



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACT SHEET #3

# EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

Supervision is a key aspect of ensuring children's safety is protected in the service environment. Educators need to be alert and aware of risks and hazards and the potential for accidents and injury throughout the service, not just within their immediate area.

Supervision is part of the duty of care that requires educators to attend to children at all times. Educators need to actively supervise children to identify risks and therefore minimise injury. Children often challenge their own abilities but are not always able to recognise the potential risks involved therefore active supervision ensures that children's play is enjoyable and their learning experiences are maximised. By watching children closely, educators are able to identify opportunities for supporting and scaffolding children's play experiences.

In school age care a wide range of ages are catered for so it is important for educators to assess each situation and supervise accordingly. For example, young children will require close monitoring at all times. However, for older children it is important to balance the need for close supervision with the respect for their age and increasing independence. A well-defined private space that is monitored at regular intervals, can provide older children with opportunities to assume greater responsibility and self-management.

School age care services may implement a variety of supervision strategies including various styles and systems of supervision. Supervision may be direct and constant, intermittent, focused on an area of play space or related to a specific group of children. In general, the system of supervision will vary according to:

- The type of activity
- The location of the activity
- The age and skill of the children involved in the activity
- The age and skill of the educators supervising the children

Any system of supervision requires educators to:

- Use their senses to gather information
- Regularly scan the area and note the movement of children
- Position their body to face the children they are supervising
- Be 'one step ahead' of the action by:
  - Looking for patterns of behaviour
  - Anticipating behaviours before they occur
  - Being aware of each child's needs.
- Be 'with-it' at all times by knowing:
  - What has happened
  - What is happening
  - What is likely to happen next.



## **Supervision skills**

Being totally aware of what is happening around and beyond a specific activity requires the development of specific supervision skills. These skills include:

### **Scanning**

Scanning involves regularly looking around the whole area to observe all the children in the vicinity. This is useful when educators are directly involved in an activity with an individual child or group of children but also need to supervise surrounding areas.

By continually scanning the area you will be able to quickly intervene in a dispute or situation where children could be placed at risk. As you scan the area, note the number of children present, what they are doing and the movement of children within the area. Sudden movement of a group of children that is not connected to a game, could indicate something has happened or is about to happen.

### **Positioning**

The physical position you take will determine how well you are able to supervise the children within your area. When choosing a position, consider any obstacles to seeing or hearing the children and always position yourself to be able to observe the maximum area possible. Never sit or stand with your back to the children.

Organise furniture and equipment, both indoors and out, to allow for maximum vision. Observe the movement of children to determine favourite and popular play areas and position yourself so you can monitor those areas closely.

### **Listening**

Listening closely to children will help supervise areas that may not be in a direct line of sight. This is particularly useful when supervising areas where children may be playing in corners, behind trees or play equipment. Anticipating children's play will allow educators to assist children as difficulties arise or to intervene where there is the potential for danger.

### **Being 'with-it'**

Educators need to be aware of what is known about each child and the level of supervision they may need. This includes knowing the child's range of skills, interests and capabilities when interacting with others. With this knowledge you can assess the situation at any time and determine whether intervention is or will be required.

By being alert you will also be able to capture some of the magical moments of a child's day. You will notice children engaged in co-operation, kindness, sharing, leadership, perseverance and caring. Acknowledging these qualities and skills will further enhance behaviours that assist in maintaining a safe and secure environment.

## **Supervision systems**

Each situation needs to be assessed to determine the most appropriate system of supervision. Educators need to be particularly diligent in attending to areas that pose a high risk to children. Effective supervision systems will reduce children's injuries and allow educators to meaningfully interact with and respond to the children. All of the following supervision systems may be used in the program to cater for the various situations.

### **Direct and constant supervision**

Some activities require direct and constant supervision from educators to ensure children's safety. To determine if this style of supervision is required, an assessment must be made on the level of risk involved in the activity against the skill and developmental stages of the children participating. An older child who is experienced in using a hot glue gun during craft activities may not require direct supervision however, a younger child who has never used the equipment before would need closer and more constant supervision.

### **Intermittent supervision**

It is important that the supervision systems reflect the growing independence and increased skill of older children therefore intermittent supervision may be appropriate for older children participating in low risk activities. Through this form of supervision, children have opportunity to take greater responsibility for themselves and their actions.

Intermittent supervision must be well planned. The expectations of the children should be clearly stated, the level of responsibility, maturity and self-control of the children known and the play areas defined. Educators must check on the children within this area regularly and not get too involved in other activities.



### Area supervision

This requires an educator to take responsibility for a particular area such as the oval, craft room, kitchen or outdoor area and be accountable for the children within that designated area. Area supervision can allow children to move freely between play areas and is easy to plan and manage. A communication system for educators may need to be implemented to ensure this system of supervision is managed effectively.

### Group supervision

This relates to a group of children regardless of the play area they are in. An educator may directly supervise the children by interacting and participating in the activities together or alternatively, children may be scattered throughout the play area with one specific educator having responsibility for them. Group supervision is useful for excursions to venues where it is more difficult to supervise a large group of children and may allow children to be grouped according to age, interests or skill level.

### Floater supervision

This refers to a system where an educator moves among the play areas supporting and encouraging other educators and children. The 'floater' keeps track of the 'big picture' and doesn't monitor a specific activity or area. This educator is aware of the children's movements and is available to assist when required. Floater supervision works well in larger services where it may be possible to dedicate an educator to this role.

### **Ensuring constant supervision**

Educators will often need to respond flexibly to children's and families' needs while maintaining supervision standards. Policies and procedures that address supervision can promote consistency in educator practice and should be reviewed regularly by all stakeholders. This will assist in developing a common understanding and agreement about supervision standards within the service. Services may choose to address supervision through a range of policies or one over-arching policy that encompasses all aspects of supervision.

Educator schedules and service routines should be developed and implemented to maximise the consistency of supervision of children by ensuring that:

- Educator to child ratios are maintained at all times
- Educators are available to greet and farewell children and families
- Supervision standards are maintained during educator breaks
- Children are well supervised during times of escorting, travel and/or excursions
- Children are monitored when using the toilets

