. Students, with the permission of families, may include information about children in reports and assignments completed at the centre but only for the purposes of their coursework.

Students will be expected to follow the duties an employee would normally undertake. They will be rostered to work closely with a regular team member, but should not be routinely used to undertake that staff member's shift duties on their own.

Students will not be left alone with any child or be in charge of any children.

Students may administer first aid if they hold a first aid certificate and work alongside the regular staff member.

iv. **Consultant educators**

The centre welcomes the input of consultant and visiting educators and professionals. Such visitors will be asked to sign the visitors book on arrival and departure, and their bona fides confirmed prior to any work being done at the centre.

Families of any child seen by a consultant at the centre will be asked to approve such contact prior to the visit and will be informed of the outcomes of the visit.

Staff will offer access to necessary information so that such consultants are able to provide appropriate services to the children. It is understood that they will recognise the confidentiality of any information disclosed to them about children and families.

Staff will offer appropriate support liaison as necessary within the program to allow the consultants to undertake their roles.

v. **Invited visitors**

Visitors may be invited to the centre to add to the children's program. Visitors can also include people or parents with a skill or ability to share with the children or local community resources. The Director will ensure that when invited visitors enter the centre they are welcomed by a regular staff member and they sign the visitors book. The allocated staff member should stay with the visitor at all times while they are at the centre.

vi. **Government or other officers in official positions** Professional access to the centre will be at the discretion of the Director or Management Committee or when requested to do by law. They include union representatives, State and Federal Government Departmental Officers, Occupational Health and Safety officers, building inspectors and police officers.

vii. **Trades people working in the centre**

Trade access to the centre shall also be necessary to provide whatever services are needed by the centre.

Such visitors will be asked to sign the visitors book if their visit requires they stay on the premises to undertake work.

Such visitors will be asked to provide proof of insurance cover and asked to perform work outside normal operating hours if practical. If undertaking work during operating hours, trades persons will be asked to ensure they work in a manner which will be safe for children and staff. The Director will inform the tradesperson about the special potential risks of inquisitive young children in case the person is not used to children, and shall monitor the work to ensure it is done in accordance with safe practice.

viii. **Unwelcome visitors** Staff are expected to act with common sense and discretion in the event of any unwelcome visitors and maintain the safety of staff and children as the highest priority, while seeking outside assistance (e.g. police) if necessary.

k) Staff records and wages

Explanation As an employer, and as an operator of children's services, Rainbow is required to hold various types of information about staff both while they are employed and for some time after employment. In order to meet those requirements the centre must maintain staff records. These records also safeguard the rights of staff as they detail their employment status, their work, their leave, their ongoing training their staff evaluations. Due to the confidential nature of such information, and the laws regarding employment, the records must be maintained in the ways set out by relevant authorities.

Implementation

On employment, Rainbow will develop a file for each employee. That file will initially contain the application from the employee, the offer of employment, a staff record form, a tax declaration, a superannuation choice and a copy of qualifications held by the employee. The file will be stored in a manner making it confidential from anyone other than centre management and administration and the employee themselves. The employee has the right to ask to look at their file at any time, however employees must coordinate with the Director to access these records to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of other employee records is maintained as required by relevant authorities.

The letter of employment will contain details about the date of employment, grade, pay rate and basis of employment of all staff members as well as a rationale for the wage grading applicable to each employee. For any contracted staff member, the start and finish date of employment will be clearly set out

On employment each employee's previous work shall be assessed and a pay rate determined based on both formal qualifications, previous work in children's services, other previous work – both paid and unpaid, and any other factor Rainbow considers pertinent.

The centre will maintain a record of the employee's address and contact details and nearest of kin at all times and staff are required to update this information promptly in the event of any changes.

The application forms of prospective employees who apply for work at Rainbow, may be retained for up to twelve months to allow the centre to contact the applicant in regards to any other employment opportunities and will then be destroyed.

The centre will include in the staff members file records of all subsequent work, leave, staff evaluations, training, formal qualifications attained and any other information considered relevant. When an employee leaves Rainbow the staff record will be retained for eight years as proscribed by law.

Staff are asked to sign in and out each day as a record of time worked This is also a record of those present at the centre in case of an emergency. These records are maintained for five years and may be accessed on request by staff or any staff member's nominated representative or other person authorised by law to check that staff have been paid appropriate amounts. Staff are encouraged to approach the Director as soon as possible in the event of any apparent short payment of wages.

The centre will pay employee's fortnightly and deposit the money directly to the account/s nominated by the employee. All wage deductions taken from employee's pay will be promptly paid to the appropriate third party and all superannuation entitlements will be paid as required by law. The centre will provide a comprehensive pay slip including all details of time worked, wages paid, leave taken, leave accrued and other entitlements paid. A complete record of the wages for each employee shall be maintained in the employee's file.

