

Tarome's Early Learning Centre



10 December 2020

Kia Orana,

My name is Liz Harawira, owner of Tarome's Early Learning Centre, we provide quality childcare for children ages 1-5 years, I have two centres here in Rarotonga, one in Arorangi and the other in Tupapa, this is our 3rd year of operating.

Before opening my Arorangi centre, I learnt that Early Childcare providers have no requirements, regulations to follow or guidelines in place for basic requirements for the child's well-being. Te Marae Ora (TMO) currently have no certification for this area, nor have they inspected either of my centres upon request.

As an early childhood provider from New Zealand, this has been a shocking precedence set by my homeland. The learning, well-being, safety and development of our children is very crucial.

To set an example and ensure quality care is provided, these are some of the things I have implemented within my centres:

Ratios

We have a strict 1:5 Adult to child ratio, meaning every five children on session will have one Adult and child educator, with only one baby (baby is between the age of 12 months and 18 months). The only exception is made for Children 5 years and over, this enables my staff to engage with children and properly care and tend to their needs.

Premises

Both centres are fully fenced, where no child can exit the building without adult supervision, both have limited access to the kitchen and bathroom and sleeping room, these areas require assistance from our Educator's as there are gates at these areas. There is adequate ventilation throughout the buildings, fans installed and open plan areas to allow for good clean comfortable air. Both our centres are fully equipped with the necessary utilities and equipment our children need throughout the day of being in care.

Equipment

We provide each child with their own bed and linen, there is strictly no bed and linen sharing in any of our centres, our 12 to 18 month old babies have their own cot, and our older children have their own stretcher bed, all linen is washed at

the end of each week. All our toys and furniture are checked regularly and disposed of if broken and hazardous to the children.

Cleaning Schedules

Our staff follow a very strict cleaning schedule throughout our daily sessions, we have a set eating area, this is cleaned throughout the day because we have an open lunch box system in place and the area is swept and wiped down regularly.

A daily morning check is done prior to the children entering the outdoor area, where the grounds are checked for animal droppings, and the area is raked from falling leaves. Our whole centre is vacuumed, swept and mopped with disinfectant at the end of each day, all tables are disinfected as well as our kitchen. At the end of each week, all our linen, which includes bedding, dress ups, couch coverings and towels are washed and dried.

All our play equipment and toys are bleached and disinfected then sundried every 4 weeks, sometimes more, dependent on the use, or if a child has broken out with a contagious skin infection. Our Sandpit is bleached every 3 months, or if there is an outbreak of skin infections (1 child defines an outbreak). Our lawns are cut every 2 weeks and the grass clippings are removed from the play areas.

Childcare Subsidies

Currently subsidies to the centres and providers are given to centres who follow the Ministry of Educations guidelines and become a registered centre, this amount is \$100 per year, per child between the ages of 3 to 5 years old, however these centres are government operated, their overheads and staff are paid by the government, therefore, low fees are charged to the families.

There are currently no subsidies for children 3 years and below.

It is obvious that the majority of our day cares here in Rarotonga are very poorly equipped and operated. They have not been given set guidelines and solely function as a babysitting service, it is vital these services continue to function as they are needed here to enable families to go to work, and provide for their homes, however regulations and health and safety requirements should be set, to protect our children and to support their learning and development.

I believe childcare subsidies should put in place to regulate all centres, this can be set out in two parts, one to the provider, and the other for the child's family indirectly.

1. Providers – Set regulations and guidelines put in place, to qualify for this, centre inspections should be conducted, 1 scheduled visit and 2 unscheduled visits throughout the year, or more.
2. Children – Strick and set guidelines put in place, offering child care subsidies based on household income and expenses, funds should NOT go directly to the families, only to registered centres.

It would be great to see this implemented here in Rarotonga, where the Government is seen to directly supporting low income families as well as the well-being, and learning and development of our future leaders.

Early intervention is the key to success and if we invest in our future early then we have a better opportunity to build our future leaders.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Meitaki Ma'ata,