



association for the wellbeing
of children in healthcare

AWCH

Ward Grandparent Scheme Guidelines

March 1995

Revised March 2004



association for the wellbeing
of children in healthcare

'helping you help kids'



www.awch.org.au

The Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare (AWCH) is a national, non-profit organisation of parents, professionals and community members who work together to ensure the emotional and social needs of children, adolescents and their families are recognised and met within hospitals and the health care system in Australia. We believe in:

- access to quality healthcare for all children and young people
- valuing the opinions of children, young people and their families in the delivery of healthcare
- families playing a vital role supporting children and young people receiving healthcare
- fostering partnerships between parents/carers and health care providers
- the provision of culturally sensitive healthcare services
- appropriate information and resources being readily accessible
- challenging the status quo to advance our mission

AWCH tries to ensure a holistic family-oriented approach to the care of children, acknowledging that families are the main support and strength for children and young people when they are sick or have a chronic illness or condition.

BACKGROUND

'When health care for the child is necessary within a hospital setting or other health care service, a close and continuous relationship between the child and the family/carer should be encouraged and maintained.' (AWCH Health Care Policy Relating to Children and their Families, October 1974).

Parents are often prevented from giving their hospitalised child or adolescent the support they require because of restrictions imposed by distance, family, work or parental health needs. The AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme provides surrogate care for children whose parents/carers can't be there.

The AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme, first established in 1986 at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children by AWCH, is a practical expression of AWCH philosophy and policies carried forward by volunteers working with health professionals, children, adolescents and their families in hospitals throughout Australia.

The ward grandparent is assigned to an individual child for the duration of their stay in hospital or as required by the parent. Contact between the ward grandparent and the child's family prior to meeting the child is important to ensure that the ward grandparent is identified as a resource for the family and to establish a co-operative relationship with the parents.

Hospitals participating in the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme include:

- Allowah Presbyterian Children's Hospital at Dundas, NSW
- Campbelltown Hospital, NSW
- Gosford Hospital, NSW
- John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle, NSW
- Liverpool Hospital, NSW
- Manning Base Hospital, Taree, NSW
- Port Macquarie Base Hospital, NSW
- Royal North Shore Hospital, NSW
- St George Hospital at Kogarah, NSW
- Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick, NSW
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead, NSW
- The Sutherland Hospital, NSW

AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparents have a dual role:

- to provide respite for parents/carers and
- to provide regular contact and support to children in hospital

Key principles:

- Where practical a ward grandparent may be primarily identified with one ward/unit so that a comfortable relationship be developed with staff.
- Parental permission must be gained and if possible a meeting between the parent and ward grandparent be arranged prior to contact with the child.
- A ward grandparent is associated with only one child and family at any given time. This is to enable the child to form a "special" relationship with the ward grandparent.
- Relevant information about the child's condition, treatment and possible length of stay should be given to the ward grandparent by the social worker or the ward grandparent volunteer coordinator at the hospital. Ward grandparents should not read medical notes or comment on a child's medical condition to the parents, with other parents/visitors on the ward or other volunteers. Parents should be encouraged to contact ward staff for information.
- The focus is on the child's emotional well being - the ward grandparent responds to the individual child's needs. Ward grandparents attend to things such as nursing, feeding, changing nappies, bathing, calming, playing, talking, singing, going on walks with the child or implementing special instructions in handling the child. Ward grandparents may work under the direction from the health staff as to the special needs of the child.
- Ward grandparents do not:
 - ✚ give medications or perform nursing duties
 - ✚ hold a syringe used for tube feeding
 - ✚ feed the child with anything other than food or drink presented by nursing staff
 - ✚ visit child when he/she has an infection which may be contagious
- Ward grandparents should feel free to take breaks between children, have holidays etc, but it is important that the Hospital Co-ordinator is advised of dates when unavailable for assignment.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

At the completion of the negotiations to commence the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme at a hospital/health facility, it is recommended that a paediatric social worker or other relevant health care worker act as the hospital co-ordinator for Scheme.

Prior to the introduction of the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme to a hospital/health facility, an AWCH Representative presents an outline of the Scheme to staff through hospital in-service education. This presentation should include the requirement that a ward grandparent be assigned to an individual child and that ward grandparents should not be seen as an extra pair of hands in the ward for miscellaneous tasks.

Establishing the Scheme

Hospital/ health facility to implement a publicity drive for ward grandparents in the local media in consultation with AWCH:

- advertisement to nominate AWCH as the initial telephone contact for enquiries.
- AWCH to outline scheme to respondents and assess their availability/suitability for the scheme.
- AWCH forwards material to relevant applicants.
- Completed application forms to be returned to the AWCH who will photocopy the application and forward original to the relevant hospital coordinator.

