

The Holiday Programme

SURVIVAL

GUIDE



Hello! ☺ At OSCN, we get all kinds of requests for help, advice and information, but assistance with holiday programmes is always in steady demand. When starting a new holiday programme from scratch, people ask us: “where do I begin?”

This resource covers all the basics of operating a school holiday programme (HP as we call it), under the OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) sector model. If you are new to the job, it will give you an overview of what you are in for and get you moving quickly on important tasks. If you already have a few, or a lot, of programmes under your belt, you will find plenty of useful tips here too.

Keep in mind that we have seen hundreds of ways to run a good programme. We have tried to give varied examples to reflect this, but there are so many good ideas out there. Get involved in the sector and network with other HP operators and you will find many more practical tips – we have included suggestions for contacts.

This guide aims to be practical and realistic. We “tell it like it is”, based on our many years working in and alongside HPs. We also hope to inspire you and show that a well-organised HP can have a huge impact on children’s learning and development.

The resources are in your hands. So let’s get into it!


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We wanted this resource to be small and portable - so you can carry it with you when you are putting your programme together. There's a lot more information in the on-line version of this booklet. www.oscarnz.org.nz/resources

Thanks for helpful input from Michelle Nathan, Bill Huppler, Carol Plewinski, Daniel Shotter, Maree Fraser and all the other awesome holiday programmes we have learnt so much from over the years. You all do an amazing job!

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What is a holiday programme for?

Having a clear vision of “what sort of holiday” you want for the children will help with the many decisions you will make as your programme comes together.

Through the 1990’s and early 2000’s there was a steady growth in the provision of OSCAR services. The main driver in demand was increasing numbers of working parents who needed safe and accessible services for their school-age children, outside of school hours and during holiday periods. Holiday programmes therefore provide a much-needed service for parents, but it’s the children who take centre stage as “customers” when we get down to planning a HP.

From a child’s point of view, what are school holidays for? On most kid’s lists will probably be FRIENDS, FREEDOM AND FUN.

HPs are social environments. Whether a child is an outgoing, “get involved” kind of person or more of a “in my own time” or “happy on my own” type, in a HP they will be part of very rich neighbourhood of people and social opportunities. If they already have friends there, even better. If not, they will very likely be making new friends, and friendly staff can help this process along.

School is out, so it’s our time. This doesn’t mean “anything goes” but children expect a clear change of pace, more choice about how to spend their time and the opportunity to really be a child; to live in the moment and follow their own path. We recommend that you don’t overload your programme with too much activity, so there is time for children to do their own thing, at their own pace and to recharge their batteries for their next school term.

When kids look back at a great holiday what they are seeing is the fun they had. What’s fun for you? Ask any group of people and you get all sorts of answers. So, on one level, fun in a HP is about variety, having a range of activity types on offer over the course of a week. “Fun” is also about an attitude. Imagine 2 different groups of children playing tiggy. In one game there is a lot of stopping to argue about who got tagged. In the other the kids just seem to be getting on with it. Which one is more fun? Probably the latter and in a few minutes no one will be left playing the first game – they’ll have moved on to something “funner”.

Some days kids come with their “fun on”, other days maybe not, and that’s where your staff step in and inject some sunshine and energy into the situation.

As the person overseeing this child-centred enterprise, there are two other elements we would suggest you put firmly in your sights.

The first is **SAFETY**. There is no fun is if things are unsafe. Safety requires both awareness (of what could go wrong and where there is a higher risk) and a systematic approach (clear staff roles, regular checks, proper preparation). Children need to be “in the loop” about safety, without ending up fearful or overdosed on safety rules and over-protective restrictions.

Which brings us to the topic of **LEARNING**. Children are hard-wired for learning. They are doing it all the time as their developing bodies (and brains), reach out for new experiences, driven by an innate drive to take on and succeed at all kinds of developmental challenges.

HPs are ideally placed to promote “real-life” learning through experiences, interaction and the right input of support and encouragement. Learning “what my community has to offer me”, through a well-run HP, ultimately helps children gain a sense of belonging and connection to the place they live and the people they live there with.

*Read more on-line:
OSCAR and Learning*

Quality programmes – what we look for

There are all kinds of ways to describe and measure quality, but at OSCN we like to keep it simple:

- Children and staff are settled and respond positively to new people, new experiences and new challenges
- Staff support / extend children’s activities and learning, with a focus on fun
- A variety of play and activity is occurring, including spontaneous, child-initiated and child-directed activity
- Programme tasks are fairly and broadly shared among staff and children.



our holiday programme facility

Many different types of facilities can be home-base for a HP. With smart planning, the right resources and a focus on what your children need each day, you will be able to make the most of what you have got.

For HP venues, there are just a few regulations & sector requirements, outlined in the **MSD OSCAR Standards**:

- provision of sufficient space & essential facilities (toilets, phone, first aid etc.)
- facilities are safe & legally compliant (including local council certifications as required)
- the facility can cater for a variety of children's activity and needs.

A place for everything

Some facilities have one room, others several. Either way your facility needs to be organised to accommodate various activities including messy stuff & active games.

- Some activities require tables, but often children are happier at floor level – so you don't always need lots of tables and other furnishings
- Set up comfy, quiet area(s) that can be available throughout the day; equally needed by your youngest kids for rest and solitary play (tents, cushions, picture books) and by older kids for chilling out.
- Indoor/outdoor flow is an important consideration when planning the use of any facility. How can you make it easy for children to get outside?
- Think outside the box: take art, cooking & board games outside. Most children like being outdoors and this can take pressure off your indoor space.
- Liaise closely with the facility manager over other usage. Trip days might need to be planned for days when other users are in your facility.
- Wet weather planning is essential. Borrow more space - foyers, walkways, verandas (can be closed in with awnings). Find a home for your active play (scale down the intensity and group size) and fit other activity around it.



Setting up your facility so that children have the opportunity to practice self-reliance will save valuable staff time and build up a child's capability to sort out all kinds of problems for themselves.

