



ASD PLAYGROUPS PROGRAM

Position Description

PlayConnect Playgroup Development Worker

Tenure: Casual - subject to needs of PlayConnect Playgroup clients and ongoing funding

Remuneration \$30.00 p/h casual rate + 9% superannuation

Location: Swan Hill

JOB PURPOSE

The position of PlayConnect Playgroup Development Worker is a frontline role in the implementation of the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Playgroups Program, funded by the Australian Government under the 'Helping Children with Autism' package and managed by Playgroup Australia.

PlayConnect Playgroup Development Workers work with families attending a PlayConnect Playgroup for up to 2 years to:

- assist parents and caregivers of young children (0-6 years) with autism spectrum disorders or ASD-like symptoms in establishing a quality playgroup, inclusive of play-based activities and learning experiences that are responsive to the specific needs of the children and their families
- provide support to families in implementing and participating in appropriate play experiences with their young children with ASD, both at playgroup and outside of playgroup sessions
- assist families in developing parenting skills and to access information about other early intervention services, relevant family support services and agencies within their local community
- link families to other components of the Australian Government's 'Helping Children with Autism' package, including advisory services, the ASD website, education and support workshops and early intervention services.

The PlayConnect Playgroup Development Worker will have sound knowledge of local autism services and will become fully informed about the 'Helping Children with Autism' package. The PlayConnect Playgroup Development Worker will also develop networks with other relevant local service providers to increase awareness of autism within communities. It is expected that this working relationship will avoid duplication of playgroup resources and will provide choice and opportunities for families caring for a child with ASD.

PlayConnect Playgroups will aim to build the capacity of families and the community. To facilitate the achievement of this outcome, the PlayConnect Development Worker in consultation with participating families will oversee the development and implementation of a transition plan for the PlayConnect Playgroup to (i) enable the group to function as a self-managed community playgroup within two years (with the specific duration of time for transition being determined by the families' support needs), *and/or* (ii) to assist the participating families to join an existing community playgroup, or to access other forms of community participation, early intervention programs or education services as appropriate to their circumstances.

PlayConnect Playgroup Development Workers are also required to collect data and to report information to assist in the evaluation and continuous improvement of the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Playgroups Program.

KEY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Support the establishment, implementation and transition of a PlayConnect Playgroup to achieve the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Playgroups Program objectives and outputs in a local community including:

- Establishing and implementing the PlayConnect Playgroup in accordance with the Australian Government's Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Playgroups Program Guidelines, PlayConnect Playgroups National Quality Assurance Framework, PlayConnect Playgroups Risk Management Plan, and as advised and directed by the PlayConnect Playgroups State Coordinator and Playgroup Australia's National Program Manager.
- Promoting the PlayConnect Playgroup within the community to encourage active and ongoing participation by families with children with ASD or ASD-like symptoms.
- Appropriately engaging and supporting families and their children with ASD so that they can enjoy a safe, quality playgroup experience at all times
- Demonstrating and offering advice on implementing suitable play experiences in line with the families' expectations and the specific needs of participating children, including providing culturally appropriate activities
- Following up families whose absence is noted and encouraging these families continued participation
- Providing information to participating families about other early intervention services, relevant family support services and agencies within their local community - including instigating direct referrals, acquiring relevant resources, organising visits by professionals, and facilitating other forms of contact as appropriate
- Liaising with other early intervention service providers and professionals as necessary to support the participation of identified children and their families in the playgroup
- Providing relevant information and assisting families to access other components of the Australian Government's 'Helping Children with Autism' package, including advisory services, the ASD website, education and support workshops and early intervention services, as appropriate to both individual and group needs
- Developing and documenting a transition plan in consultation with participating families, in accordance with the PlayConnect Playgroups Transition Strategy
- Facilitating the timely implementation of transition-related activities,

- Monitoring and reviewing progress towards transition and taking action as appropriate to ensure the achievement of a successful transition outcome for both individual families and the group within one to two years after the PlayConnect Playgroup commences
- Empowering families to organise and manage playgroup activities independently wherever possible - including mentoring individual parents within the PlayConnect Playgroup who have the capacity and willingness to assume leadership roles
- Mentoring the PlayConnect Playgroup or selected members to ensure they have a good understanding of local State Playgroup Association's resources, membership policy/procedures, and other local administrative functions
- Working in partnership with Playgroup Association staff so that the PlayConnect Playgroup is sustained as a self-managed, community playgroup in future years.