Hospital Coordinator Role

- Receives and processes application forms according to hospital/health facility policy.
 - ✚ contacts applicants for interview
 - ✚ contacts referees
 - ✚ arranges criminal record check
 - ✚ ensures new ward grandparent is covered by hospital volunteers insurance
 - ✚ arranges attendance at child protection education
 - ✚ arranges photo ID
 - ✚ negotiates with AWCH an orientation date for new ward grandparents

NB: it is desirable that orientation include the following:

- ✚ An overview of AWCH and its activities
 - ✚ Education about the special needs of hospitalised children
 - ✚ Introduction to the key members of the multi disciplinary team
 - ✚ Relevant hospital policies/protocols including OH & S
-
- Establish a system with NUMS to identify and notify when a ward grandparent is required.
 - Maintain an availability list of ward grandparents.
 - Discuss with parents the possibility of a ward grandparent being involved.
 - Ensure that the ward grandparent and parents have contact before the ward grandparent is introduced to the new child.
 - Introduce child to the ward grandparent.
 - Be available for support, advice and information while the ward grandparent is in contact with the child.
 - Ensure that the ward grandparent keeps a daily diary of contacts which should include hours and days for statistical purposes. This record should be kept in the hospital coordinator's department file and will be helpful when reviewing the Scheme.
 - Provide annual statistics to AWCH of ward grandparent hours, days and number of children supported. These statistics are presented to NSW Department of Health by June 30 each year for annual funding accountabilities.

- With parent's permission ward grandparents may be given/take a photograph of the child.
- When the ward grandparent's contact with the child ends, offer an opportunity to debrief and reflect on the experience.
- The hospital coordinator to convene regular meetings with the ward grandparents to provide opportunities for processing experiences and debriefing. These meetings facilitate the development of peer support and group identity.
- Hospital coordinators to ensure AWCH travel claim forms are distributed to ward grandparents and countersigned before forwarding to AWCH for processing.
- Hospital coordinators to ensure that regular contact is made with the ward grandparent.

AWCH HOSPITAL WARD GRANDPARENT ROLE

AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparents are encouraged to become members of AWCH at a reduced annual membership fee.

- Potential ward grandparents should have a clear understanding of the commitment to visit the hospitalised child up to three to five days a week for up to three to five hours a day.
- Where possible ward grandparents are allocated in rotation, but they should feel free to decline working in a specific ward or with an age group, if they feel unable to cope with a particular situation.
- It is expected that if parents or other family members arrive to visit the child unexpectedly, the ward grandparent will leave, unless expressly asked to stay by parents/carers.
- Ward grandparents may travel outside the hospital/health facility with children when they are attending tests and procedures on a day only basis, but should always be accompanied by medical or nursing staff. The hospital must ensure that the volunteers' insurance covers the ward grandparents on such an excursion.
- As a general rule, a ward grandparent should attend only one hospital. If a child is to be admitted to another hospital and the ward grandparent is transferred with the child, the social worker and /or hospital coordinator should liaise with each other and arrange volunteer status in the new hospital.
- On occasions two ward grandparents may "share" care for a child in order to give contact seven days per week for a long term unaccompanied child. Where this occurs, the two ward grandparents concerned may alter times and days with each other if necessary, but should inform ward staff. No other arrangements should be made between ward grandparents, however, without the consent of the child's social worker and/or coordinator.
- Under no circumstances should a child be allowed to go home with a ward grandparent either during hospitalisation on a gate pass or after hospitalisation.
- Ward grandparents should be encouraged to separate from their child at the hospital and be given the opportunity to say "goodbye" to the child. If the child goes home the hospital coordinator needs to inform the ward grandparent so that they do not make a wasted trip to the hospital. The ward grandparent should only make contact after separation if initiated by the parents/carers. If the child makes contact, the ward grandparent may respond, taking care to include the parents in the response. The ward grandparent should discuss ongoing contact with the hospital coordinator.

- The ward grandparent should complete an availability form when the child is discharged and indicate to the coordinator whether he/she is available to work with another child, or would like a break.
- In the event of a child being re-admitted to hospital/health facility, the same ward grandparent may be given the option of having that child again. If a ward grandparent already is providing care for a child, he/she will stay with the current child. If the current child will shortly be leaving then it may be possible for a ward grandparent to provide care for the two children for a brief period. Although this may not be possible as the children may be in different parts of the hospital.
- Travel reimbursement is provided by AWCH. Ward grandparents are encouraged to claim travel costs to avoid financial hardship. See the claim form in the appendix.
- Ward grandparents will be asked to follow hospital orientation procedures prior to starting. This includes criminal record and reference checks, child protection training and other parts of orientation as deemed appropriate for volunteers.

