Learning Guide

CHCCOM005
Communicate and work in health or community services
This publication is one of a number of learning guides produced by The Australian Medical Association (WA) Inc as a resource for the health sector. It is utilised within AMA Training Services and Health Training Australia as a training resource and within the workplace as a support guide.

The development of this workbook was undertaken by a number of trainers and developers within AMA and HTA, who have both industry knowledge and specific expertise in the course content.

Although every effort has been made to present reliable and accurate information, the AMA will assume no responsibility for outcomes and actions resulting from the application of the information presented in this workbook. Users are encouraged to confirm application in conjunction with protocols within their specific work environment.

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INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

This learning guide will assist you in developing skills and knowledge to work effectively in the health industry and to apply these skills to your workplace and daily tasks.

Training

Competence means that you have the required knowledge and skills to do your job. These are described in ‘competency standards’. Your training will be based on these to make sure it is relevant to the needs of your job and yourself.

The purpose of the training is to develop your workplace competence, so you will be expected to practise your skills whenever you can. This can be done through work experience, practical sessions in a training organisation or through your full time or part-time job. It is important that you have both theoretical and practical skills and knowledge.

On and Off-the-Job Training

Your training may consist of on-the-job coaching with your workplace supervisor and/or trainer on a one-to-one or small group basis. It may also involve formal training sessions conducted off-the-job in addition to working through your learning guide. Make sure you ask lots of questions, complete the activities.

If you do not understand any part of the unit please contact your Trainer.

Assessment

Once you have completed your training and practised your skills, you will be ready to have your skills and knowledge assessed. The purpose of this is not to see if you can pass a test but to determine if you can perform work tasks competently.
**Tips for Students**

Read through the information in the learning guide carefully. Make sure you understand the material. If you come across anything you do not understand:

- Discuss your training with your trainer and make sure you understand what is required and how the training will be organised.
- Ask for feedback on your progress as you work through the activities.
- Ask for help when you need it. Talk to more experienced colleagues or your trainer and ask for their guidance.
- Listen, take notes, ask questions and practise your new skills as often as possible. This way you will improve your speed, memory, and also your confidence.
- During your training, you should seek other sources of information as well; e.g. reference books, the internet.
- Try to relate the information presented in this learning guide to your own experiences and to what you already know.
- Work through the activities. They are there for a reason and even if you already have the knowledge or skills relating to a particular activity, doing them will help to reinforce what you already know. If you do not understand an activity, think carefully about the way the question or instructions are phrased.

*Students are to read through the learning guide and work through the assignments.*
This learning guide will provide you with the knowledge required to communicate effectively with clients, colleagues, management and other industry providers and applies to a range of health and community service contexts where workers may communicate face-to-face, in writing or using digital media and work with limited responsibility under direct or indirect supervision.

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to apply these skills to your daily work duties in order to support the client meet their care needs.

The unit which is covered in this learning guide will provide you with an understanding of:

- Communicating effectively with people.
- Collaborating with colleagues.
- Addressing constraints to communication.
- Reporting problems to supervisor.
- Completing workplace correspondence and documentation.
- Contributing to continuous improvement.

This unit applies to all care workers in the care sector, which includes those working with clients in a group home, residential facility and in a home and community care environment.

If you have any questions about this learning guide contact:

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

This learning guide will provide you with information that will assist you to work as part of a team and effectively communicate with clients, staff and health care professionals and to work ethically within the health or community sector.

• Explain the meaning of communication.
• Demonstrate effective communication.
• Describe barriers to communication.
• Describe what a team is.
• Demonstrate understanding of your role and responsibility within the team.
• Describe how your work with others reflects an understanding of cultural differences and diversity.
• Describing the meaning of ethical and unethical work practices.
• Explaining the meaning of ‘Duty of Care’.
• Identifying your obligations in respect to breaches in workplace policies and procedures.
• Demonstrating commitment to the values and philosophy underpinning the health sector.
• Reflecting of own work practices in the workplace.

Knowledge Evidence

This learning guide provides you with the knowledge required of this unit.

The unit of competency requires you to demonstrate the essential knowledge required to effectively complete tasks outlined in elements and performance criteria of this unit (to see the complete unit refer to your Record Book). Manage tasks and manage contingencies in the context of the work role.

• Legal and ethical considerations in relation to communication:
  - Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure.
  - Discrimination.
  - Duty of care.
  - Mandatory reporting.
  - Translation.
  - Informed consent.
  - Work role boundaries – responsibilities and limitations.
  - Child protection across all health and community services contexts, including duty of care when child is not the client, indicators of risk and adult disclosure.
• Sources of information and the application of legal and ethical aspects of health and community services work.
• Ethical decision making and conflicts of interest.
• Principles of effective communication, including models, modes and types.
• Communication techniques:
  - Open ended questions, affirmations, reflections and summaries.
  - Difference between motivational interviewing and coercive approach.
  - Difference between collaboration and confrontation.
• Influences on communication:
  - Language.
  - Culture.
- Religion.
- Emotional state.
- Disability.
- Health.
- Age.

- Potential constraints to effective communication in health and community service contexts.
- Health and community services industry terminology relating to role and service provision.
- Importance of grammar, speed and pronunciation for verbal communication.
- When and how to use and recognise non-verbal communication.
- Structure, function and interrelationships between different parts of the health and community service system.