A welcoming & user-friendly place

What do people see when they walk into your facility? Is it comfortable and welcoming? Creating a small display area around the sign in/out register, with photos, programme information and friendly signage can help create a positive first impression. Does your venue send welcoming signals to the children? Are there visible activities and resources that offer some options when they arrive? Make it personal – display different children’s creations each day. Put some of your older children in charge of making signage and get their personal stamp on the programme (giving them a bit of ownership, as well).

A well-organised facility sets the scene for a humming programme and has a flow-on to reducing boredom, conflict and disruptive behaviour.

- Kids will play everywhere and with everything - so set clear boundaries where they are needed; use simple visuals (e.g. cones) as a reminder
- Have a clear plan for how and where staff will supervise: zones, timeframes; monitor your staff & encourage constant communication within the team
- Decide on equipment/resources/places that kids can “help themselves” to and make these accessible (e.g. pens & paper, drinking water, balls)
- Equipment and resources should also be as accessible as possible to staff; wheeled containers & smart storage solutions is money well-spent, especially if you need to pack-down each day
- Clear signage and obvious storage places help to get things back in the right place during clean up time
- Don’t over-use playgrounds or other special equipment; limit time and think about “going without” on some days, to avoid boredom.

Read more on-line:
OSCAR Venues
MSD Approval & Venues

Your venue: key points

Confirm your facility complies with current codes, local council requirements and check the OSCAR Standards

Use a simple set up process to create a variety of zones: go for spaces, rather than clutter; comfortable and welcoming - for kids and parents

Think about how kids will really use the facility; establish necessary boundaries & procedures; make some resources easily accessible & promote self-reliance.

Holiday Programme to do...

10 weeks to go

Collect children's feedback and ideas for next programme
Confirming venue and dates for next programme

9 weeks to go

Start shopping list for resources – replacing what is broken / used
Research new ideas – use OSCN Facebook

8 weeks to go

Contact staff re- availability for next programme – is their training up-to-date?

7 weeks to go

Finalise a programme budget
Draft activity schedule (get some staff input)

6 weeks to go

Contact excursion venues and book transport
Start shopping list for activity resources and supplies

5 weeks to go

Prepare flier and distribute
Complete risk assessments as required

4 weeks to go

Prepare staff shifts and rosters and distribute to staff
Contact / recruit casual staff

3 weeks to go

Open enrolments
Receive parent enquiries / bookings

2 weeks to go

Staff meeting: programme overview / rosters / team-building
Shopping

1 week to go

Finalise venue access / move equipment / set up / check equipment & resources / venue hazard and hygiene check
Double check excursion booking and transport arrangements
Check enrolment forms – note medical conditions etc.
Last minute shopping!
Print rolls / registers



our holiday programme staff

Your staff will have a huge impact on the success of the programme and ultimately whether children come back for the next one. Because the work is part-time/casual, be ready to recruit frequently & appoint carefully.

Staffing requirement in the OSCAR Standards

[Selected key requirements. View the full standards at www.oscarnz.org.nz]

- Ratios: in-house 1 adult to 10 children; trips 1 to 8 (AND MAY NEED TO BE LOWER, DEPENDING ON THE ACTIVITY)
- Overall management and site supervision must be by a person least 20 years of age; all adults in supervision ratios must be 16 years or over
- All staff must receive training in health & safety, child protection, behaviour guidance; a qualified first aider must be on-site at all times
- All staff must be referee-checked and police vetted (17 years and over)
- All staff have a written employment agreement; employers comply with all relevant legislation

Being a “good employer”

Most HP staff are paid, so it is likely that you will need a working knowledge of good employment practice and legislative requirements.

- Communicate clearly at the start about key aspects of the employment relationship; this will help prevent misunderstandings further on
- Be clear about the terms you are offering; a fixed term or “as and when required” are the common options
- Don’t expect staff to read everything. Explain “need to know” policies fully: police vetting; dress code; staff children in the programme etc.
- Keep informed about relevant legislation: minimum wage; break times etc.
- Check out our employment resources on-line and seek expert advice when you aren’t sure how to proceed.

CONTINUES OVER...



Because you will often be asking staff to flexible in term of their hours of work, and the tasks they undertake, there might be issues or concerns. Be prepared to work through these fairly and reasonably.

Bringing your team together

The hours and nature of HP work suits a specific person, often at a specific time in their lives, so you can expect to often be bringing new staff into your team.

- Follow a planned recruitment/induction process - there are useful OSCAR checklists on-line
- Bring on more people than you really need - to act as “on call” & relievers (*Many prefer a lower ratio such as 1 to 6 for trips*)
- Be clear as to how and when staff will be notified of shifts - an “on call” person should have fair notice (e.g. day before by a specified time) but you should be clear if there is no guarantee of work
- Give clear guidance on duties and roles, including any “grey areas” which might include cleaning (“yes we all assist with basic cleaning”) and break times - legal minimums may apply
- Use rosters to organise roles and duties; staff need to be flexible and not expect to do the same job each day, even if it is one they are good at
- Don’t overload staff meetings with information - it will put them (and you) to sleep; provide food, a quick programme overview, try some new games and play out some programme scenarios to help get communication going with the whole team.
- Be aware of the mix of experienced/new staff; ideally each new staff member needs at least 2 competent colleagues they can look to for help and a good example.

Volunteers

Some programmes, through good local relationships with high schools, churches, youth groups etc, have a significant number of volunteers in their programme.

- Volunteer staff can count in your ratios, if they meet age requirements
- What are your volunteers getting out of the programme? Create the programme to benefit them (work experience, learning, fun) and your reputation will attract more volunteers when you need them
- Offer a pathway, if they want to move into a paid position.



In an effective team everyone should be prepared to “muck in” if needed. At the same time, experienced staff should hand over routine jobs as much as possible.

Staff conduct and job performance

OSCAR work is a complex and skilful role and your staff bring to it a range of helpful qualities and experiences. The challenge is to harness this diversity and get people working together with a consistent purpose.