Collect evaluation data and implement evaluation activities:

- Collect data and prepare local evaluation reports as directed and when required by the State PlayConnect Playgroup Co-ordinator and National Program Manager
- Provide feedback to improve program quality
- Maintain confidential and accurate information (in line with the National Privacy Policy) on each PlayConnect Playgroup participant

At the direction of the State PlayConnect Playgroup Coordinator:

- Work collaboratively with partnering organisations to establishing and implement the PlayConnect Playgroup
- Liaise with venue providers to ensure a safe environment for all staff, volunteers and playgroup participants
- Establish and maintain networks with other local early intervention services, family support services and agencies relevant to families with children with ASD
- Respond to local enquiries from families and service providers to facilitate access to the PlayConnect Playgroup
- Participate in training and professional development activities in accordance with the national PlayConnect Playgroups Training Strategy and State Playgroup Association requirements and directives.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The PlayConnect Playgroup Development Worker reports to PlayConnect Playgroups State Coordinator and will take direction from Playgroup Australia's National Program Manager from time to time if required

REQUIREMENTS OF THE EMPLOYEE

Specialist Qualifications, Experience and/or Training

- Tertiary qualifications and/or experience in early childhood, special education, disability services, family support, community development, social work or other area relevant to the

- position
- Previous experience in facilitating the participation and inclusion of families with children with disabilities in the community
- An understanding of and commitment to the importance of play during early childhood
- A demonstrated ability and affinity to work within a team to achieve program objectives and organisational goals within required timeframes
- Access to telephone, email and internet facilities
- Driver's licence and own vehicle.

Key Competencies

Teamwork: Demonstrates a team orientation and spirit to build and maintain co-operative and productive relationships. Observes appropriate reporting structure.

Oral, written communication: Understood when communicating orally. Listens actively and encourages further communication. Writes with professional flair, with a clear purpose, and using appropriate language.

Initiative: Demonstrates self reliance and resourcefulness, is pro-active, and anticipates developments. Does more than is specifically required.

Dependability: Can be relied upon to meet deadlines. Consistently punctual and regular in attendance. Effectively follows up on assignments. Fulfils all commitments.

Flexibility: Appropriately changes approaches to situations to achieve a desired result.

Empathy: Recognises and responds appropriately to the needs and feelings of others, particularly families who are marginalised.

Social Justice: A commitment to the principles of social justice, access and equity for disadvantaged families

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

- Satisfactory criminal history check (National Police Certificate) or State/Territory Working with Children Check is required prior to employment in the role
- Intra-state travel may be required for training and or supervision depending on local requirements
- Other conditions in accordance with SACS Award/Australian Workplace Agreement
- Compliance with the relevant email, IT and privacy policies

SELECTION CRITERIA

Essential

- SC1 Tertiary qualifications and/or experience in early childhood, special education, disability services, family support, community development, social work or other area relevant to the position
- SC2 Previous experience in facilitating the participation and inclusion of families with children with disabilities in the community
- SC3 Demonstrated ability to facilitate a group-based project
- SC4 A proven ability to collect data and prepare written evaluation reports

SC5 Excellent interpersonal skills and ability to interact and communicate effectively with other professionals and stakeholders from varying social contexts

Desirable

SC6 Previous training and/or experience in working with children with autism spectrum disorders

SC7 Experience using Microsoft Office

FORWARD RESUME TO:

Lea Johnson

Swan Hill Community House

email: shch@bigpond.com

Closing date 4 pm Friday 12 March 2010