

MSD OSCAR Accreditation (Previously MSD OSCAR Approval)

Key points for OSCAR Staff

Background

The OSCAR sector is not governed by any specific regulations. An operator of an OSCAR service must however comply with relevant legislation such as the Health and Safety in Employment Act, Employment Relations Act, Vulnerable Children Act, Privacy Act etc.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) Accreditation Standards for OSCAR services are a set of operating requirements which are in place over a large proportion of the OSCAR sector, so that services can be eligible for OSCAR Fee Subsidy and/or MSD OSCAR Funding.

The requirements for OSCAR in the MSD standards include:

- Policies to safeguard children and promote their wellbeing and development
- Staffing ratios and minimum staffing levels, age requirements etc.
- Employment requirements: background checking, police vetting, induction training, employment agreements etc.
- Health and safety procedures: regular facility checks; emergency drills; risk assessment etc.
- Enrolment, attendance and sign in/out procedures
- Various management requirements: financial management, record-keeping, responding to complaints etc.

MSD Assessors will usually visit the programme every three years to renew the Accreditation and at this time they may review programme paper work such as attendance records, enrolment forms, risk assessment forms, safety check lists, incident reports and notes from staff meetings. For this reason, it is important that all staff record-keeping is legible, accurate and up-to-date.

Child-centred services

The standards require that the programme is responsive to the needs of children and families - demonstrating a “client-centred” approach. This means that the welfare and interests of children are the first and paramount consideration for the programme and all staff. Required policies include:

- The programme recognises and caters for the interests, strengths and backgrounds of individual children.
- Children have regular opportunities for participation, choice and input into the programme.
- Staff utilise positive approaches to guiding children’s behaviour, applied consistently across the programme, with individual approaches for children as required.
- Staff pro-actively respond to concerns about children’s safety/wellbeing – this includes incident reporting, communicating concerns to the programme supervisor and following required procedures for responding to any suspected abuse or mistreatment of children.
- The programme responds effectively to accidents / incidents involving children, or if children become unwell while at the programme.

Privacy

The programme is required to keep private information stored securely and also to respect confidentiality when a child or family member shares personal information with a staff member. It is usually not appropriate to share this information with anyone else, without permission from the person concerned. There are exceptions, if there are concerns about the safety or welfare of a child. If in doubt, staff should consult with senior colleagues.

Supervision and safety: staffing requirements

Under the Standards, an OSCAR programme is required to provide competent and appropriate supervision for children at all times:

- a minimum of two staff effectively supervise children at all times
- staff must be located within sight and/or sound of the children they are supervising
- a staff to child ratio of one staff member to 10 children on-site and one staff member to eight children off-site.
- a qualified first aid person must be on-site at all times

The standards also require that staff receive appropriate induction training.

OSCAR services are also obligated under law to ensure that their staff members actively participate in all safety processes at a programme. This means that staff take responsibility for asking questions when they need to and raising any concerns.

Other safety procedures include:

- regular evacuation drills are carried out and records kept of them
- maintaining safety when children are being dropped to and collected from the programme
- the process to locate an expected child who does not arrive at the programme, to ensure that they are safe
- that children are only released to individuals who are authorised on the enrolment form, or as notified by the child's parent/guardian.