- Strong leadership and a good example from senior staff, working “on the floor” each day, will help other staff to see what is expected of them
- Delegation is crucial and must be ongoing; senior staff should not be constantly caught up in supervising activities and managing minor misbehaviour
- From day one, new staff need consistent encouragement to “step up”. Senior staff should monitor that they are being given that chance and that no one is undermining this process (often unintentionally)
- Staff need regular, timely feedback (immediate, on the spot) - positives for what they did well; helping them identify “what I could try next time”, when things could have been better
- Staff should commit to behaving respectfully and professionally. A firm hand (constructive & considerate) might be needed to help people set aside differences and put the team (and programme) first
- Reinforce professional standards and regularly refresh your guidelines (on confidentiality, fairness, duty of care (see *The OSCAR Staff Code of Conduct*)
- After the holidays, give staff time to go away, think about what happened and then bring any issues to a meeting about the next programme; this way they can get some perspective and put aside the small stuff and put effort into improving in areas that really matter.

More on-line:
Employment in OSCAR:
A checklist for employers

Your staff: key points

Understand good employment process and legal requirements - especially for casual staff and fixed term agreements

Expect to be recruiting frequently and have a well-planned appointment/induction process

Build a co-operative team culture with clear roles and responsibilities; ensure senior staff are appropriately delegating as much as possible



typical HP day

Children might be spending 8-10 hours each day in your HP. Clearly this needs a different approach than a 2-3 hour after school session. A suitable daily routine is the key to a centre-based HP session. There are many ways that could run each day, but if you are wondering where to start, try this and see if it works for your group.

An example of a daily routine

Approximate times, be flexible

8:30am	Children arriving, settling in, some quick, quiet, art or craft activity Self-directed active play in a set area
9:30am	Excursions depart OR some group active games OR continue as above
10:00am	Morning Tea, everyone together (20 mins)
10:30am	Start major art/craft activity OR choice of other non-disruptive activities
12:00pm	Lunch together
12:30pm	Free play/Sport/Active group games
1:30pm	Major art/craft activity OR Short excursion Continuation of morning activity / group games, sports, interests
3:00pm	Afternoon tea snack
3:30pm	Wind down time Free play, board games, puzzles, drawing, Lego, etc Programme closes



Provide just enough structure to give direction and options, but remain flexible to respond to children's changing needs and adapt to unexpected events.

Daily routine: key points

Get each day off to a good start (see tips for the very first day later ...)

- Settle kids in with a selection of low-key activities and well-allocated staff, who mingle to help kids transition into the programme as they arrive
- Have a well-managed group time once everyone has arrived. Don't be boring, with a long list of announcements (this isn't school remember) but do give a news update (e.g. anything that's different about today) and touch base on important rules and reminders.
- Have as many staff as possible at this "briefing session", involved, paying attention, united and ready to put effort into the day ahead.

The rest of the day will revolve around the various activities and tuning into children's changing energy levels and needs.

- Many holiday programmes will have 1-2 feature activities in a centre-based day, with other parts of the routine wrapped around these
- TOO SHORT? "Action kids" may finish planned activities such as crafts quickly and want to get back into something more physical; sometimes the activity just goes more quickly than you thought. "So what's next?" HAVE OPTIONS READY
- OVER TIME? A more flexible afternoon programme gives you the option to continue activities from the morning, or the previous day
- Provide regular bursts of active play, especially for high energy children; allocate staff, space and time accordingly, starting as early as needed
- Snack and lunch times are key transition points e.g. a morning snack can help with the transition to the first planned activity; in smaller programmes there can be greater flexibility with eating times
- AFTER LUNCH you might need to differentiate between the tired kids, the go hard action group and the "at my own pace" kids (still working at the morning's activity), while helping the "I'll go with the flow" group settle back into something. Also, have some activity options that are just available to children later in the day (e.g. an "end of the day" box, with some cool things to play with)
- Keep it familiar and regular but remember it's fun to mix it up sometimes; e.g. "today after lunch we're all heading down to the park for the afternoon"; "tomorrow is going to be 'orange day' so wear something suitable."



Many children will be happy to "go with the flow", if what is on offer is varied, fun and providing an element of choice.



Activities and programming

Whenever we see HP co-ordinators get together, the topic of conversation quickly turns to “what are you doing in your next HP?” Everyone wants a programme that is fresh, inviting to children and “offers good value” for parents.

Compared to OSCAR in after school time, HPs offer more scope for longer activities and a relaxed time-frame; moving at the pace of the children.

Many HPs follow a consistent daily/weekly format but remain flexible to taking a different approach if the activity or day requires it.

- “Tried and true” activities will include: art/crafts, sports, fun games, cooking, performing arts, nature activities, local outings and more substantial day trips such as movies, parks/reserves, adventure activities and playgrounds
- Keep on the lookout for what’s “new and different”, maybe picking up on movies and TV: Amazing Race, Master Chef, Harry Potter etc. or use a week-long theme to get your imagination going: pirates, outer space, circus
- Some programmes work hard on the “take home factor”: that children make attractive crafts and creations that will be valued and treasured; others let children follow their own inspiration to create and construct more freely
- Have a good variety of self-selectable activity options on-hand: easy board games, construction toys, dolls, pen/paper games, hopscotch, elastics etc.

Staff input & building ownership

- Staff input to the programme should be consistently required and encouraged; team effort and ownership grows and your staff may be more “at the coal-face” as to what children would like to be doing
- Staff will be naturally more enthused and engaged when running their own activity ideas; you might take an idea from a staff member and work out the details, resources etc. then hand it back for the delivery;
- Harness staff hobbies, skills interests and they might be happy to take on more of the preparation and contribute resources or equipment
- Encourage your staff to network with people in other HPs in your region to keep things fresh and swap ideas. There is a treasure trove of inspiration to be found on-line: Facebook; Pinterest etc

“They don’t want to do it.”

It is fairly universal in HPs that no activities (excursions aside) are strictly compulsory but there is usually a balanced approach taken to participation: varied, stimulating activities, enthusiastic delivery and encouragement from others (staff and peers) might all sway a reluctant child to get involved, but individual children might benefit from different approaches.

