



Out of Home Care Capability Framework

ACWA acknowledges the Cadigal People of the Eora Nation as the traditional owners of the lands where ACWA stands and wish to pay respect to their elders, past and present.

Introduction

ACWA's Best Practice Unit has developed the OOHC Capability Framework (NSW) as part of their response to the current changes and growth in the sector caused by legislative reform and the transition of OOHC services to non-government organisations. The aim is to give organisations that provide out of home care a structured system by which they can:

- Identify skills required by staff to effectively carry out their work role
- Assess the existing skills of staff
- Assess and address areas of skills gaps in staff
- Plan professional development activities that will contribute to the achievement of organisational goals

Capability Frameworks also have wider benefits beyond the individual staff member. They assist managers to understand the composition of their team and identify gaps in skills in the team, and they can be used as a tool in recruitment and performance management processes.

The capabilities address core elements of working in designated roles within the OOHC workforce.

Stage 1 includes the roles of:

- Foster Care Caseworker
- Residential Support Worker

Further work on this will include expanding the types of work roles examined, including management and administration support roles, and refining the lists of skills and knowledge required. The Framework will then be mapped to qualifications and accredited skills sets to provide pathways through formal education opportunities.

The skills listed in this package have been gathered from a few sources:

- Job descriptions
- Other capability frameworks
- Community Services Training Package- qualifications and units
- Caseworker development program – FACS
- OOHC Fundamentals course - FACS

What skills form the basis of this Framework?

Four domains of work were identified:

- Technical Skills
- Working With Others
- Organisational Responsibilities
- Personal Skills and Learning

The domains are broken down into skill areas, each of which has a number of statements about how skills are used in that area of work. The domain and skills areas for Stage 1 of the Capability Framework are listed in the tables below.

Table 1 – Foster Care Caseworker

Domain	Area of Skill	Specific Skill
Technical Skills	Cultural competency	Demonstrates an understanding of how underlying cultural values and norms affect communication with individuals and groups
		Develops an appropriate cultural care plan for a client and supports the client in positive identification with their culture
		Accesses networks and communities when needing guidance or information
		Considers the impact of culture in all aspects of their work
	Reporting, documentation and administration	Agency forms and documents are completed accurately, with the level of detail required to reflect and assist child-centred decision making
		Written communication is appropriate to context with use of language, grammar and structure
		Administrative tasks are completed according to the procedure and within correct timeframe
		Carries out role as mandatory reporter in accordance with legislation and agency requirements
	Casework	Case plans are written in an appropriate style of factual, non-judgemental language and using the correct grammar
		Case plans reflect the input from all relevant parties including the child, carers, birth family, professionals and the agency and this information informs the development of ongoing strategies
		Communicates with the client in a way which encourages client participation in case management processes
		Communicates sensitively with children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and is willing to adapt approach to the individual
		Use client centred goal setting strategies
		Works in a trauma informed framework with clients
		Demonstrates the ability to set clear boundaries with clients and discuss non-negotiables of service delivery
	Leaving care	Develops a leaving care plan in accordance with agency requirements and using correct documentation
		Works collaboratively with the young person to develop and implement the Leaving Care Plan
		Works with carers to support the young person transitioning from care

