

WORK BY COMMISSION STAFF WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – “KIDS’ TIME”

Introduction

Kids’ Time is a policy of the Commission for Children and Young People. It is one of the ways we encourage staff to maintain an active connection with the children and young people of NSW. This connection can be achieved through a range of activities from volunteering with an external agency to organising events for kids, hosted by the Commission. Staff participation in Kids’ Time is voluntary.

The values of the Commission for Children and Young People are particularly relevant to the Kids’ Time policy and both influence and are influenced by this policy. The values of the Commission are;

To us, kids are paramount;
We explore possibilities and create opportunities;
We are honest and fair;
We practice what we preach;
We have commitment to the work of the organisation and are willing to develop the organisation;
We work collaboratively and respectfully
We support and encourage each other; and
We make our workplace open, friendly and fun.

In implementing this policy, staff should be aware of the risk that, as employees of the Commission, some assumptions will be made about them. Organisations and members of the public may assume that Commission staff;

- § have an expert level of knowledge regarding children’s behaviour and issues;
- § have a high degree of competence in working directly with children and young people;
- § are safe and protective in all of their dealings with children and young people.

As a result, it is important that Commission staff are able to identify their strengths and limitations and articulate these clearly with the organisations that they are working with. Any issues that arise should be immediately discussed with the staff members’ supervisor.

The key aspect of Kids’ Time activities is the nature of the relationship which the staff member will be establishing with the kids involved. It is a relationship where the staff member stands alongside the child or young person rather than in a family role or a professional role. It is standing in the child’s shoes that facilitates your understanding of the child’s world.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide specific opportunities for staff to see the world through the eyes of children and young people outside of their professional and family roles. This scheme is one of the ways through which staff may understand a broader range of children and young people's experiences. This will:

- help maintain our understanding of childhood and children;
- provide a way of avoiding claims that Commission staff are "office-bound" or out of touch; and
- establish a point of contact with the Commission for the children and young people with whom we have direct contact.

Kids' Time is also a professional development opportunity for staff and should be discussed as part of the Performance Development Process.

Policy Statement

Staff, including trainees, either substantively appointed to the Commission for Children and Young People or temporarily attached to it for longer than six months are able to participate in Kids' Time.

The arrangements will be considered part of normal work roles; will be performed either during bandwidth or after hours with appropriate recognition and will encompass activities, involving children and young people.

Staff are encouraged to seek help from their managers in locating Kids' Time opportunities and in making applications for Kids' Time.

Kids' Time may be implemented in a number of ways and these will be at the discretion of the Commission. Staff are required to negotiate the specifics of each Kids' Time proposal with their supervisor, and all requests will be considered. Approval may not be given in every circumstance. Kids' Time, for example, may not be approved when;

- the activity is a part of your usual role within the Commission, for example running a children's focus group for a Commission project which you are working on;
- the activity predominantly involves your own children. (However, Kids' Time may be approved for groups that your child is connected to – for example, a reading group at your child's school.)

Commitment by Commission:

In implementing Kids' Time, the Commission will;

§ Consider all requests by staff to participate in or organise activities with children and young people.

- § Encourage staff to participate and provide assistance to do so.
- § Recognise Kids' Time commitments in the allocation of work to staff and in discussions regarding workload.
- § Allow Kids' Time to be performed during normal 'bandwidth' hours. Where this is not possible, give recognition, on an equivalent basis, to any time devoted to Kids' Time outside bandwidth hours. The usual employment entitlements will apply in such circumstances including full recognition of hours worked, workers' compensation etc.
- § If requested to do so, use Executive Team members to make contact, and be the conduit, in any discussions between Commission staff, identified external agencies or volunteer centres in which staff indicate an interest in working.
- § Have the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people as their primary consideration.

Commitment by Individual:

In implementing the Kids' time policy, individual staff members will;

- § Negotiate the specifics of any Kids' Time proposal with their supervisor.
- § Obtain the approval of the Directors or the Commissioner (for the Executive Team) prior to engaging in any arrangements. (Initial approval is given by the staff member's supervisor, final approval by the supervisor's manager).
- § Keep your supervisors informed of progress in the activities. Keep the Directors informed of any significant proposed changes to the arrangements. As well, provide brief verbal reports on developments at staff meetings or team meetings.
- § At all times, act in accordance with the Commission's Code of Conduct and Ethics and the Commission's Risk of Harm Reporting Policy.
- § At all times, have the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people as their primary consideration.

Operation of the Scheme:

Kids' Time can be undertaken individually, in pairs, small groups or teams. Kids' Time is a flexible policy that could include, for example;

- § an ongoing commitment to one organisation,
- § a one off event with an organisation,
- § an event hosted by the Commission.

Staff who wish to participate in Kids Time should begin the process by discussing this with their manager, who will provide support through out the process. This could include providing assistance with locating opportunities and agencies, negotiating with agencies as well as supporting staff in the lead up to and throughout the activity, as required.

Prior to engaging in any Kids' Time activity, approval must be obtained from the Directors, and/or the Commissioner, using the accompanying form (Tab A). Approval may not be given in every circumstance.

Staff should not devote more than 70 hours to Kids' Time activities within a 12 month period. Kids' Time hours accrue under normal flexi-time agreements for staff who work under flex arrangements. For staff working under standard hours, Kids' Time hours are accrued under a time in lieu arrangement which must be negotiated with their supervisor.

Approval, once given, will remain in force for 12 months or until notification of discontinuation, or of variation, is received from the individual.

Any significant changes in arrangements will require written approval of the Directors and/or Commissioner prior to implementation.

Date Approved: September 2005