

Section 3: Professional Practice

E-learning readings



Child protection awareness training

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Introduction

All employees of the NSW Department of Education have a duty to plan and provide a safe environment for children and young people and to be responsive to their needs in a manner appropriate to their role. In doing this, the aim is to be child-focused while keeping yourself and others safe.

In this section you will be able to reflect on common situations that may arise in your professional practice and consider how you may best respond.

Defining child-focused practice

Child-focused practice has two essential components:

- The practice is based around a child-centred belief that every child or young person has the right to a safe passage through childhood and the right to grow in an environment free from harm.
- The child's needs and welfare are the primary concern and the primary focus of practice. Professional knowledge and practice need to be examined in terms of their potential for furthering the best interests of children and young people.

If we are not child-centred:

- it is easier to lose sight of the child or young person in our practice
- there is less chance of effecting positive change for children and young people
- it is difficult to know if we have produced effective interventions.

Child-focused practice includes:

- listening to the child or young person
- trying to understand their perspective and the meaning of their experience to them
- believing the child or young person: being aware that children and young people rarely lie about harm or risk of harm
- respect
- age-appropriate responses
- realistic expectations
- empathy
- focusing on the child's or young person's needs
- the provision of accurate information to the child or young person
- ensuring the child or young person is able to participate in decision making about his or her future
- maintaining appropriate boundaries
- accommodating individual differences such as special needs and culture
- promoting positive experiences and outcomes
- ensuring that services are relevant and accessible to children and young people, and that they are child-friendly in focus.

Professional judgement

The legislation makes it clear that employees are able to use reasonable conduct for the discipline, management or care of children and young people. It is important then to understand what reasonable conduct means.

Teachers continually use their professional judgement to decide on the best strategy in any given situation. In making their judgement they must take into account the age, maturity, health and other characteristics of children and young people as well as the [Code of Conduct](#) and any other professional standards or policies.

It is clear that employees, particularly teachers, may take reasonable action to exercise effective classroom management and discipline. This includes actions such as reasonably restraining a student for the safety of that student or others, comforting a distressed student, or raising their voice to restore order with a group of students.

Casual employees, particularly teachers, may often be placed in a range of situations where they are unfamiliar with students, school or campus routines. They are often required to respond very quickly to manage difficult situations, and it is important to understand what is expected in these circumstances.

Appendix five of the procedures *Responding to Allegations against Employees in the Area of Child Protection* contains [A Guide for Teaching and Protecting Children and Young People](#) which can assist the professional judgement of teachers about acceptable and unacceptable practice in common situations in schools. A [TAFE version of this guide](#) has also been developed.

Each guide gives suggestions covering the spectrum of professional practice from good or acceptable practice to poor and unacceptable practice. Conduct prohibited by law is also indicated.

Remember that the guides were written not as lists of prescriptive "do's and don'ts" but to provide some clear advice in this area to assist you in your planning, preparation and in reflecting on your own professional practice. It is always necessary to consider the particular context of any situation as well as the NSW Department of Education's policies, procedures and programs when deciding what conduct is appropriate.

Further advice about professional practice

Advice about the use of touch in physical education or sports is available in [PDHPE: A Touchy Subject Curriculum Support Directorate, PDHPE, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1998](#).

Advice about maintaining professional relationships with secondary students can be found in [Student: Friend or Foe? Curriculum Support Directorate, PDHPE, Vol 3, No. 4, 1998](#).

Bulletins that provide advice about related legal issues can be found in the [legal services section](#) of the NSW Department of Education's intranet website.

Please note:

The above web links may not be accessible outside the Department's intranet. You are not required to access these links to complete the online Child Protection Awareness Training module. They are provided as additional information. Should you wish to access the following links, please use the Department's intranet connection at your workplace or through your Department of Education staff portal.