

OSCAR Staff Code of Conduct

OSCAR services aim to create environments for children that are stimulating, fun, caring and safe. We recommend that all staff commit to these guidelines that cover, in general terms, conduct and professional relationships.

This document should be read in conjunction with a relevant job description and employment agreement that explains the requirements of the particular workplace.

Please refer to the policies and procedures of your programme for specific guidelines on behaviour management, child protection, health and safety and employment matters.

Treat all children with dignity and respect

It is essential that all staff appreciate the important role that OSCAR services play in children's development, especially how they shape children's social and interpersonal skills, and their sense of self-worth.

This means:

- recognise that all children have the right to feel safe and to be safe
- do not physically punish children or in any way intentionally harm children either physically or emotionally e.g. by ridiculing, threatening, or abusive behaviour
- provide physical comfort or reassurance when needed by children, but exercise caution and restraint when initiating physical contact or displaying signs of affection
- clearly communicate programme rules and boundaries to children and be fair and consistent when responding to misbehaviour
- take care to ensure any activity suits the age and ability of the children participating
- encourage and assist, but do not force children into an activity
- consistently monitor children's changing needs during the programme session and respond appropriately

Always be aware of safety and "duty of care"

Staff have a professional and legal obligation to consistently monitor and assess the safety of children and to act to reduce or eliminate unacceptable risks. This is a "duty of care" and it continues for the entire time that children attend the programme, until they are released to the care of a parent/caregiver or other authorized person.

This means:

- when supervising children, give this task your complete attention
- if a situation is unsafe, act immediately and get assistance if required
- if you see any possibility that an activity could cause an accident or injury, stop the activity immediately
- monitor yourself and others (staff/visitors) to avoid situations where an adult is alone with a child
- keep other staff informed about your whereabouts and immediate duties
- act promptly to report any observations or concerns regarding child abuse or mistreatment, following processes in the relevant programme policies
- discuss incidents where safety was a concern with other staff in order to raise awareness and improve practices

Be an effective and respectful team member

Staff relationships need to be positive and supportive, both to ensure the smooth running of the programme and to create a positive environment for children.

This means:

- work co-operatively with other staff towards programme goals
- practice polite and calm communication at all times
- support other staff to become more confident and skillful in their work
- demonstrate a commitment to professional development, including regular child protection training
- ask for help and advice whenever it is needed and you can expect to get help and to not be criticised for seeking help
- when conflicts arise within the team, you seek to resolve matters constructively and if formal procedures are implemented, all parties co-operate throughout the process

Maintain appropriate personal conduct at all times

Staff are expected to behave in a professional and responsible manner, while not losing sight of the need to promote fun, enjoyment and friendly, informal relationships with children and staff.

This means:

- ensure you understand your job description
- provide an appropriate role model for children's behaviour
- be punctual and ready for work at the required time
- dress appropriately and be "fit for work"
- no smoking at the programme
- do not discuss adult topics around children
- have friendly and courteous interactions with parents
- maintain professional boundaries with children – if there are any personal relationships with children at the programme, you need to keep personal matters confidential and ensure all children are treated without bias or favouritism
- respect the confidentiality of any conversations with parents about their children
- respond appropriately to any complaints about the programme and if you have any concern or grievance yourself, report this using the appropriate procedure

Fit for Work

Staff should turn up for work, ready and fit to perform their role in a safe and professional manner.

Being "fit for work" means:

- being dressed appropriately (refer to Dress Code if relevant)
- do not bring children or siblings with you unless the Programme Manager has agreed to this
- not being under the influence of drugs, alcohol or other substances that reduce your ability to perform programme duties

Serious Misconduct

Acts of serious misconduct may result in staff having their employment with the programme terminated without further notice or formal warning.

Examples of serious misconduct:

- failure to disclose criminal convictions
- abusive or offensive behaviour to any other person in the course of employment
- theft, vandalism, or unauthorised use of property belonging to the programme, another staff member, or any other person
- falsification of programme records
- bringing into or consuming at the programme, non-prescribed drugs, or other dangerous substances
- the disclosure to unauthorised persons of any confidential information belonging to the programme or concerning any child, family or staff member
- failure to record and report any work place accident
- harassment of programme staff or families