	Contact visits	Maintains appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients, birth parents and foster parents during contact visits
		Manages conflict and tension in a way which defuses the conflict and allows for positive work to continue
		Records contact visits according to organisational procedures
	Recruitment and retention of carers	Participates in carer recruitment activities in a way which promotes both foster care and the agency
		Carries out detailed assessment of carers, including background checks, home visits, referee checks, purposeful discussions and provision of information and support
		Makes recommendations about the suitability of potential foster carers based on assessment processes, using a required format
		Communicates with potential foster carers in a way which promotes understanding, clarifies expectations and gathers accurate information
	Foster Carer training	Delivers group foster care training sessions with receive satisfactory feedback
		Uses a coaching approach when working with individual foster carers that encourages application into practice
		Able to respond to specific needs of foster parents as they arise
	Placement coordination	Receives and analyses referrals for foster care
		Makes matches between foster parent and child or young person based on carer strengths and capabilities and the child or young person's needs
		Provides support to foster carer and child/young person in period immediately following placement
Working with Others	Oral communication	Negotiates with client, family and other service providers to ensure the needs of the client are met according to the program and case plan
	Relationships	Build supportive relationships with clients and families
		Provides information and support to other team members as needed
		Demonstrates coaching and/or mentoring skills
	Teamwork	Contributes to discussions in team meetings
Organisational Responsibilities	Work health and safety	Works within organisation's work health and safety policies and procedures to provide a safe and healthy environment for each young person
		Identifies impacts and signs of abuse and reports accordingly
	Quality improvement	Analyses current systems and procedures for areas in which improvements can be made and makes recommendations to appropriate groups

		Supports implementation of new systems to improve quality and gives constructive feedback
	Legislation and regulations	Understands and works within legislation and regulations relevant to their role
		Understands the underpinning values of the sector and makes decisions about action in accordance with these values
		Consults with youth legal services where appropriate to the needs of the young person
	Service promotion and development	Participates in network and other sector meetings
		Works collaboratively with other agencies and workers to deliver client service
Personal Skill and Learning	Personal work values	Manages own work load successfully and takes responsibility for achieving own work outcomes
		Communicates with supervisor about current workload challenges and implements appropriate strategies to manage these
		Is adaptable and flexible when adjustments to work tasks is required to meet agency goals

Table 2 – Residential Support Worker

Domain	Area of Skill	Specific Skill
Technical Skills	Cultural competency	Demonstrates an understanding of their own cultural lens and the impact this may have on their view of others
		Considers the impact of culture in all aspects of their work
		Demonstrates an understanding of cultural values and practices in communication with others, both individually and in groups and including conflict situations
		Accesses networks and communities when needing guidance or information about cultural aspects
		Develops an appropriate cultural care plan for a client and supports the client in positive identification with their culture
	Reporting, documentation and administration	Agency forms and documents are completed accurately, with the level of detail required to reflect and assist child-centred decision making
		Written communication is factual, non-judgemental and appropriate to context with use of language, grammar and structure
		Administrative tasks are completed according to the procedure and within correct timeframe
		Carries out role as mandatory reporter in accordance with legislation and agency requirements
	Casework	Communicates with clients in a way which encourages client involvement in case management processes
		Uses client centred goal setting strategies
		Employs strategies that actively include the young person in the program
		Case plans are written in an appropriate styles of factual, non-judgemental language using the correct grammar
		Case plans reflect the input from all relevant parties including the child, carers, birth family, professionals and the agency and this information informs the development of ongoing strategies
		Provides structure and routine in the placement for the client
		Participates in internal and external case conferences and reviews and provides appropriate information about the client as required
		Ensures clients attend external services and appointments
		Supports the young person to attend school and assist with homework
		Supports the young person in taking responsibility with household duties such as cleaning and cooking
		Understands and works within the agency's therapeutic care program.
	Leaving care	Develops a leaving care plan in accordance with agency requirements and using correct documentation
		Works collaboratively with the young person to develop and implement the Leaving Care Plan

