

Guiding Principles



The following principles are fundamental and underlie the provision of services by hospital play specialists. We believe that:

1. Children and young people have basic rights as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In all actions concerning children and young people, their best interests shall be a primary consideration.
2. Families have a right to services that honour te Tiriti o Waitangi by respecting Maori views and choices and their rights as tangata whenua of Aotearoa/New Zealand.
3. Parents and families are integral to the wellbeing of children and young people. Healthcare facilities and personnel should protect and promote the child and young person's sense of identity, wellbeing and belonging within his or her family, whānau, community and culture.
4. Each child, young person and family is unique and deserving of respect. They have a right to services which respond to their individual, cultural, religious, spiritual and social needs, beliefs and values.
5. Hospitalisation is potentially traumatising and detrimental to development, but with appropriate support it can be a positive experience. The emotional, psychological and developmental needs of children and young people in hospital must be afforded a priority equal to that of their physical needs in order that immediate distress and/or long-term behavioural, psychiatric or developmental disturbance may be avoided.
6. Play is an essential life process, a natural part of childhood and vital to normal development. Through play, children learn, create, achieve, develop skills, express themselves, master experiences and cope with anxiety. All children and young people in healthcare should have equitable opportunities for play, creative and expressive activities, learning and leisure regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnicity, diagnosis and prognosis, and location within the healthcare facility.
7. Children and young people must be able to obtain information, to express their opinions and preferences and to have these taken into account in decisions which affect them.
8. Developmentally appropriate psychological preparation for admission to hospital, and for medical experiences is essential. For children, play provides a primary means by which this may be achieved.
9. All children and young people have a right to hospital play programmes. These must be supervised by appropriately qualified and experienced people. Volunteers may complement the role of hospital play specialists. However they must be supervised by a hospital play specialist.
10. The healthcare environment should foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing in children, young people and their families. Hospital play specialists have an essential role in planning for, and monitoring of, the environment.
11. An interdisciplinary model of care is necessary for effective provision of services to children, young people and families. Hospital play specialists provide an essential component of care and are members of the healthcare team.
12. Continuity is essential. Transition processes within and between services - health, education, respite, home and community - must foster consistency of experiences and personnel.
13. The commitment of the hospital play specialist to his or her profession, to continuing professional development, and to the Hospital Play Specialist Association Code of Ethics is essential for continued growth and excellence