

Guiding Principles

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

1. Pēpē, tamariki and rangatahi have basic rights as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the charter on the rights of tamariki children and rangatahi young people in healthcare services in Aotearoa New Zealand. In all actions concerning pēpē, tamariki and rangatahi, their best interests shall be a primary consideration.
2. Whānau have a right to services that honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by respecting Māori views and choices and their rights as tangata whenua of Aotearoa.
3. Whānau are integral to the wellbeing of pēpē, tamariki and rangatahi. Healthcare facilities and personnel should protect and promote tamariki and rangatahi sense of identity, wellbeing and belonging within their whānau, community and culture.
4. Each tamariki, rangatahi and whānau 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 tamariki and rangatahi 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 pēpē, tamariki and rangatahi 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. Tamariki and rangatahi 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 pēpē tamariki, play provides a primary means by which this may be achieved.
9. Pēpē, tamariki and rangatahi have a right to participate in hospital play programmes. These must be developed and facilitated by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Volunteers may complement the role of hospital play specialists.

10. The healthcare environment should foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing in pēpē, tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. 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. Hospital play specialists provide an essential component of care and are members of the healthcare team.

12. Bridging the gap between hospital and home is beneficial. Providing continuity in care, rituals and relationships, support holistic development. This enables whānau to manage the challenges of hospital experiences.

13. The commitment of the hospital play specialist to their profession, to continuing professional development, and to the Hospital Play Specialist Association Code of Ethics is essential for continued growth and excellence.

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¹ reviewed August 2023