In the end, it is unlikely that placing undue pressure on a child will help matters and staff tend to tread carefully.

- When children don't want to join in the planned activity they need to be offered some alternative; quiet activities like word searches, knuckle bones, hang man, noughts and crosses or more active self-directed options like skipping, hopscotch or handball.
- When structured activities are on offer, it is reasonable to expect everyone to be *doing something*, even if it's a free play option like kicking a ball or reading, rather than drifting aimlessly.
- Have a staff member keep an eye on kids choosing to opt out, minimising the disruption might cause to the planned activity.
- Other staff should keep on track with the planned activity - even if it's a small group that starts with it, sometimes a few happy participants, getting on with it, will attract others to join in! It's often a good idea to have at least 2 staff allocated to a planned activity initially, one to lead and provide direction; the other staff can look out for/engage with less enthusiastic children.
- Check staff participation - are they standing back too much? Their involvement/attitude is very influential.

If a child continually opts out of activities staff need to step back and look at that child's needs and how the programme can meet them. If a quiet child is often off on their own, ask a staff member who has a good rapport with the child to check in with them. Although they are on their own, don't assume that they are unhappy or lonely.

Check with parents; they may be ok with the child “doing their own thing”, or they might have suggestions for activities/interests.



In the same situation, with different children you may need a different, possibly opposite approach to what worked last time. Ask yourself “what are the child's needs and how is the programme meeting them?”



xcursions

Most HPs will offer trips, typically 1-2 per week, that serve all kinds of purposes:

- A break from centre-based activity, fresh surroundings
- New places, new experiences, new challenges
- Showing children what their community and region “has to offer”
- Creating a buzz around the programme - something to look forward to
- A holiday feeling – kids expect to do “something different”
- Unique and positive holiday memories; fun with their friends
- A good price for something that families maybe can’t afford on their own

There are many good reasons for trips; each HP will work out what they can offer.

- Some offer more trips, in the case that their venue might be needed for other activities/user groups.
- “Going local” can keep transport costs down and help connect children to their community: pet shop, fire station, art gallery, local reserve, beach combing, skate park
- Some HPs have suitable facilities (pools, movies, parks, etc.) very close by.
- REVERSE TRIPS: *bring the special activities and experiences in*; often a cheaper option than going there (especially for smaller programmes); or buddy up with a nearby programme to share the costs e.g. music/gym/circus skill tutors; bouncy castles; kayak instructors (if you have use of the school pool); bike/skate instructors.

Where ever you take a trip to, have a plan for what you’ll do, don’t expect that “the trip will do all the work.”

HOW MANY TRIPS? Trips have an impact on the pacing of your programme and many HPs have moved away from a offering a lot of trips (3-4 per week), not only because of cost, but also because children attending the entire programme were ending their holidays exhausted. So while trips are usually “expected” in a HP, there can be a lot of variation in how that expectation is met.



Will you charge extra for trip days? Some programmes prefer to keep a uniform cost over each day, but many do charge extra. What can your programme afford?

Struggling for ideas?

Try programming with themes: At the Circus, Lion King, Amazing Race, Underwater Adventure or tap into whatever is happening: Olympics, Matariki.... Once you have a theme for the week, ideas flow a bit easier.

Recycle! Resources, ideas, programme plans. Start a file, store it , make a few notes about how it worked and then go back in a year and use it again...

Have you tried these?

paper hats	pop-up cards	chalk drawing
making your own skittles	weaving with paper	water bombs
finger painting	print-making	puppets
masks	tangrams	stilts
scary stories	picture frames	secret codes

Do it yourself!

“I’m bored!” Self-directed activities teach kids to make their own fun. Your help might be needed to get them started.

playing shops	word search puzzles	tiddly winks
hop scotch	leap frog	skipping
four square	knuckle bones	follow the leader

Bag of tricks

A bunch of kids and nothing else....what can you do? Once they know it, many of these will become self-directed activities.

Captain’s Coming	Sleeping Lions	Go Home Stay Home
Duck Duck Goose	I Spy	Traffic Light
Simon Says	Octopus	Good Morning Mr Judge
Hot Potato	Cat & Mouse	Bang
20 questions	Stuck in the Mud	Wink Murder
Heads Down Thumbs Up	What’s the Time, Mr Wolf	I Wrote a Letter to my Mum
Marco Polo		



Age-appropriate activities

One of the defining characteristics of OSCAR is the wide age-range of participating children and being “age-appropriate” is one of the consistent challenges for HP staff. Even within the age span of 5-8 years there can be a significant variance in physical skills, cognitive ability and emotional response. The common challenges this causes will be:

- Getting activities started / instructing at different developmental levels
- Maintaining focus and engagement in the activity (varied attention spans)
- Managing frustration, which could be because of lack of skills, or impatience from the more skilled participants

It can be quite feasible to programme for your 5-8 year olds as a single, yet diverse group. Some larger programmes do cater differently for their 5-6’s and then have a separate middle group.

Where this sort of separation might not be an option (due to venue size, available staff/resources and overall group size), activities can be set up to work at several levels and possibly move at different rates for different ages/abilities. E.g. making puppets: a five-year old might make a very basic puppet and move on quickly to playing with it. An eight-year old might add clothing, a hat, props and then design a skit with a friend and their puppet.

More capable children might like to help others and take on elements of leadership (although it is better to let this develop naturally rather than forcing older children into helping roles). With this sort of approach, a mixed age grouping can become an asset and children learn to appreciate peers of different ages and abilities. Siblings may bring particular challenges to a HP. While many sibling relationships can be relatively harmonious and tolerant, where there is a more often friction and conflict, it may be advisable, even within a mixed-age setting, to let some siblings take a break from each other.



Some programmes may provide choice by offering two or more activities at a time (maybe geared towards different ages). Sometimes groups might rotate through different activities, circuit - style.



Older children

As children get older still, 9 years and up, the changing needs strongly indicate that even smaller HPs would be wise to provide some different programming for this older group. This doesn't mean that an entirely separate programme should be run for older children, though where facilities have been available, some very successful services along these lines have been established.

