

# Gathering Evidence in Outside School Hours Care

By Natalie Hamilton

Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) requires that an outside school hours care service demonstrate or show evidence of its practices to support each Principle outlined in the OSHCQA *Quality Practices Guide*. Because some Principles are not easily observed or are not readily evident at all times, services need to consider ways to collect evidence that will support practices that are not always easily observed.

## What does an OSHCQA Validator need to see at an outside school hours care service?

The Validator's role is to complete a *Validation Report* based on observations of quality practices in outside school hours care services against the Indicators outlined in the OSHCQA *Quality Practices Guide* (2003). The Validator may ask staff for more information or evidence for those Indicators that are not readily apparent.

In determining which Principles and Indicators will require some additional information staff should:

1. Read the OSHCQA *Quality Practices Guide* carefully
2. Ask yourself "are we meeting this Indicator?"
3. If the answer is "yes", then ask yourself "how would someone coming into the service for the first time know that?"

Answers to the above question could include:

- The Validator can clearly see that the Indicator is being met. For example, the Validator can see that drinking water is readily available for all children whilst at the service (Indicator 6.1.3) and that the environment allows children a choice of being engaged in experiences with others or withdrawing to quiet areas (Indicator 4.2.4).
- The Validator can observe staff meeting the Indicator. For example, the Validator can see how staff willingly assist other team members (Indicator 2.1.4) and can hear that the atmosphere is generally relaxed and happy (Indicator 2.2.1).
- Staff can tell the Validator how they meet the Indicator. For example, staff can tell the Validator how the service seeks to make use of community resources and contacts (Indicator 3.2.3) and about the orientation process for children and families (Indicator 8.3.3).

- Staff would need to show the Validator some evidence to demonstrate how they meet some Indicators. For example, to demonstrate to the Validator that staff are involved in professional development (Indicator 8.5.2) certificates from a range of professional development undertaken by staff can be shown as evidence.

Although evidence for most Indicators is apparent in a caring environment, additional information which supports what the staff are saying and putting into practice will assist the Validator to complete the *Validation Report*. For example, the service may have a family publication that explains the service's philosophy and policies (Indicator 3.1.2). This resource may also complement what staff tell the Validator about how families receive current information about the service's operations (Indicator 3.1.3).

Some services are required by State or Territory Legislation or their own organisation's policies and procedures, to keep written documentation about a number of things (for example, menus, forms, and evacuation plans). These documents could be included in your evidence to support the validation of the relevant Indicators.

## What constitutes satisfactory evidence?

Evidence of quality practice which is not so apparent in the environment, can be represented in policy and procedure documents, programs, written program evaluation, photographs, pictures, snippets from handouts/books/magazines or training certificates. Staff do not have to do lots of writing to outline their quality practices.

Photographs are a great way of recording children's works in progress (Indicator 4.2.6), but do not provide evidence of positive interactions. The Validator will need to observe and listen to be able to validate many of the Indicators in Quality Area 1 and Quality Area 2.

Certificates awarded to staff when they complete training can also be included in your service's evidence. It is important to remember that the Validator will need evidence that the learning that occurred during training has been transferred into the staff's actual practice. For example, a staff member may have a certificate from a workshop they attended on incorporating cultural diversity into the program, but this alone would not be sufficient evidence to support the validation of Indicators about cultural diversity. The Validator would need to see evidence of resources and experiences for children that reflect the lives of children in care and the cultural diversity of the local community, in order to be able to mark the Indicators as "occurring".

Presentation of your evidence is a matter of choice and is dependent upon the staff's individual working methods, organisation and the amount of information and material. A folder, a file box, wall displays, printed matter, reference charts or other methods which suit your service can be used to demonstrate quality.

Whilst compiling evidence can greatly assist the Validation process it can be a lot of work and can be very time consuming. In OSHCQA, it is important to remain focussed on the outcomes for children. Providing stimulating, positive experiences and interactions for children that can clearly be observed by the Validator is the best use of staff time.

If you have any queries regarding your service's documentation or evidence, please contact an NCAC Child Care Adviser on 1300 136 554. ■

**Please note:**

**It is important that evidence that may support your service's practices is easily accessible to the Validator.**

**For example, if your service operates from one location and stores its records at a different location, ensure that your evidence is on-site for the Validator to view.**