



4.02 DEALING WITH STRESS

Purpose Statement

Despite the many rewards that working with young children can bring, workplace stress is often experienced by child care professionals in children's services. The demands of working with young children and their families can be physical, intellectual and emotional.

Windermere is committed to working together with educators to reduce and manage stress and identify opportunities for long term career satisfaction. Preventing and lowering stress levels in education and care services helps educators to feel more positive and energetic which in turn has a positive impact on children and families engaged with the service.

Scope

This policy applies to all salaried full time and part time staff (including casuals), educators, contractors, children and families.

Definitions

Workplace Stress: is the physical or emotional reaction someone may have to unrelieved and intense pressures in the workplace environment. Stress can create a risk to workplace health and safety.

Policy Statement

TO PROMOTE A GOOD SENSE OF WELLBEING AMONGST ALL STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED WITH THE EDUCATION AND CARE SCHEME.

Procedures

Preventing Workplace Stress

Educator wellbeing is an important focus for coordinators when conducting support visits. These visits provide educators with an opportunity to identify factors that contribute to stress and develop plans to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. Other helpful ways of preventing workplace stress in an education and care setting is to:

1. Develop a clear understanding of policies and procedures. Know what is expected of you in relation to program planning, feeding, interacting with children and document management.
2. Promote positive interactions with children and use a positive guidance approach when responding to difficult behaviours.
3. Bring more laughter and play into the education and care setting. A relaxed, happy environment will reduce stress levels and promote positive interactions.
4. Make sure the education and care environment is safe and secure.
5. Build respectful relationships with parents and guardians. Discuss any issues openly and transparently and respect the unique wishes and needs of families and their children. Good relationships are crucial.



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6. Use the Windermere Educator Network to reflect on and debrief about challenging issues, events and conflicts, whilst at all times maintaining the confidentiality of children and/or their families.
7. Develop strong professional relationships and networks to support your confidence and professional direction
8. Seek support, advice and training from external professionals and agencies.
9. Take planned annual leave. Be sure to give yourself a break as a way of recharging your batteries!

Personal Care

Individuals can help to prevent or manage stress on a personal level by taking care of one's own health and wellbeing. Effective self-care will help to build individual resilience to stressful situations and assist you with seeking positive solutions to issues that cause stress. Reflecting on the demands of life, and being able to identify the things that cause personal stress are also important strategies that can be used to combat or reduce the incidence of stress.

Tips for stress prevention through personal wellbeing include:

1. Adopting a positive attitude to life and work
2. Setting realistic goals for personal and professional life
3. Finding practical ways to release tension and increase health
4. Eating nutritious foods and limiting intake of fats and sugars
5. Incorporating regular exercise into daily life
6. Focussing on all aspects of wellbeing including physical, spiritual and intellectual
7. Managing stress through movement and relaxation including yoga, massage, Pilates and meditation
8. Seeking support when needed from family and friends and/or health care professionals.

Stress Related Trauma

Traumatic events can trigger stress in individuals. An educator who has been exposed to a traumatic event or incident during the course of their work or is caring for a child who has experienced significant trauma (i.e. sexual or physical assault; sudden death of a family member) can feel the effects of stress for a significant time afterward. Accessing support is critical following a traumatic event or incident. Windermere will:

1. Encourage educators to make telephone contact immediately for help and guidance
2. Support educators to take leave from their education and care duties (where applicable)
3. Provide educators with the details for an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP service can be contacted to provide free and confidential counselling following a traumatic incident or event. In order to access the service free of charge, educators must identify themselves as a Windermere Child and Family Services contractor.