Most of the time, what is feasible is to provide some of the following elements:

- Separate space, even if for just some part of the day
- Age-appropriate supervision that is more “hands-off”, involving staff who relate well to this age group
- More responsibility for routine tasks: snacks, setting up activities, access to different resources & equipment
- Some activities (even if only once or twice per week) that cater to their different interests and developmental needs (such as a higher level of challenge and nothing that looks like it is really for “little kids”), including different excursions where feasible
- More consultation / input regarding activities, resources etc.
- Reasonable expectations from staff that sometimes, especially for the pre-teen group, they just want to just chill out.

In some circumstances, it might be worth considering if a different HP might be able to cater better for an older child, but often it is the case, where there are younger siblings, that parents prefer all their children to attend a single HP.

In the end, older children can be a great force for positive influence and bring energy, humour and some helpful input into your HP. While older, they are still kids and while they like to keep adults at more of a distance, they still need adults to provide stability, patient oversight and activities to nurture their emerging sense of who they are and where they fit in the world.

More on-line:
Doing Our Own Thing
Olders in OSCAR



Set aside time to look back at the close of the holidays, at how the programme went. A simple conversation with your children can give you a good idea of what you are doing right or wrong. No one is more honest than kids!



ood

Because they run through school hours, most HPs ask parents to provide their children with similar “school day” food and snacks. Food can also be part of the programming, so that cooking, learning about food and promoting of healthy food choices and a varied diet, can all feature in a HP. Going further, food activities like a “ready, steady cook” race/challenge, or cup cake decorating provide a fun focus on food, creativity or acquiring the practical “life skills” of cooking and serving food. Food is also an expression of culture and a nice way to bring people together, so some HPs have shared lunches, where all the children sit down for a meal together, picnic or “restaurant” style, where much can be made of the presentation, serving and complete experience of eating together.

All food activities should be supported with appropriate procedures such as:

- Consulting with parents around dietary needs, cultural practices, allergies
- Clear communication with all staff about special food needs, allergies
- Safe and hygienic storage and food preparation
- Promotion to children of good hygiene and respect for food
- Provision of snack food to promote healthy eating choices and enjoyment of a variety of food types
- Sensible monitoring of children’s food and fluid intake each day.

Programming: key points

Have a reliable routine but remain flexible. Change it up some days.

Children should have choices/options - including variable levels to cater for different ages/abilities, to minimise possible frustration

Be constantly on the lookout for activity ideas – get involved in local/regional networks and use the on-line community – Facebook, Pinterest etc.

Recycle your programmes – keep old plans on file and go back to them after a couple of years, especially theme ideas.

Staff are more likely to put have enthusiasm and energy when it’s their ideas that are being put into action. Encourage and support their input.



Children with special needs

Many children with special needs enjoy spending time in HPs. Some may be operated by a “special school” or a disability support group. Other children might be “mainstreamed” in much the same way as they are during their school day.

Education legislation does not usually apply to OSCAR services. For this reason, our obligation to operate inclusively, similar to any provider of services, comes from the Human Rights Act. This means that all children and their families have a right to fair, respectful treatment and no child can be excluded from a HP solely because they have a disability. (Read more in the “OSCAR Legal Resource Kit”)

It is important to not be discriminatory when children are being enrolled in your programme e.g. by requiring the parent of a special needs children to fill in extra paper work or put in front of them additional rules or requirements.

Ideally, you will be able to meet with parents of children with special needs and develop an understanding of how you could cater for the child and what support they might need to enjoy their time in your programme: activities that they would enjoy; any safety issues; extra care required etc.

Many HP operators find parents very willing to share information and tips on the best way to care for their child and are appreciative of this effort being made. In many instances HPs will move ahead and accept a child on a trial basis and see how it goes.

“Opening the door” is only the start. All children need social opportunities and rewarding activities on a daily basis to nurture their development. For children who may be spending a lot of time in specialised therapy and intensive educational programmes, there is also the need to have a break: rest, recharge and have fun.

More on-line:
[Out of School with ASD
ADHD Guidelines](#)



Each child is an individual and there are a whole lot of factors that come together when inclusion is successful. Sometimes it doesn't work out but that doesn't mean it won't for the another child at another time.



Health & safety in a holiday programme

Programmes are safest when everyone involved works together (staff, children, parents, other people in the facility). There needs to be a systematic approach to checking and maintaining a safe environment. Staff should have a good understanding of their “duty of care” and supervision responsibilities.

Health & safety in the OSCAR Standards

[Selected key requirements. View the full standards at www.oscarnz.org.nz]

- Programmes comply with all relevant legislation including the Health & Safety in Employment Act.
- The health and safety system includes regular safety checks, staff training and written risk assessment of higher risk activities, as well as emergency preparedness (including drills) and provision for the care of unwell children
- An appropriate standard of cleanliness and hygiene is maintained
- All health and safety practices are consistently carried out and documented.
- Programmes have a comprehensive child protection policy.

Programme supervision - the essential skill

Supervision is the foundation of a safe programme and it's the most important task that your staff must master. Senior staff should monitor all new staff until they are meeting your requirements for supervision consistently. Common concerns may be:

- Poor supervision due to use of cell phones or chatting to other staff
- Staff involved in activity with children but not watching the wider area
- Staff leaving an area or activity without notifying another staff member and ensuring coverage is maintained
- Lack of confidence to resolve minor behaviour issues.

Effective supervision requires staff to be actively involved, interacting with children and thinking ahead. Most staff will learn this on-the-job. Direct and clear feedback from colleagues will help this learning process along - which is why a programme culture of open and respectful communication is so important.



A SAFE PROGRAMME IS A FUN PROGRAMME. Children understand that "there needs to be rules to keep us safe" and that "no one is having fun if someone is hurt."

What is duty of care?

“Duty of Care” is a legal principal that underpins effective supervision and professional conduct. “Negligence” is a breach of the duty of care and may arise if staff fail to follow your programme safety guidelines and an accident occurs that was “reasonably foreseeable and preventable.”

