

Training is important for the professional development of carers and for the benefit of the children and families who use their scheme. Traditionally there has been a lack of recognition for carers and the work they do in their own homes. This can involve working long hours, often with little contact with adults and other carers. While training is important for increasing skills and knowledge, it can also provide carers with a sense of confidence and professionalism in their work and provide opportunities for networking with other professionals. Carers and coordination unit staff need to have knowledge of child development and child care practice to sufficiently implement the standards of care indicated in these principles.

## What training is relevant to every day practice?

Many carers and staff in family day care hold a formal qualification in childcare, education or nursing and all carers must hold a current first aid certificate. The diverse nature of family day care schemes and providers means that some types of training may be relevant to some carers and not to others.

Training can be categorised into two areas: formal or recognised training, where certificates of attainments or formal qualifications are the result; and informal training where the focus is on improving skills and knowledge through reflection and interaction. It is important that carers and staff seek training that best suits their individual needs and that is relevant to everyday practice. However, quality outcomes for children in care must be the focus, whatever form of training is undertaken.

## What is formal or recognised training?

### Vocational Education and Training

Nationally recognised training is provided by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) who must be registered with the Department of Education, Science and Training. RTOs provide Vocational and Educational Training (VET) courses and modules of study. RTOs may operate in the public sector, such as TAFE colleges, or in the private arena under a variety of college or institute names. The National Training Information Service (NTIS) is an organisation that provides information on vocational education. Carers can visit the NTIS website ([www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au)) to check if an RTO offers accredited training or to access information on courses and qualifications. A range of courses can be accessed through public and private RTOs. These include short courses that may focus on a single topic, and/or formal award courses such as a Certificate III in Children's Services.

### Higher Education

Universities also offer nationally recognised training commonly called higher education. Degree and diploma courses in early childhood teacher education

may be offered through universities. Some universities work in collaboration with RTOs to offer courses that recognise and credit Diploma level qualifications. This credit can mean that the time required to complete a course of study at university is considerably shorter.

## Time frames and access to training

Attending classes may not be a suitable option for many carers due to the long hours they work. Many RTOs and universities now offer courses using time frames and delivery methods that will suit the individual needs of carers and staff.

### Time Frames

- Certificate III and Diploma in Children's Services courses can take between six months and four years depending on the number of modules attempted and the time allowed by the RTO for their completion
- short courses offered through RTOs that focus on individual topics may be offered as one or two day courses. These smaller modules of study attract a certificate of attainment on completion and may be credited to make broader VET courses of study shorter
- university courses also have a range of time spans depending on the method of study, the credit on entry to the course and the pace of study chosen by the student

### Delivery Methods

Courses are now offered in a variety of delivery methods that have increased access to study. These methods come under the broad heading of 'flexible delivery learning'. Flexible delivery methods can also offer the opportunity for learners to engage in self paced learning so they can determine the time and pace at which they will study. Some methods may include:

- online modules of study, print based learning packages to use at home
- interactive computer modules
- phone or video link lectures
- individual tutorial sessions

## Negotiated training

Schemes can work in conjunction with their local RTO to negotiate training that is tailored specifically for them. This may involve trainers from RTOs visiting individual schemes to conduct training for small groups of carers and coordination unit staff. Weekend or evening workshops may also be an option the local or regional RTO is willing to consider.

## Informal training

It is important to remember that not all training is formal and results in a qualification. Training may also be informal and focus on short units of study that meet the immediate needs of the learner. These short courses may be credited towards award courses of study such as a Certificate III in Children's Services or a Diploma of Children's Services.

There are also other forms of informal training that do not result in certificates of attainment or formal qualifications but are just as important to a carer's understanding of child development. These include networking, discussions on focus topics with others and personal or group reflections on practice. These types of learning will also contribute to quality outcomes for the children in care.

The *Family Day Care Quality Assurance Quality Practices Guide* (2nd Edition, 2004) emphasises the value of networking, sharing and reflection on practice. Sharing reflections on practice and discussing different approaches can assist carers and staff to learn new methods of practice or deepen understandings of why certain practices are appropriate.

## Peak bodies

Peer associations and peak bodies are a valuable source of support and training. New South Wales Family Day Care Association, Family Day Care Victoria Inc. and Family Day Care Association Queensland Inc. all have their own resource units to assist carers working in schemes to access training. Information about these organisations can be accessed by visiting the websites listed below. Family day care schemes in South Australia

are run by the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) and are geographically based. Contact DECS for further information about training requirements and courses.

## Ongoing training

Schemes may organise ongoing training opportunities for their carers. These training events can be organised in collaboration with the carers and staff so that areas of need, expressed by carers and staff, are included.

Some examples:

- visits to carer's homes by coordination unit staff are an effective way to provide training on a one to one basis and can be a valuable way of providing practical advice and support
- play sessions also provide the opportunity to share information with groups of carers and coordination unit staff. These events can encourage discussion and debate and provide opportunities to demonstrate good practice
- mentoring is another important way carers can support and learn from each other. Carers from within individual schemes can elect a mentor to provide peer support to other carers in their scheme. This type of support can assist the person being mentored by offering consistency and a trainer who has an intimate understanding of the carers' training needs. The information passed on is specific, current and personalised

## Research and reading

Reading professional journals can also be an effective way of obtaining information that is relevant to the carers practice. Carers and coordination unit staff may have access to a range of early childhood journals including Early Childhood Australia Inc. (ECA) *Research in Practice Series*, *Rattler* and *Jigsaw*. Journal articles provide a good stimulus for discussion and can offer new ideas for practice or comparison.

## Further Information

- Stonehouse, A. (2004). *Dimensions*, National Family Day Care Council of Australia, Gosford, New South Wales.
- National Family Day Care Council of Australia, *Jigsaw*, Webber, M. (Ed.), Gosford, New South Wales.
- Early Childhood Australia, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, Kingwell, D. (Ed.), Watson, Australian Capital Territory.
- Community Child Care Cooperative, *Rattler*, Jokovich, E. (Ed.), Marrickville, New South Wales.

## Useful Websites

- Early Childhood Australia Inc. (ECA) - ([www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au))
- National Family Day Care Council of Australia - ([www.familydaycare.com.au](http://www.familydaycare.com.au))
- New South Wales Family Day Care Association - ([www.nswfamilydaycare.com.au](http://www.nswfamilydaycare.com.au))
- Family Day Care Association Queensland Inc. - ([www.fdcqld.org](http://www.fdcqld.org))
- Family Day Care Victoria Inc. - ([www.familydaycare.org.au](http://www.familydaycare.org.au))
- National Training Information Service - ([www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au))
- New South Wales Vocational Education & Training Accreditation Board - ([www.vetab.nsw.gov.au](http://www.vetab.nsw.gov.au))
- Department of Education, Science and Training - ([www.dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au))



**For more information on FDCQA please contact a NCAC Child Care Adviser.**

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