



HANDY HINTS FOR HOST SERVICE

Thank you for taking up the challenge to be a Host Service in the Exchange Program. We appreciate your commitment to supporting quality professional development activities in the children's service industry. As a Host Service you will have the opportunity to learn from participants who visit your service as you share information, ideas, resources and knowledge.

Preparation is the key to success for any experience and your role as a Host service in the exchange program is no different. Past experience has shown that when Host Services are well prepared the exchange runs smoother and your service will gain more from the visit.

The following **suggestions** have been put together to help you prepare to be a Host Service:

ENHANCING THE VALUE OF THE EXCHANGE FOR YOUR SERVICE

- When your participant phones prior to the visit, seek some background information about the service they are from. They should also bring something to share with your service (e.g. samples of portfolios, program ideas, outdoor/indoor environments plans/photos and relevant policies) for your staff to learn from.
- Remind your staff that taking on the role of Host Service also allows them the opportunity to learn from participants.
 - They may like to spend some time prior to the visit (perhaps during a staff meeting or just give it some thought individually) considering questions or information they would like to gather from the participant during their stay.
 - When your staff are sharing their ideas with participants encourage them to ask the participant for information about their service.
 - If your staff feel comfortable with the participant they may want to exchange contact details (service details) to encourage the development of professional networks at all levels.

ENHANCING THE VALUE OF THE EXCHANGE FOR THE PARTICIPANT

- **Send information** about your service to the Exchange Program Coordinator prior to the visit. This will be passed on to the participant to allow them to have some knowledge about how your service operates before they arrive. Information such as service philosophy, workplace health and safety policies (including sun safety, manual handling, dress etc), Hygiene and nutrition/food handling policies would be useful.
- Let **all** your staff know that your service will be hosting an exchange participant. Services have found it useful to use staff meetings, staff communication book or staff notice boards to spread the word. The Exchange Program Coordinator will send you a "Confirmation of Exchange" form that will provide information about the participant. You may like to use this so your staff know a bit about the participant before they arrive. Some services have found it effective to display this in the staff room or on the staff notice board.
- Your participant will phone you at least **a week prior** to their visit to introduce themselves. This is a chance for you to discuss:
 - Why they have chosen your service and what they would like to gain from the experience (for example spend time in the rooms to look at programming styles, discussing menu ideas, spend time talking about admin tasks);
 - Let them know what time they should start on the first day (This should preferably be when you as the Director/Coordinator will be there);
 - Give them some general information about your service such as access to meals (shop close by, bring your own or centre provides), dress codes, sun safe policy etc.



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- Allow some time for you or another staff member to spend with the participant when they arrive to introduce them to other staff members and give them a tour of the service.
- Set aside some time early on arrival to discuss the program for the visit (what they will be doing each day for example day 1 in the office, day 2 in the baby room etc.) What the program looks like will depend on what the participant wants to gain from the experience so they will all be very different. By planning a program you and your staff will know when they may need to set aside some time to answer questions the participant may have or share some of their ideas and resources. Remember to allow time for the participant to reflect on their experience and look through resources.
- Some participants may be a long way from home and could be feeling overwhelmed and lonely during their visit. A friendly environment with people smiling and talking to them will help to make them feel comfortable.
- Many participants like to take photos to record what they have seen. Discuss relevant policies with the participant so they are clear about what they will be able to photograph.
- If possible set aside some time each day (5 to 10 mins) to chat with the participant about how the visit is progressing, what they have discovered, issues they have etc.
- Some Host Services have provided additional support/experiences to participants during their stay such as taking them to other services in their local area, taking them shopping for resource they are not able to access in their own area and driving them to and from the service from their accommodation each day. These experiences/opportunities enhanced the value of the visit and were greatly appreciated by participants.

We hope this information has not been too daunting but rather it has been of some help in preparing you for your role as a Host Service. Remember these are only suggestions and many are very small, commonsense ideas that will enhance the enormous benefits of the visit for your service and the participant.

Have fun sharing and learning!