AWCH ROLE

- Liaise with hospital/health facility re the ward gran scheme publicity drive. This could be for the initial establishment of the Scheme at a hospital/health facility and/or when the hospital/health facility is ready to expand the number of grandparents.
- Provide initial contact in response to advertising by answering telephone enquiries about how the Scheme works and the commitment required.
- Forward information and application forms to respondents. Applicants should be encouraged to make a realistic assessment of their personal commitments to ensure that they will be able to set aside the time required.
- Collate and photocopy application forms (for AWCH records) and forward originals to the hospital coordinator for processing.
- Attend orientation day for new ward grandparents to provide an AWCH perspective and to develop a liaison link with the ward grandparents.
- Provide a secondary support to ward grandparents who may wish to talk about a concern to someone outside the hospital environment. AWCH may be able to assist in the resolving of any communication difficulties with hospital staff that may arise.
- Attend regular meetings with the ward grandparents and the hospital coordinators.
- Speak on behalf of AWCH about the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme to hospital/health facilities and community groups.
- AWCH to keep a list of current ward grandparents, updated in June each year for the generation of annual membership fee invoices.
- Process the reimbursement of travel costs to ward grandparents and maintain appropriate records.
- Acknowledge the ward grandparents' contribution by providing an annual training day.
- Arrange an annual thank you lunch for ward grandparents.



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**Association for the Wellbeing of Children in
Healthcare (AWCH)**

ABN 33 119 036 261

Bldg 40B, Gladesville Hospital, Cnr Victoria & Punt
Roads, GLADESVILLE NSW 2111

T: 02 9817 2439

F: 02 9879 4346

Parent Line: 1800 244 396 (outside Sydney)

E: awch@awch.com.au

W: www.awch.org.au

Appendix 2

sample

AWCH Ward Grandparent Scheme Application



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ABN 33 119 036 261
Bldg 40B, Gladesville Hospital
Cnr Victoria & Punt Roads
GLADESVILLE NSW 2111
Tel: 02 9817 2439
Fax: 02 9879 4346
Parent Line: 1800 244 396
(outside Sydney)
E: awch@awch.com.au
W: www.awch.org.au

Thank you for your interest in becoming an AWCH Ward Grandparent.

Please complete and return this form, so that we can commence the recruitment process.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Age: 30-44yrs 45-60yrs Over 60yrs

Hospital of Interest Please tick or number your preference 1 to 3 (1 being your first choice)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick | <input type="checkbox"/> The Children's Hospital at Westmead |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Royal North Shore Hospital, North Sydney | <input type="checkbox"/> St George Hospital, Kogarah |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liverpool Hospital | <input type="checkbox"/> Gosford Hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle | <input type="checkbox"/> Port Macquarie Base Hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Sutherland Hospital | <input type="checkbox"/> Manning Base Hospital, Taree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campbelltown Hospital | <input type="checkbox"/> Allowah Presbyterian Children's Hospital, Dundas |

Who should we contact in an emergency? Name: _____

Telephone number/s _____ Relationship to you: _____

Please nominate 2 referees Please ensure to inform your referees that we will telephone them for a reference

1. Name: _____ Telephone: _____

2. Name: _____ Telephone: _____

AWCH is a non-government organisation funded by NSW Ministry of Health

- Do you have experience with children?** Yes No
- Would you be happy to work with a child with a disability?** Yes No
- Do you speak a language in addition to English? (if so, please specify)** Yes No
- Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?** Yes No
- Have you done voluntary work before?** Yes No
- What days are you available to visit a child in hospital?**
- Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri
- Occasionally a child may require a Ward Grandparent for a longer period of time, for example 1 week. Would you be available in these circumstances?** Yes No

Please attach any additional information you would like to give.

NB: It is a requirement that all staff/volunteers dealing with children undergo a criminal record check, conducted by the relevant authorities in your state.

I hereby wish to apply to become a Ward Grandparent, and agree to the necessary checks being done.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

What happens next?

Please return your application to:

Anne Cutler, AWCH Program Officer
 AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme
 Building 40B, Corner Victoria & Punt Roads
 GLADESVILLE NSW 2111
 or email to: awch@awch.com.au or fax to: 02 9879 4346

Once your application has been processed you will be contacted by the hospital to arrange an interview time. Meanwhile, should you have any queries, please feel free to contact Anne Cutler, AWCH Program Officer on 02 9817 2439 or 1800 244 396 (outside Sydney).

Thank you for your interest in the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme.

AWCH is a non-government organisation funded by NSW Department of Health

'Granny' spreads TLC

By SUE CONVEY

JAN Benson has lost count of her extended brood.

Mrs Benson shows off dozens of smiling faces in her brag book – like any proud grandmother would – even though she has spent no more than six weeks with any one of them.

The 56-year-old is something of a surrogate grandmother to young St George Hospital patients whose parents cannot always be with them.

Known as a "ward grandmother", Mrs Benson spends four days a week by the bedsides of her ill or injured charges reading, playing card games, watching television and playing computer games.