If staff have not had experience of “looking after” children before (their own, their siblings or other people’s) then they may not fully appreciate the seriousness of this duty. Staff need to approach their role diligently, act responsibly at all times and give proper attention and effort when carrying out the tasks they are assigned.

Your safety management system

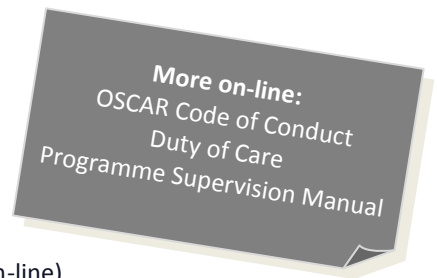
Being “systematic” about safety means setting up rules and procedures that apply consistently and are carried out to a clear schedule.

Daily safety practices might include:

- Roll calls and head counts
- Rules reminders—general and specific e.g. playgrounds / pools
- Start of the day venue safety check/ playground safety check
- Sunscreen and hat check
- Buddy check - for walking groups when off-site
- Pre-excursion briefing and check-list
- Toilet supervision – on and off-site

Other regular processes include:

- Maintaining a list of children with allergies and medical conditions
- Evacuation drill / Earthquake drill
- Activity/excursion risk assessment
- Staff safety briefing/scenarios (examples on-line)



Yes, there can be a lot to do, which is why these tasks should be delegated out to your staff team. If the person responsible is away, it should be clear who will do it instead e.g. collecting and checking the roll after a fire evacuation.



Programmes are more likely to be unsafe if they are poorly planned - “free play”/unstructured parts of the day need particularly careful supervision.

Child protection - safeguarding your programme and your staff

The OSCAR Standards require an organisational commitment to protecting children from abuse and to act appropriately where there are concerns. This includes:

- a comprehensive child protection policy, communicated to staff and parents
- clear procedures for responding to allegations or concerns
- training for all staff in recognising abuse and responding appropriately
- clear guidelines to safeguard staff when working with children

INAPPROPRIATE, UNSAFE PEOPLE DO LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK WITH CHILDREN. When appointing staff, it is essential to inform applicants that your programme has robust procedures for background checking and supervision of staff on-the-job and make sure these procedures are being followed.

Safety on excursions

Excursions create a higher level of uncertainty and therefore greater risk. It is recommended that you consult carefully with staff about excursions and plan well:

- Has someone on your staff been there before?
- Do staff have the right skills/experience to supervise the activities?
- What support/staff will be provided by the facility owner and what are their safety requirements?
- Where will you arrive at the facility and disembark from transport?
- What will happen in the event of delay or mishap en route to the facility and has there been a realistic allowance for travel time?

Use this discussion to create a written risk assessment that records how you will manage safety concerns while off-site. This should include:

- Ratios - many HPs prefer 1 to 6 group sizes
- Allocate children to trip groups that match staff abilities and experience
- Use of wrist-bands or some way for each child to carry your contact number (many programmes find lanyards or safety pins too much hassle)
- A pre-excursion list of equipment and checks before leaving
- Use you networks for tips from HPs that have made the same excursion.



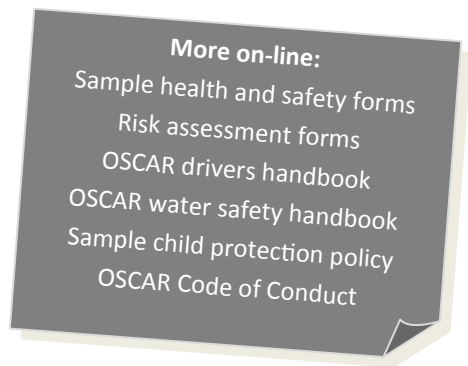
Safety is paramount but that doesn't mean staff have to be constantly worried that children will be injured. Children need the chance to play and to "be children".

Learning more about safe practices

Although there is an element of “common sense” involved, keeping safe in OSCAR requires an more expert awareness of likely safety risks and their management, that is relevant for the situations OSCAR services will find themselves in.

People’s awareness of safety can vary greatly, based on their individual experiences and attitudes: have you ever provided first aid to someone with a broken bone; been lost in the outdoors; witnessed a drowning incident? It’s can be a case of “you don’t know, what you don’t know.”

Fortunately, there is a mass of expertise in the sector, on preventing accidents and managing risks. We strongly recommend you seek contact with experienced OSCAR people by networking, attending work-shops and contacting OSCAR support bodies. Safety is a continual learning process and your confidence and competence will build if you seek out opportunities to expand your knowledge.



Health & safety: key points

From a safety perspective, time spent in planning and communicating “the plan” is time well-spent, especially for higher risk and off-site activities

Safe practices are both a legal requirement and professional obligation; it pays to be systematic and to hold your staff accountable that proper procedures are followed, especially those for supervision of children

A safe programme does not need to be overly restrictive on children’s play, but staff need to use careful judgement and have an awareness of “what can go wrong”

Promote a positive “safety culture”; where it’s ok to ask questions, mistakes are viewed constructively and people can learn from experience.



Getting ready to enrol children

When parents enrol their children, important information is given and gathered. The enrolment process should be well-organised, so that parents receive clear information and a positive first impression of your programme.

Promoting your programme

In some locations there are a lot of HPs to choose from. In others, parents may not know there is a local HP. Make your programme as visible as possible.

- If you already offer an after school service start creating a positive buzz with the children attending; maintain an up-to-date data base of parents and keep them in the loop about the next programme
- Place signage outside your facility, or on a nearby main road
- Use a web-site or social media to raise the profile of your programme
- Produce a flier giving a snapshot of activities and trips that are planned for each day - select a few parents to look at a draft programme & give feedback
- Programme information will usually be released 3-4 weeks before term end, with existing customers often getting advance notice
- Schools may be willing to promote your programme (but not if there is a HP in the school already). Many HPs promote on-line or by email only, no longer dropping pamphlets with schools or by post

ON ENROLMENT, A LEGAL AGREEMENT IS FORMED WITH THE PARENT

- You are obligated to deliver the programme as stated (except where circumstances are out of your hands).
- The OSCAR Standards outline what information to include on an enrolment form; parent details must be up-to-date which is why most programmes ask parents to re-enrol before each programme
- Parents must be informed and give their consent for children to participate in activities, such as swimming, where there may be a higher level of risk (or to raise concerns and maybe look for an alternative that day).