		Makes and follows up appropriate referrals to assist the young person in their transition from care
	Behaviour management	Observes and monitors the behaviour of the clients and reports incidents as appropriate
		Prevents and defuses conflict and diverts behaviour in the early stages
		Is consistent, fair and objective in evaluation of behaviour and consequences for clients, and applies in line with organisational policy
		Encourages young people to accept responsibility and negotiate consequences with the young person
		Apply minimum restraint in line with organisational policy of appropriate
		Support clients with medication needs in line with organisational policy, including making and attending appointments with medical professionals
		Supports clients in identifying appropriate ways of managing stress and strong emotions
		Identify indicators of, and management techniques for client mental health and substance abuse issues and work with professionals as required
Working with Others	Oral communication	Negotiates with client, family and other service providers to ensure the needs of the client are met according to the program and case plan
	Relationships	Build supportive relationships with clients and families
	Teamwork	Contributes to discussions in team meetings
		Listens to feedback from others and respectfully considers other's points of view
		Provides information and support to other team members as needed
		Demonstrates coaching and/or mentoring skills with team members
Organisational Responsibilities	Work health and safety	Works within organisation's work health and safety policies and procedures to provide a safe and healthy environment for each young person
		Identifies impacts and signs of abuse and reports accordingly
	Quality improvement	Analyses current systems and procedures for areas in which improvements can be made and makes recommendations to appropriate groups
		Supports implementation of new systems to improve quality and gives constructive feedback
	Legislation and regulations	Understands and works within legislation and regulations relevant to their role
		Understands the underpinning values of the sector and makes decisions about action in accordance with these values
		Consults with youth legal services where appropriate to the needs of the young person
	Service promotion and development	Participates in network and other sector meetings
		Works collaboratively with other agencies and workers to deliver client service
Personal Skill and	Personal work values	Manages own work load successfully and takes responsibility for achieving own work outcomes

Learning		
		Communicates with supervisor about current workload challenges and implements appropriate strategies to manage these
		Is adaptable and flexible when adjustments to work tasks is required to meet agency goals
	Reflective practice and learning	Participates in reflective practice activities, identifies own areas where further learning is required and participates in activities to gain this learning

How to use this resource

Step 1 – Customise the list of skills to your workplace if required.

This resource lists general skills and knowledge of each of the identified work roles. You may wish to customise this by subtracting some skills that aren't relevant to your staff and adding other skills in.

It is important that you take the time to complete this step. If the lists of skills do not reflect your organisational context the staff which are completing the survey may find parts of it irrelevant.

The documents are all available in Word so that you can make any changes required.

Step 2 – Allocate responsibility for the Training Needs Analysis process.

Allocate a staff member to manage the survey process. This person will need to distribute the surveys and follow up if they are not returned. They will also need to know who to report the results to.

Step 3 – Distribute the survey

Decide which of your staff are going to be completing the survey. You may decide to survey all staff, or certain groups of staff. For example – you may limit the survey to people who have been in their current role less than one year.

As part of this step you need to decide whether to have the surveys completed anonymously or whether people will identify themselves on the survey. This depends on whether your purpose for completing the survey is to identify skills of particular staff or to identify the skills and skills gaps of your workforce in general.

Surveys can be completed on paper or digitally. The forms are available on the ACWA website

<http://www.acwa.asn.au/Resources11.html>

You may also wish to copy these questions into your Survey Monkey account. ACWA has entered the survey into our Survey Monkey account. We can provide you with a weblink that you can distribute to your staff. We will then collate all responses into a report and forward to you.

If this is the first time that you have carried out a Skills Analysis survey you may need to prepare your staff with some information about the purpose of the survey and how the information will be used.

Step 4 – Analyse the results

If you have distributed the survey anonymously your results will give you an overall view of the skills that you staff have. Consider these against the level of skills that your staff required to successfully carry out their work tasks to meet standards, goals and client needs.

If you have required staff to identify themselves you will have a report on their skills that can be the focal point of a discussion with their supervisor regarding any areas of skills gaps.

Remember that not all staff will need to be proficient in all skills. It may be that an emerging level of skill is all that is required.

Step 5 – Decide if training or other support is needed

Once you have analysed your results you need to develop a plan of action to ensure that your staff have the skills that you need. A Development Plan template is included in this package.

Options for developing skills and knowledge include:

- Coaching, buddying, mentoring
- Formal training programs – face to face, distance, online
- Workplace projects
- Acting up or sideways into other positions
- Conferences

Examples

Agency X

The Team Leader of the foster care team in one office would like an understanding of what learning areas need to be focused on over the next 12 months for his team.

He distributes the Foster Care Caseworker Training Needs Analysis to all of his caseworkers (6 in total). They are allowed to respond anonymously.