Procedures to ensure the protection of children

Explanation Child care staff are placed in a position of trust in looking after young children. Such children are vulnerable and staff are asked to undertake many very personal and at times intrusive care tasks. As a result there is a need to protect the interests of everyone involved – children, families, the centre and staff. Other policies will deal with child protection from the point of view of children and families. This policy sets out the way the centre ensures children are protected from any inappropriate behaviours by staff, but also how staff can and should ensure they protect themselves from any misconception by others.

As well, the nature of child care work, with the constancy of demand from children for support and supervision can become overwhelming for anyone. Any person becoming overly stressed can respond in ways they would not normally do. To ensure such a situation does not occur staff have to be aware of their own and their fellow workers levels of stress and act to minimise or eliminate such situations.

Implementation¹

Staff are required to

(1) Ensure they work in ways that recognise the stressful nature of child care work and attempt to minimise any stress they feel. Staff should be alert to their own personal stress levels and the stress levels of staff working with them and seek to minimise that stress by for instance: changing duties, seeking further assistance from other staff, reorganising tasks or managing daily timetables etc.

(2) When staff feel stress may affect their work and the quality of their interactions with children they should alert other staff and seek to leave the situation so that they never put themselves into a situation where they could overreact to the stressful situation.

(3) Undertake personal care tasks with all children that involve staff removing children's clothing and cleaning the genital and anal regions of the child. Staff should respect the

1. Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018. Quality Area 5. National Quality Standard and Operational Requirements.

personal rights and privacy of children while providing support to each child as required and in accordance with appropriate practice. However staff must also recognise that most young children may not yet have developed a sense of inhibition and so may not require privacy.

(4) Be aware of child protection issues. Staff will have an opportunity to undertake child protection training and the principles set out in such training must be implemented in the centre. As well up to date information about child protection will be available to staff and they should keep up to date re such information.

(5) When possible work with other staff when with children. At times it will not be possible for two staff to always be together e.g. when a staff member is assisting a baby to get to sleep in the cot room. In such circumstances staff should ensure other staff know where they are and what children they are with. Staff should take care to remain within sight of other staff when undertaking intrusive personal care tasks such as nappy changing.

(5) Ensure no student, volunteer, visitor is left alone or has the opportunity to be alone with a child at any time.

(6) Acknowledge that one of the most difficult situations that arises in child care is when a child becomes aggressive towards others. While the centre will implement strategies to assist a child with behaviour management and self control, such strategies often take some time to work. The centre will also implement short term strategies when a child tantrums or becomes aggressive, that safeguards all concerned while sometimes allowing the child to “let off steam” in a way that does not endanger others. However, sometimes a child may direct such anger towards staff or other children and it is not possible to let that child be. Staff may not restrain a child in any way nor allow a child to hurt themselves. However, realistically on such occasions, that is easy to say but not so easy to do. While the centre can call and ask the family to remove the child, the parent may take some time to get to the centre and it may well not be in the child’s best interest to just send them home. The centre awaits advice from outside agencies that realistically recognises the complexity of such situations.

Rainbow will ensure Staff work within optimum conditions of employment that recognise that staff stress and overwork can lead to inappropriate behaviours. Conditions will include ensuring:

- (1) Staff take regular leave and are provided with daily breaks
- (2) Relief from regular duties to undertake other tasks and multi-skilling by task and job rotation.
- (3) Staff are always rostered to be working with other staff in close contact as support and empowered to ask for assistance when required.
- (4) Ensure when possible, all staff have up to date training in child protection
- (5) All visitors, students & volunteers are made aware: of child protection issues; that they must work alongside a regular staff person: that they must not ever have the care of a child on their own

When an allegation is made about a staff member, the centre has no discretion and must notify the Ombudsman and will proceed as directed by the Ombudsman and any relevant agency² involved.

² Ombudsman, Commission for Children and Young Persons, Community Services NSW, NSW Police and any other outside agency with legal responsibility to act or direct the centre in any investigation of action regarding an allegation of child abuse.

Since the centre will be required by the Ombudsman to investigate the allegation, it is imperative that records of employment of staff, especially staff assessments, are maintained at the centre. Any record of poor work performance, concerns about actions by the staff member with a child and any pattern of behaviour in the centre over a period of time may be an important indicator in subsequent allegations. While management may often feel inclined to minimise any concerns about a staff member in a formal written report, such honest and realistic assessments are required to be made and kept up to date.

For the protection of both staff and children, if any staff member is the subject of an allegation, the Director and Committee Office bearers will make a decision whether suspension from duties at the centre until the situation is resolved is warranted. Such suspension will be at full pay.

If required, counselling and support will be made available to children, families and staff in the event of an allegation or inquiry regarding a staff member.