Positive word-of-mouth is still a very strong force for boosting enrolments; running a successful programme may be the best advertising.

Receiving enrolments and fees

“Is it school holidays again already?” HP time does creep up on many parents, so expect your busiest enrolment time to be the last 3 weeks of term & plan for it.

This can be a stressful period as you juggle staff, update rolls and sometimes turn unhappy people away. If you have anyone helping with this, now would be a good time to make them a nice cup of tea!

- Many programmes keep their rolls open right up to and past the programme commencement, and call on casual staff as numbers change. But if you suspect that you will be full and cutting off late enrolments then save yourself a huge headache and tell parents well in advance.
- After all the pressure of keeping on top of paperwork, don't let all your good work be undone by a big batch of bad debts. Nearly all HPs are very strict about fees being payable up front and you should have a clear policy about cancellations and refunds.
- Where a parent is applying for OSCAR Fee Subsidy there is likely to be a waiting period before their Work & Income application is confirmed and it might be several weeks after the holiday period before the payment shows up in your bank account. **DO WHAT YOU CAN TO REMIND AND ASSIST THESE PARENTS TO ENROL SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.**
- Once a parent has enrolled and received all the programme information, don't expect them to remember it all. They might only have given it a glance. Have your “need to know” info - daily schedules, reminders, what to bring - all on hand by the sign in/out area (a white-board comes in handy here).



More on-line:
Sample fliers
Programme info
Enrolment forms
Fees policy



Parents may leave enrolling till the absolute last minute - sometimes you might have very few bookings until the last week. Don't panic!

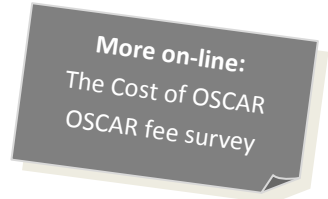


ees, finances and budgets

When you are putting a lot of effort into developing a successful programme with dedicated staff and happy children, it makes sense to check it's financially viable.

Can your HP “pay it’s way?” A simple budget will give you some idea:

- Income: Fees (e.g. 30 children x \$190 per week)
 (Parent payment + any Work & Income Subsidy)
 MSD Contract funding*
- Expenses: Wages (usually 50-70% of expenditure)
 Facility Rental
 Transport and Excursion costs
 Consumables (food, materials, equipment)



EACH HP HAS IT’S OWN NUMBERS - DON’T EXPECT 2 BUDGETS TO LOOK THE SAME.

* MSD contract funding gives an income boost to many HPs, but the fund is limited and already mostly allocated. Please register through the OSCARNZ web-site to receive updates on availability of contract funding for new services.

On the income side, what is a reasonable fee to charge?

- Find out what other HPs in your area charge
- Take note of the hours & activities offered - this varies a lot; many HPs charge more for trips; “before/after care” is often an extra charge
- Parents may be eligible to claim Work and Income Fee Subsidy but what if they aren’t? Is your full fee affordable for a 2-3 child family?

With a rough budget you should be able to set some spending guidelines/limits.

Activities/trips have to fit what the programme can afford.

- Some expenses will vary depending on the number of children enrolled: staff, activity costs, food. Transport & venue rental may be a fixed cost
- Centre-based days run cheaply can help offset more expensive trips
- Some HPs benefit from low rentals or staff costs absorbed into other parts of an organisation; after school programme resources can help offset HP costs
- Smaller programmes need to manage trip costs carefully to remain viable.



Very few holiday programmes make a profit but to be sustainable you should aim to cover your costs.



Running your programme: THE FIRST DAY

Getting off to a good start will help establish a strong programme culture and boost the confidence of staff to manage the many challenges ahead of them.

There are a number of key tasks to work through on the first day, mostly in the first few hours of the programme!

- Venue and equipment checks: safety, activity plan etc.
- Settling children especially those who are clinging to their parents
- Group/team-based activities; fun ice-breakers; free-play options to ease kids into “holiday time” - not too much pressure
- Meeting parents, especially newbies, answering questions etc.
- Admin. tasks like: last minute enrolments; finalising days booked; excursion numbers; following up on incomplete enrolment forms
- Bringing the group together for a first meeting & transition to activities; staff introductions, safety, drills, housekeeping; keep it fun(ny) and involving

Right from day one, delegation and sharing the workload is essential. Even in a small centre, be clear on roles. *“I’ll be mostly dealing with parents for the next half hour, so can you circulate around all the kids and help them settle.”*

- Children arrive in dribs and drabs, maybe sudden rushes - be ready to adjust; limit your space early on, so staff can communicate easily and work flexibly
- Have plenty of staff on the floor early; encourage them to be pro-active; watch for staff who aren’t interacting and direct them where needed
- Are staff visible? T-shirts/lanyards help parents/kids to spot them
- Put the right staff in the right roles to make a good first impression with parents; there shouldn’t be any need for friction or grumpiness
- Parents need confidence in you; staff should understand this and act accordingly (anxious parents might need a follow up call that things are all ok)
- Are there staff on hand that can help with other languages?
- MAKE IT VISUAL - have “need to know” info on display: use a whiteboard



Take this chance to “set the scene”: a friendly, enthusiastic “united front” of staff who are ready to make an effort and all on the same page.



eeeping going

Some common challenges and ideas for getting through them.

Customer service

- Concerned parents: senior staff should be free enough to give parents time when needed; allocate other staff to leading activities
- Grumpy parents: stay positive, learn their names, build a rapport; not everyone is at their best at the beginning and end of the day
- Incidents/accidents/dramas: children will tend to give a more emotive and distorted picture of what happened; be proactive and collect information to get your report to parents ASAP
- Complaints: all staff represent your programme, if the complaint comes to them, the initial response must be professional and concerned (with follow up through the proper process); let the parent explain fully their problem and don't minimise it ("it's no big deal") or appear like you don't care.