Most are long-term patients such as four-year-old Joseph Tuazon, who was hit by a car and will have his left leg in traction for the next four weeks.

"I get a lot of children in traction," Mrs Benson said.

"Oddly enough, they're usually boys.

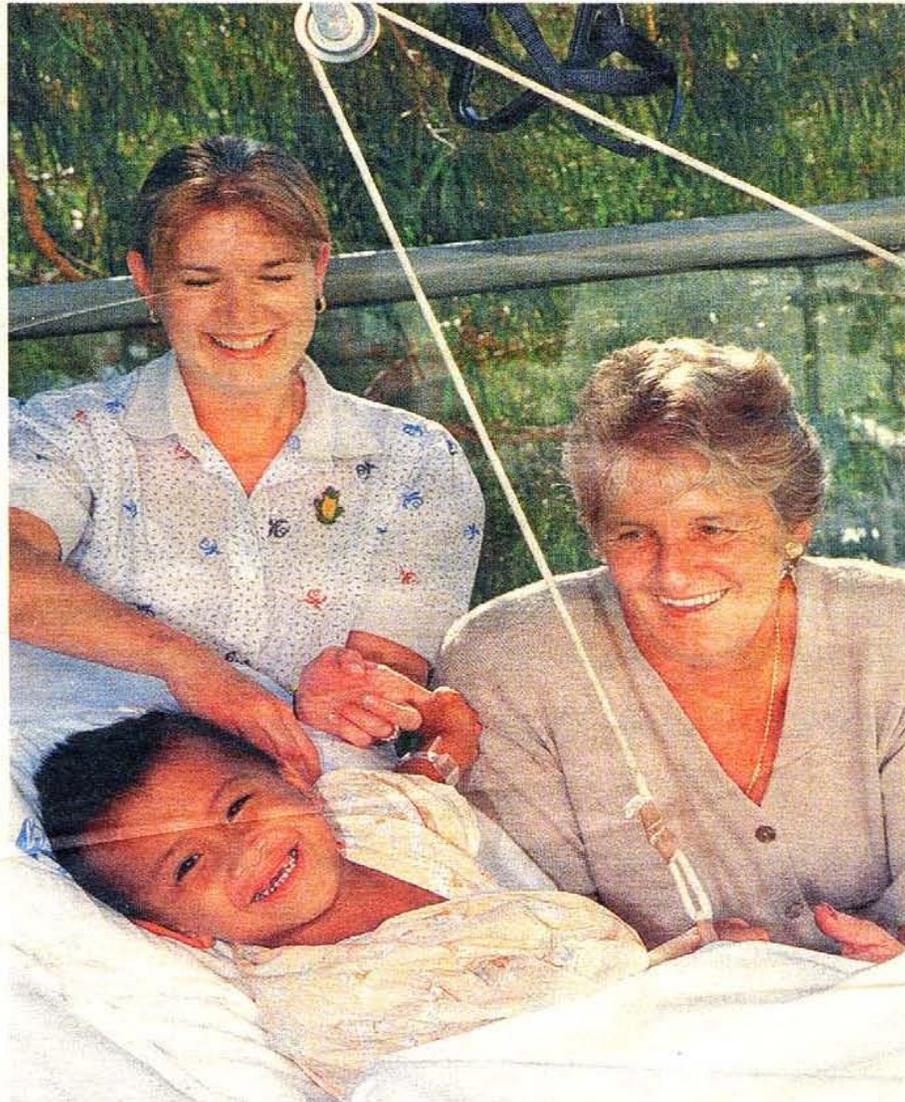
"I usually see each child for about four or five weeks. It just depends on what the child is in for and what the parents' situation is."

Mrs Benson, who actually has no grandchildren of her own, said many parents worked and could not get the necessary leave to spend each day with their child, while others had other children to tend to and little family support.

"Sometimes, I'm just needed for a morning or afternoon, and other times I'm there all day," she said. "But it's not something you can do just here and there. You have to be available on a regular basis."

The hospital ward grandparent scheme began in 1973 at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children to meet the emotional needs of children in hospital and their parents.

The program was adopted by St George in 1995, but numbers



■ TRACTION-BOUND Joseph Tuazon laps up the attention from nurse Julie Evans and his adopted grandmother Jan Benson
Photo: DAVID MARIUZ

have thinned recently, making it difficult for Mrs Benson to cover all bases.

She said the main criteria were a love of children and free time.

"I find it rewarding because I

like children and I like communicating with children," Mrs Benson said. "More often than not, I prefer communicating with children to adults.

"The kids can be a bit hard to get to know at first because

they're a bit shy, but once you break the ice they're a lot of fun."

For more details about how to volunteer for the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme, please contact AWCH:
Ph: 02 9817 2439
Ph: 1800 244 396 (outside Sydney)
Email: awch@awch.com.au