University of British Columbia

Improving staff training at The Arts Connection

To Kate McCrae and staff at The Arts Connection

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**INTRODUCTION**

In our current society where, dual income families are becoming a norm, child care programs are constantly sought out throughout the school year and the summer time so parents can have peace of mind when they drop their kids off and go to work. Along with the rise in demand for child care programs, stringent licensing procedures have been implanted throughout the years to ensure the safety of the children and protecting the staff from a liability stand point. Proper training in behavioral management, conflict resolution, and knowledge of licensing standards are imperative for anyone working in any child related programs. After conducting various surveys and interviews with the staff at The Arts Connection, it appears that the staff have poor knowledge and understanding of how to properly be a leader in a child care setting. This has made solving recurring problems difficult for the supervisor.

Given the circumstances, ensuring that staff receive proper certifications and training before starting the job would help to greatly increase the quality of life at The Arts Connection. For example, the HIGH Five course is a great supplemental certification for someone in childcare to have as it teaches proper behavioral management, conflict resolution, and classroom management skills to be successful in a child care setting. Having a dedicated staff training procedure would help to ensure the important points that licensing requires can be covered and new staff are properly prepared to handle situations as they arise.

Why do staff in child care need proper behavioral management and conflict resolution training?

 In order to create a safe environment, staff in child care must be able to identify problematic behaviour before it becomes an issue or conflict. Working in child care also involves conflict resolution amongst children and amongst fellow staff. Having the knowledge and ability to properly mediate and solve an argument, while giving appropriate disciplinary measures, aids in preventing the problem to come up again.

A child care program who wants to ensure a high quality and safe environment needs to ensure their staff are trained in basic procedures and skills such as:

* Knowledge in licensing protocols
* Proper emergency protocol procedure
* Behaviour management and conflict resolution

This report will serve to identify current weaknesses amongst Arts Connection morning care staff through information gathered from surveys and interviews. After identifying these weaknesses, plans of actions will be proposed to improve the staff training and quality of the centre.

**DATA SECTION**

**Identifying weaknesses amongst morning care staff**

After conducting a survey with the morning care staff at The Arts Connection, most of the staff responded with results that showed lack of knowledge in licensing regulations and overall behavioural management and control.

**Survey Questions**

Please answer on a scale of 1-10

1. How familiar are you with current licensing standards for childcare in BC?
2. How comfortable are you with leading 12-15 children on your own?
3. How comfortable are you with giving disciplinary action for misconduct?
4. How well do you believe you can identify misconduct before it escalates? (e.g. Children start to speak loudly and you can identify an argument is about to happen/going on)
5. How satisfied are you with the current state of morning care? (i.e. Current routine, supervision standards, etc.)
6. How well do you feel you are performing in terms of supervision?

Please answer yes/no

1. Do you know standard ratio for adults to children in a room? (i.e. 1 adult per 10 children or 1 adult per 20 children)
2. Do you know proper procedure for conflict resolution for children who are physically hurting each other/in a fight?
3. Are you aware of scenarios that could cause liability issues for yourself and how to avoid them? (e.g. Giving food to children without consent from parents)

We can see that in the questions involving licensing/liability knowledge and managing behaviour and disciplinary action that the current staff don’t feel equipped with the tools to perform their job properly. This most likely could lead to heavy liability issues for the staff as supervision may be poor and not up to standard.

Child licensing regulations have strict guidelines for licensed child care centers and programs that must be strictly followed. Important points of emphasis that we will use in this analysis will be the sections regarding the Guidance and Treatment or Children and Group sizes and employee to children ratios (British Columbia. Community Care and Assisted Living Act)



Figure 1. Group sizes and employee to children ratio

**Behavioural guidance**

**51**   (1)A licensee must

(a)ensure that behavioural guidance is appropriate to the age and development of the child who is receiving the guidance, and

(b)provide to employees and parents a written statement of the licensee's policy on behavioural guidance.

(2)If the child has a care plan that includes instructions respecting behavioural guidance, the licensee must ensure that

(a)any behavioural guidance given to the child is consistent with those instructions, and

(b)if the behavioural guidance includes the use of restraints, that the restraints are administered only by a person who is trained in the use of, and alternatives to the use of, restraints.

**Harmful actions not permitted**

**52**   (1)A licensee must ensure that a child, while under the care or supervision of the licensee, is not subjected to any of the following:

(a)shoving, hitting or shaking by an employee or another child, or confinement or physical restraint by another child;

(b)confinement or physical restraint by an employee, except as authorized in a child care's plan if the care plan includes instructions respecting behavioural guidance;

(c)harsh, belittling or degrading treatment by an employee or another child, whether verbal, emotional or physical, that could humiliate the child or undermine the child's self respect;

(d)spanking or any other form of corporal punishment;

(e)separation, without supervision by a responsible adult, from other children;

(f)as a form of punishment, deprivation of meals, snacks, rest or necessary use of a toilet.

(2)A licensee must ensure that a child is not, while under the care or supervision of the licensee, subjected to emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect as those terms are defined in Schedule H.

Figure 2. Guidance and Treatment of children (British Columbia. Community Care and Assisted Living Act 51, 52)

It is essential that these guidelines are followed as one infraction could lead to the termination of the child care licensed. Periodically, licensing officers drop in to ensure all files are in order and that procedures are being followed. In the instance where a licensing offer drops in while ratios aren’t met, it could lead to repercussions if enough infractions are noted by licensing officers.

In the case of proper behavioural management skills, it is important that staff know how to handle physical altercations amongst children and ensure that harmful actions aren’t committed while trying to solve the problem.

After interviewing the supervisor of morning care at Arts Connection, Ester Cheung, her responses shows that the problems she currently views correlate with the results from the staff survey.

**Interview Questions**

1. What is your current position at Arts Connection?
2. What does your job entail?
3. What problems, if any, do you currently see during morning care at Arts Connection
4. What have you done to try and solve these problems
5. What steps do you think needs to be taken to solve these problems?
6. Do you believe the current staff are meeting standards set by licensing?
7. How should we move forward in ensuring staff are aware of these standards?

Her responses are as follows,

Question 3 onward,

“Many of the problems that we have in the morning come from poor supervision and disciplinary measures. The children have become complacent and disregard authority from some of our more timid staff and only really listen to me”.

“I have tried to help our staff by teaching them different ways to handle children who are misbehaving and tactics that would help mediate situations. Most of our staff have been working here for a few years and I believe that their problem comes from bad habits that have developed which has also led to the kids not taking them seriously anymore.”

“I think that hosting a workshop for our staff that can include ways to properly handle disciplinary actions and overall classroom management would be beneficial to my team as I don’t think they are comfortable with handling those tasks. I also think that during the hiring process and training we need to be emphasize things such as licensing regulations, emergency procedures, etc. I was only recently hired for the beginning of the school year and those points were only mentioned in passing and without prior knowledge I would be completely lost”

“I believe my staff are capable and properly certified for the position they are in. The only thing is I believe they have poor knowledge on licensing protocols and I constantly have to remind them to sign their kids out, maintain ratio, other basic things. I believe they just need the proper resources to learn that information.

“As I mentioned before, I believe a workshop would be beneficial for my staff or even supplementary certifications that teaches proper behavioural management. It has also been helpful that the staff who are familiar with licensing and comfortable with children have been there to help aid the other staff and point them in the right direction. Overall I think they just need to be properly educated and trained and everything should work itself out!”

It is important to note the supervisors concern for her staff’s knowledge and ability to perform their duties. Looking back at the survey results, both the supervisor and staff seem to agree that extra training is needed to gain more comfort with their job.

**Advantages of extra training**

Offering extra training to the staff at Arts Connection will not only improve the standards as a whole, but give the staff confidence to do their job and handle any situation. Being prepared with the knowledge to handle high pressure situations such as emergencies will create an overall safer environment for the children. Having the confidence to handle misconduct and conflict amongst children will allow for the staff to equally share responsibilities in disciplinary actions. Providing extra training would open up opportunities to place your staff in other programs Arts Connection offers as the skills learned are not exclusive for morning care.

**Disadvantages of extra training**

It will time consuming and potentially costly to provide extra training to current staff. Paid training would incentivize participation and depending on what options are chosen, it will cost extra to enroll in certifications. It also might be difficult to bring in someone who has the knowledge of extensive licensing protocols to teach the staff.

**Training Options**

**Supplementary Certifications**

The High Five organization offers certifications for anyone working with children aged 6-12 called the Principles of Healthy Child Development. The training includes knowledge, tips and resources to enhance their programs and includes topics like bullying, conflict resolution and children’s mental health (Principles of Healthy Child Development, highfive.org). This certification would help the staff at arts connection understand how to manage the children in the program as a front-line leader. Having a professional organization certify the staff at Arts Connection will improve the quality of the centre.

**In-House Workshops**

Hosting workshops in-house that will cover an overview of morning care procedure, licensing regulations, and behaviour management techniques would be an easy access way to ensure the morning care staff are up to speed with everything they need to know. The supervisor and program director could host these workshops as they have the experience and expertise to effectively deliver the workshops. This option would also provide framework for a comprehensive training material for future hires.

**Conclusion**

**Summary**

The current morning care staff at The Arts Connection have not received the proper training to effectively perform their duties during morning care. Licensing standards are not being met, and additional training is needed in order to improve the standards of the morning care staff. Staff currently do not feel comfortable or confident in their ability to handle disciplinary situations which could lead to children getting hurt or the centre being liable for potential damages.

**Recommendations**

Creating a comprehensive training manual for new hires and host a workshop for the current staff to become familiar with proper procedures.

The training should include:

* Overview of licensing protocol and regulations
* Emergency protocol for The Arts Connection
* First Aid protocol for children with medical concerns
* Point of contacts for emergencies
* How to navigate and use binder with children profiles
* Behavioural management
	+ Classroom management
	+ How to identify a conflict or problem
	+ How to properly intervene a physical altercation
	+ Review licensing protocol on behavioural guidance