



# COMBINED CARE: ACTIVITY PLANNING

Because of the number of potential variables involved in providing combined care, staff need planning time to ensure they are prepared to meet the needs of both long-term children and the variety of short-term children who may require care.

One advantage of offering a Combined Care program, is that the same play materials and equipment can be used by both long-term and short-term children. On the other hand, because a Combined program must be prepared for unexpected numbers of children, it will require additional items to meet the varied needs of the short-term children. In fact, it may be a good idea to provide additional play materials in the form of “activity kits” that can be stored when not in use.

If Combined Care is offered only on scheduled days or by enrolment, plans can include games and activities suitable for both types of care. Planning is more challenging when a program offers drop-in care without advance notice.

## **Tips for Combined Care Activity Planning:**

When caring for short-term children, staff should plan a range of activities that can be implemented on short notice – with an individual child or with the group. Planned activities should be suitable for varying ages and materials should be prepared in advance. Activities might be modular and organized in mobile activity kits that can be easily stored until needed.

When offering Combined Care, it is helpful to have an activity in progress when short-term children arrive. If new children are immediately invited to participate in free play, they may stand on the sidelines, and be unsure of how to join in.

If possible, plan a “take home” activity so that short-term children have a link between the program and home, and a positive souvenir of their experience. If it is their first time in the program, this souvenir will make them more willing to return.

When offering Combined Care, long-term children should not be disturbed by the arrival of short-term children, and measures to support short-term children should not interrupt the smooth functioning of the program. If routines for welcoming and caring for short-term children are established and consistently followed whenever a new child arrives, they will be less disruptive for long-term children. (See Developing a Welcome Plan).