"Too friendly"

- Staff should observe appropriate personal boundaries; this means being aware of showing favouritism to certain children, and not sharing personal information or gossiping about children and their families
- Teach staff (especially younger staff) that it is not unfriendly to say: "no, that's private and in this job I am not allowed to talk about that."
For more guidelines, refer to the "OSCAR Staff Code of Conduct"

A flexible plan

- On any day you may have to manage: staff shortages, equipment problems, larger/smaller group sizes/unexpected weather; any experienced HP operator will say "be flexible", meaning be ready to adapt, call in extra help, change the schedule; this is especially important where there may be safety concerns (such as staff shortages on trip days)
- Make sure any changes are clearly communicated to parents and children, including reasons why



CONSTANT COMMUNICATION IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF YOUR PROGRAMME.

Keep it flowing through your team! Make sure information, issues or concerns are passed on to the right person as soon as possible.

Phones and other personal devices

- Most HPs limit the use of technology in their centres, and some do completely ban personal devices
- It can help to set aside a time of day where children can use phones etc. but staff should maintain constant supervision
- Inform staff of what to watch for: inappropriate photos of programme staff and children; offensive and harmful messaging; parents being messaged during programme etc.
- Be aware of the risk of theft and manage accordingly; provide safe storage but have “at owner’s risk” policy
- Consider asking children and parents to sign an agreement about appropriate use; reserve the right to confiscate a device being misused.

Behaviour challenges - a general guide

- Children are constantly developing social skills; they will make mistakes and this will help them learn about getting along with others
- Look at what might be causing children to “go off track”; frustration is one common factor; is the activity too hard or the waiting time too long? Set children up for success in situations; use planning to reduce frustration; good supervision should see ahead to where kids might start getting into difficulty
- Conflict is part of life and children can learn to work through problems - often more effectively and simply than adults; teach children to deal with small things (by saying “sorry”; taking turns; speaking assertively etc.); then these minor problems will be less likely to turn into bigger incidents later on if someone “loses it”, with more serious fall-out
- Make sure you have a clear and consistent process for serious misbehaviour and exclusion; all children and their families are entitled to fair treatment and clear communication about “where things stand” if there is a serious incident or persistent disruption.

More on-line:
Excluding children
Behaviour guidance:
tips & workshops



No one sees excluding a child as a success, but sometimes it turns out that the child ends up in a better place because of it.



SD OSCAR Standards

These are a voluntary set of standards and a requirement for receiving OSCAR funding. In general terms the standards require:

- A child-focused environment that meets all legislative requirements
- Written policies and procedures for the programme operation
- A sound health and safety system that complies with current legislation
- Commitment to child protection, including a comprehensive policy for responding to concerns and allegations of abuse
- Supervision practices that ensure children are well-monitored at all times, including staff ratios and minimum age requirements
- Competent management of the service, including procedures to ensure appropriate staff are employed, including referee checks and police vetting

[Selected key requirements. View the full standards at www.oscarnz.org.nz]

Any service can apply to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) for approval under these standards. You can operate an after school programme or holiday programme without MSD Approval, but we strongly recommend that any service taking care of school age children take note of the standards and seek further advice about how to proceed.

Fee subsidy

Parents can apply for financial assistance from Work and Income to help with their fees. The programme must be Approved by MSD under the OSCAR Standards. Other eligibility criteria apply and are explained on the Work and Income website www.workandincome.govt.nz or phone 0800 559 009

MSD Contracts

Some eligible services are contracted by MSD to provide OSCAR programmes. The MSD does not guarantee funding to all OSCAR programmes and any available funding will probably be targeted to areas where programmes are most needed. If new funding becomes available, this will be notified through sector networks. Please register for sector updates at the OSCAR NZ website www.oscarnz.org.nz.

If your programme is already contracted by MSD, please ensure you refer to your contract for specific details/requirements and if ANY of your programme information changes, including contact details, ensure you let notify MSD as soon as possible: oscarcontracts@msd.govt.nz



raining opportunities & networking

The MSD OSCAR Standards require you to have staff who are adequately trained to carry out their duties but there is no required qualification for OSCAR work.

- You must have a certified first aider on-site at all times. No standard is specified, but CPR skills would be expected, as well as response to allergies, fractures, impact injuries as well as common injuries like sprains, bruises, grazing, sun burn etc.
- Health & safety legislation requires staff to be sufficiently trained to carry out their duties and monitored until they are up to the required level
- Child protection and behaviour management are also strongly recommended areas for training
- Each staff member should have a simple training plan, identifying areas where they could be developing/extending skills and competencies

OSCAR networks provide occasional workshops which are based in various main centres but most programmes supplement external training with their own in-house induction and staff development. Keep a record of when these happen—minutes, diary notes, who was there etc..

Reach out to other HPs for support and ideas. In many regions there are get-togethers, where you can network and catch up with what is happening in OSCAR.

Networking ideas: <http://www.oscarnz.org.nz/OSCAR-regional.html>

Training info: <http://www.oscarnz.org.nz/training.html>

Resources on-line to help with your training:

<http://www.oscarnz.org.nz/resources.html>

- The OSCAR Staff Code of Conduct
- OSCAR Water Safety Handbook
- OSCAR Drivers Handbook



Link with OSCAR on-line for
news and updates...
Including training and net-
working opportunities
www.oscarnz.org.nz



Be realistic about the amount of formal training you can expect from your staff, most of who are part-time/casual. Cover the essentials and focus on "on-the-job" learning and regular, timely feedback.



seful contacts

Out of School Care Network

oscn@xtra.co.nz
09 366 0320
www.oscn.org.nz
www.oscarnz.org.nz

OSCAR Network in Christchurch

admin@oscarnetwork.org.nz
(03) 379 3915
www.oscarnetwork.org.nz

OSCAR Contracts

oscar_contracts@MSD.govt.nz

WINZ Subsidies

www.workandincome.govt.nz
0800 559 009

My contacts:
