Is your orientation plan a whirlwind one-day affair of meet and greet, sign some forms, here is your job description, here is the policy manual, and off you go? Or, is it a focused period of going over documentation and memorising routines, while trying to manage the day-to-day operation of the service?

The purpose of an effective orientation is to make the employee feel like part of the team, understand goals and expectations to spark productivity and commitment.

From a management committee’s perspective, the questions are:

★ What do you want new staff members to learn?
★ If you could sit with each individual staff member, what would you teach him/her?
★ How long should the orientation be? Who should provide it?
★ How soon will the new staff member be up and running?
★ How do we know we’ve made the right decision in employing this person?

On the other side of the coin, new employees worry about different issues. Try and put yourself in the place of the new person - what was it like for you when you started your last job? Did you ask yourself the following questions?

★ Did I make the right decision coming here?
★ Will I be supported in my role?
★ How good is this service?
★ Will I get on with everyone?

You can be sure that your new employee is asking these questions - even if they are experienced workers. Starting a new job is generally a stressful experience (for everyone involved) and therefore a successful orientation plan has enormous benefits for both parties.

Many OOSH services strive to provide a responsible orientation but are challenged by not having the time, resources, or staff. To make orientations beneficial to both parties, consider the following Orientation Plan.

### STEP 1 - PRE-ORIENTATION

Why not start the orientation process when the job is offered and accepted by the new employee? Providing the new employee with information about the centre before they start provides them with the opportunity to prepare questions for the first day. Some of the key items in this package can include:

★ History of the service; Philosophy and key Policies
★ Organisational chart – who’s who, including the Management Committee
★ A copy of the Orientation Plan
★ Staff Handbook
★ A copy of the Code of Professional Practice for staff in OOSH Centres (available from Network)
★ A copy of their Job Description (in case they have misplaced the one provided at the interview)
STEP 2 – JOB-SITE ORIENTATION

Job-Site Orientation occurs primarily on the first day of work and should include a tour of the workplace, introductions, OH&S requirements, emergency procedures, routines and a general overview of the day-to-day operation of the service.

STEP 3 – JOB-SPECIFIC ORIENTATION:

Job-Specific Orientation occurs during the first few days and weeks, focusing on specific duties as outlined in the employee’s Job Description. During this time, coaching and feedback sessions will help to ensure that everything is on the right track. Are there any problems, skill deficiencies or comprehension issues? Is the new employee fulfilling all of the requirements of their job description? Will some training be required?

At the end of this orientation process, success is not measured solely when all of the boxes are ticked and questions have been exhausted, but when the new employee assimilates most of the critical information and demonstrates an understanding of the service, the families and children and expectations of their work performance.

An effective orientation program will make a significant difference in how quickly an employee can become productive and contribute fully to the service. The end of the first day and the first week is just as important as the beginning. Let your new employee feel you want them to come back the next day and the next...

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM NETWORK:

★ Staff Matters
★ Manage It!
★ A Code of Professional Practice for OOSH

“When people go to work, they shouldn’t have to leave their hearts at home.”

- Betty Bender