The results show the Team Leader that the area of Leaving Care is rated only as an Emerging skill for all of his team, except for one person. He suspects that this is a particular very experienced staff member and a conversation with that person confirms that this is the case.

The Team Leader decides to:

- Source some training in Leaving Care for all of his caseworkers, so that even the experienced staff member has a refresher and is brought up to date
- After discussion with the experienced staff member, allocates some of their work time to coaching the rest of the team in Leaving Care Skills.
- Provides the coach with some training in coaching skills to support their work.

Agency Y

Agency Y surveys all of their Residential Support Workers across all sites. The staff hold a variety of qualifications or have no qualifications, so it is important to make sure that they all have the skills needed.

As the purpose of this is to upskill individual staff they are required to identify themselves on their survey results.

When the results come in:

- The staff meet with their supervisors to discuss areas that should be rated more highly
- The supervisors meet to discuss overall results and, where possible, organise group training sessions for areas in which more than one staff member requires upskilling.
- Individual development plans are created for all staff and these are monitored in supervision sessions.

Agency Z

The manager at Agency Z has some concerns about the work of one particular staff member. As part of a performance improvement process, she asks the staff member to complete the Training Needs Analysis, and also completes the form herself, noting the level of skills that she feels the staff member holds.

The staff member and manager then meet and discuss:

- The differences between ratings by the staff member and their manager
- Why these differences have occurred
- What areas of work need to be improved for the staff member to be meeting their work role requirements
- What support Agency Z will provide and how the improvement will be monitored
- The training that will be provided to the staff member.

Development Centre

A Development Centre is a process that

- assesses a person's capabilities to fulfil their current job role, and
- provides advice around future personal and professional development needs.

A Development Centre benefits an individual by affirming their current skills and knowledge and identifying potential areas of growth and future career directions. For example, the process may show that the person has leadership skills that are currently not being used in their role, and may suggest a formal management qualification or a period of 'acting up' into a leadership role is undertaken.

A Development Centre benefits an organisation by providing concrete assessment of their staff's skills, and through identifying potential gaps in individual and team skills. For example, after having your team assessed the evidence may show that you need more skills in foster care recruitment.

A Development Centre uses a standardised set of skills and knowledge to assess staff against. The ACWA OOH Development Centre will assess a participant's existing skills and knowledge against the requirements of the OOH Capability Framework, and identify areas where the participant is capable of performing the work role at an emerging, developing or proficient level.

How does it work?

Any agency can use the Capability Framework without engaging in a Development Centre process. However for agencies who have limited time or expertise in workforce development, or who would prefer an independent assessment of their staff, participating in a Development Centre is a worthwhile option.

The Development Centre process has three components:

- Preparatory activities
- A 2 day workshop
- Concluding activities

Preparatory activities can include the completion of self assessments, personality profiles or similar profiling instruments that identify generic strengths and ways of working. There will also be some collection of work samples, and online quizzes to test some of the knowledge components of the Framework.

The two day workshop is a structured series of group and individual activities. This will include group discussions, role plays, individual written exercises, small group activities, case scenarios and presentations. Participants will be observed by qualified assessors, but will also have a role in providing feedback on the performance of other participants.

Following the workshop there will be a debriefing by the assessor, and an opportunity to submit or complete any other tasks.

The information gathered from these three components will then be analysed and the participant will receive a personalised report.

Development Centres can be organised for staff from one organisation, or for staff from a variety of organisations and can involve anywhere between 4 and 12 staff.

Further Information

How can ACWA assist you?

ACWA can assist you by:

- Providing the materials related to this program free of charge to member agencies
- Providing access to the surveys in Survey Monkey
- Allocating a learning and development team member to discuss results of the analysis process
- Assisting with development of learning plans for individuals or for teams
- Organising a Development Centre process for your team or individual staff members.

How can you help ACWA and the sector?

ACWA would appreciate any feedback on the contents of the Framework and how it has been used.

A Feedback and Evaluation Form has been included with this package and is also available on our website in the Resources section. Please return this to Linda Watson (details below)

For further information

For further information on this process please contact:

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