- Organisation structure and different models to support optimum client service:
  - Principles underpinning person-centred service delivery.
  - Principles of rights-based service delivery.
  - Different roles and responsibilities of team.
  - Characteristics of multi-disciplinary teams and how they are used.
  - Relationships between different members of the health and community services workforces.
  - Role of support services.
  - Links and interrelationships with other services.
  - Funding environment.

- Digital media and use in community services and health sector, including:
  - Web.
  - Email.
  - Social media.
  - Podcast and videos.
  - Tablets and applications.
  - Newsletters and broadcasts.
  - Intranet.
COMMUNICATION

Having a clear understanding of how your organisation operates and communicates helps you to know where you ‘fit into the team’ and your roles and responsibilities within that team. An organisational chart is a useful way of illustrating these relationships and communication channels.

QUESTION: What is communication?

ANSWER: Communication is a two-way process involving the sending and receiving of information through a medium. The medium may be written, verbal or even non-verbal.

Organisations establish their preferred communication practices through a variety of means. The mission statement may indicate the overall ‘communication climate’.

For example, the mission statement of the Australian Red Cross reads:

“To be a leading humanitarian organisation in Australia, improving the lives of vulnerable people through services delivered and promotion of humanitarian laws and values”. Australian Red Cross, Our Mission, www.redcross.org.au/aboutus_missionprinciples_default.htm

Already this gives us an indication of the way this organisation aims to operate and communicate with others.

Other formal indications of communication methods will be outlined in the policies and procedures manual.

Essentially though, it is the day-to-day operations of the organisation that govern communication practices. Guidelines for some practices may be unspoken and unwritten but clear through direct observation of care workers. For example, how care worker’s breaks are allocated and what the accepted dress standards of the organisation are.

Communication Facts

Effective communication involves the sender considering how to send the message:

TRANSMISSION

What is said, words of the message.

When it will be said.

How it will be said, tone, timing, etc.

To whom it will be said.

Its effect on the listener.

INTERFERENCE

The way the listener decodes the message will depend on a number of factors e.g. is there any background noise, could they understand the senders accent and language, does the way the sender said something have the same meaning in the receivers language.
The following guidelines may be useful in improving your communication skills with co-workers, clients and others in the work environment and overcoming barriers:

- Use clear and brief (‘to the point’) language, when both speaking and writing.
- Use language appropriate for the listener – e.g. avoid using medical terminology if the person is not familiar with it.
- Never use language that discriminates (by sex, gender, age, race, disability, etc).
- Remain objective when possible (e.g. do not place your own interpretation on messages or information).
- Use emotion and empathy appropriately, with clients AND co-workers.
- BE HONEST.

Communication can take many different forms, all forms should reflect an understanding and respect for clients and colleagues individual differences and needs. Communication should be clear and relevant to the situation or the activities being undertaken. Touch and other non-verbal means of communication should be used appropriately.

**Verbal**

the process of communication in its simplest form is two-way, between two people.

**Non-verbal**

are signals you can give out when communicating, either intentionally or unintentional, which may conflict the message you are trying to send. These messages are behind the main message and they can have an effect on how the other person responds to what you are saying.

**Tone, pitch and voice are known as ‘paralinguistic’**

This facet of nonverbal communication includes such vocal elements as:

- Tone.
- Pitch.
- Rhythm.
- Timbre.
- Loudness.
- Inflection.

Voice quality - the manner in which a verbal statement is presented, e.g. its rhythm, breathiness, hoarseness or loudness.

Tone - reflects emotion and mood. It may also carry social information, as in a sarcastic, superior, or submissive manner of speaking.

A significant number of voice qualities are universal across differing cultures, (though they are subject to cultural modification and shaping).
1. Around the world, adults use higher pitched voices to speak to infants and young children.
2. The softer pitch is innately ‘friendly’ and suggests a non-aggressive pose.
3. With each other, men and women use higher pitched voices in greetings.
4. In almost every language, speakers use a rising intonation to ask a question. The higher register appeases the request for information, and is often accompanied by a palm-up gestures and submissive shoulder-shrugs.
5. We use changes in pitch to convey meaning. Voices can be insistent, pleading, questioning, whining, demanding, etc.

**Positive and Negative Communication**

Communication can be positive and negative and this can have an effect on the outcome of a conversation.

Positive communication is about cognitions and experiences and negative communications are about emotions and dissatisfaction (though the person spreading dissatisfaction is usually satisfied).

**POSITIVE** - examples
- Facing people when they speak to you.
- Looking interested in what they are saying.
- Asking clarifying questions.
- Having open, friendly body language.

POSITIVE communication - “Hi Jane would you like me to help you hoist Mrs Jones into her chair”?

**NEGATIVE** - examples
- You are talking to a person and they turn away.
- Arguments.
- Aggressive body language.
- Inappropriate use of language, swearing at other staff members.
- Making fun of others e.g. what they are wearing, their new haircut, the way they work, or their accent.
- Having someone standing over you while they talk to you, or shouting at you.
- Yelling to you from another room.
- ‘TALK TO THE HAND’ is being negative.
- Poking and pointing can be viewed as negative.

NEGATIVE communication - “I suppose you want me to give you a hand to hoist her don’t you” using a sarcastic tone?