



IMAGINE EDUCATION

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CHILDCARE WORKER

Childcare is a very rewarding career path and no two days are ever the same. As workers, we are directly responsible for the delivery of high quality education and care to children aged from birth up to five years of age. Some centres will also provide before school care, after school care and vacation care to primary school aged children.

All workers within a childcare centre are expected to work as part of a team and a summary of our duties and responsibilities include:

- Developing social responsibility to meet the care and educational needs of individual children and families within the centre community
- Promoting a love of learning within each classroom setting from the Nursery room, right up to the Kindergarten room, which is the room children attend the year before they start school
- Incorporating knowledge of what "best practice" means in the delivery of early childhood educational programs
- Daily routines - for example, meal times, toileting and nappy changes, indoor play, outdoor play, rest times and group times
- Having knowledge and understanding of The National Quality Standard, The Early Years Learning Framework, the My Time Our Place Framework and the QLD Kindergarten Learning Guidelines as well as other relevant legislation
- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children at all times
- Ensuring the children's teaching environment is clean, tidy, hygienic and suitable for the age of the children within the class group
- Supporting and mentoring other workers, students and volunteers under your direct supervision
- Ensuring you employ a teamwork approach and communicate effectively with other staff, parents and family members at the centre
- Ensuring that Centre Policies and Procedures are adhered to at all times.

Those points that I have just mentioned may sound a little scary or overwhelming, but don't worry, even before you start work or prac for the first time, you will be given a thorough orientation process by the centre director. All new students, volunteers and workers are assigned to a senior member of staff who will mentor you through the early stages of your child care career. We value team work, hard work, cooperation, enthusiasm and dedication. There is no such thing as a silly question and we encourage you to ask for help and assistance at any time. You will have the most amazing support network of co-workers and being part of such a positive team, will help you grow and thrive as a worker.

A typical day working in a childcare centre starts even before you get to work. You need to ensure that you are dressed appropriately for work and that your appearance looks neat, tidy and professional. Depending on the opening and closing hours of each individual centre, you could be rostered anywhere from 6.00am to 7.00pm. Generally, though, you will be at work for 8 ½ hours, which will include a 1 hour lunch break. You must arrive on time for your shift.

When you arrive at the centre, you need to set up for the day. This means that you set up both the indoor and outdoor environments so that they look aesthetically pleasing and are ready for the children to start their day of learning. This process is usually completed with the assistance and input of the children. The needs of the children vary depending on their age. The Nursery children are very dependant on the workers for most of their needs. In this room, you will feed children, change their nappies, gently rock or sing them to sleep and give lots and lots of cuddles. In another room at the centre are the Kindergarten children. These children are learning to become self managed students and it is your responsibility to make sure that they are ready to go to school the following year.

If these children come back to the centre once they have started school, you may be involved with the Vacation Care age group. During the school holidays, the children are taken outside the centre for activities such as roller skating, ten pin bowling, going to the movies, trampoline jumping venues, Putt Putt golf and many more. The number of children also changes as they get older. In QLD, the ratio for children aged 0 – 2 years is 1 worker for every 4 children, 2 – 3 years is 1 worker for every 5 children and 3 – 5 years is 1 worker for every 11 children.





There will be times that you may get messy with the children and get paint, shaving cream, dirt, glue or art and craft supplies all over you. We have a saying in childcare that if you don't go home dirty, you haven't had fun! Childcare also involves a high level of communication with parents, family members and the wider community. You need to respect and incorporate the individual values, beliefs and cultural differences of all families, provide families with regular communication about the educational program, goals and learning outcomes for children and also maintain professional and open communication with families. Your interactions with families needs to be in a warm and positive manner by actively listening and responding and using appropriate language. Most importantly, you need to maintain confidentiality in relation to centre, child and family information at all times.

You will also be responsible for providing an educational program for the children with different daily activities. These activities may include art and craft, reading books, computers and technology, singing songs, learning colours and the alphabet, science, mathematics, show and tell, music and movement, obstacle courses, and many, many more. You are only limited by your imagination. You will learn to document this educational program. Some centres have a written display and others use iPad technology and email the parents the program with lots of photos. You will also take observations and set plans and goals for each individual child to show a progression of their learning. You will be responsible for encouraging the children to eat their meals provided by either their parents or the centre chef (if your centre has one).

Also in QLD, we are limited by the Cancer Council Australia as to the times that we can go outside. Your mornings will start outside in the yard, before heading inside. Generally we stay inside between the hours of approximately 10am – 3pm due to the high UV ratings. After some amazing inside learning and education, you will again head outside in the afternoon, weather permitting, and your program will continue until the centre closes. This late part of the day involves you communicating to

parents what type of day their child had, packing away and cleaning up and also setting up the environment, ready for tomorrow.

There are also lots of special days that we plan for in childcare – there are dress up days for events, such as Halloween, State of Origin, Book Week, International Pirate Day, Star Wars Day and more. There are also shows and excursions and we encourage Workers to participate and dress up too.

You will learn to see the world through the children's eyes. This is a very rewarding experience and you get to be a part of some very special milestones in a child's life. You may get to see a child's first step or hear their first word. You will be able to teach them to write or solve a problem themselves. Being part of teaching a child a life long skill or having them see you first thing in the morning (or even on the weekend) and their faces light up with the biggest smile, just because it's you, is the best part of working in child care.

For those of you interested in a career in childcare, there are a few qualifications and certificates that you will need. In QLD, you need to start with your Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. You don't need to have this completed to start work, you just need to be enrolled. You will also need your Senior First Aid and CPR qualification (which will include the Asthma and Anaphylaxis Certificates), a Working with Children Check or Blue Card (which means that you cannot have a criminal history) and most centres will ask you to provide a medical certificate from your Doctor that states you are fit for suitable duties.

To finish up, I would like to leave you with this quote:

“Children are great imitators, so as workers, give them something great to imitate”.