

2007 NSW Health Awards – Project Award Entry
Ambulance Service of NSW

Title

Be an Ambulance Hero: Dial Zero Zero Zero

Abstract

The “Be an Ambulance Hero; Dial Zero Zero Zero” school education program was developed by the Ambulance Service of NSW to assist teachers to educate Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 students (5-8 years of age) on how and when to call an ambulance and encourage the learning of vital life-saving skills.

This program was developed by Ambulance in conjunction with State, Catholic and Independent education boards. All students receive take-home merchandise and every primary school in NSW (approx. 2,400) received free copies of the program in February 2007.

The program is supported by opportunities for an ambulance officer visit and a special children’s sized ambulance so students can interact with equipment and the intimidation factor can be subtly addressed.

Aim

The Program aims to diffuse the confusion concerning emergencies, educate children that the emergency number in Australia is ‘000’ and develop their confidence and skills to call an ambulance.

Nature of the problem

It is often the case that children are responsible for calling ‘000’. They become solely responsible for directing the ambulance to the address and explaining the nature of the incident to ambulance call takers.

Due to the influence of international television shows, children were confusing the emergency number in Australia ‘000’ with ‘911’.

Children also encountered problems differentiating a little accident from a big accident and feedback provided by staff and the public clearly showed that children are intimidated by emergency vehicles in real-life situations. In particular, children typically associate needles with ambulances and hospitals.

Extent of the problem

Research consultants were contracted to establish the current level of knowledge of the target audience. Results were used to formulate the key objectives, learning outcomes and basic content for the program.

The NSW Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission and Association of Independent Schools reviewed the content and endorsed the program under the key learning area Personal Development, Health and

Physical Education – a mandatory part of the curriculum taught at all NSW schools.

A purposive sample of schools across NSW participated in a trial. Evaluation focused on the acceptability and effectiveness of key messages, methodology used to deliver content and also the degree to which the resource kit would be used by teachers.

Results confirmed overwhelming support of the program and teachers found the material and teaching methodology (particularly the role-play section) effective for ensuring children remember what to do in an emergency.

Strategic importance

NSW Health's strategic directions of prevention, continuing community care and working partnerships are pertinent to this program. This program is considered preventative as it provides children with the skills to identify potential medical emergencies.

The geographic scope of schools who have received this program has also allowed Ambulance to establish functional working relationships.

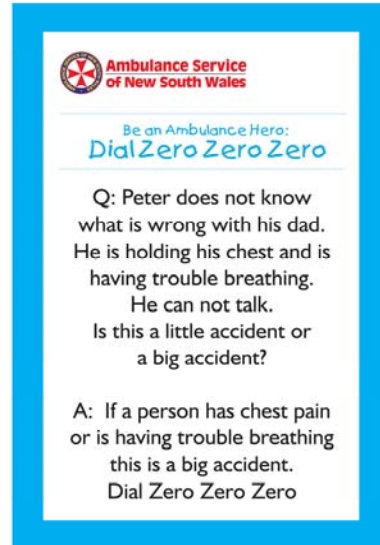
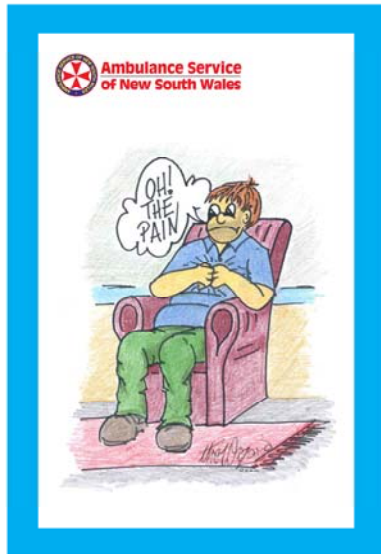
Ambulance's 2006-2010 corporate plan outlines its commitment to promote appropriate use of triple zero and an assurance to develop educational programs for the community. This program is a great example of our progress so far.

Planning and implementing solutions

A teacher resource kit was developed in consultation with teachers to enable them to deliver the following lessons:

Recognising an emergency...

This is explained using terms such as 'big accidents' and 'little accidents' to assist in comprehending the types of situations requiring an ambulance. A set of five flashcards depicting different scenarios are included and are held up in front of the students by the teacher.



CAPTION: The picture on the left is the front side of a flashcard shown to students depicting the scenario. The picture on the right is the back side of the flashcard that provides teachers with the scenario answer and explanation.

What to do in an emergency...

Students are taught how to identify an unconscious person by shouting their name and squeezing their shoulders.

Calling an ambulance...

If there is no adult available, students are taught that the emergency number in Australia is zero zero zero (000).

What happens when you call an ambulance...

When calling '000', a standard set of questions is asked by ambulance call takers. These questions are explained so that students understand how to answer them.

Calling '000' roleplay...

Students practice calling '000', based on a number of different emergency scenarios.

A student take-home kit has been developed to reinforce lessons learnt in the classroom. The kit contains an introductory letter to parents/carers, CPR chart, '000' magnet reinforcing key messages and a novelty pop-out ambulance.

Material was also developed to assist ambulance officers visiting schools to reinforce key learning outcomes and provide children with a hands-on learning environment.

A Volkswagen Caddy has been converted into a children's sized ambulance where students can interact with equipment such as lights and sirens. Students can also listen to real emergency calls made by children to gain a better understanding of the emergency call process.

Outcomes and evaluation

As the program was rolled out February 2007 a 12 month statistical review has yet to be conducted. However, since February, 10,500 students have participated in the program.

The teacher resource kits contain an evaluation form addressing:

- program content
- activities presented to the class
- the role-play session
- lesson plan for teachers
- student take home kits
- attendance

The Ambulance Officer Visit Booklet also contains an evaluation form for teachers to provide feedback on:

- learning outcomes
- student's interaction with the ambulance vehicle and equipment
- If the ambulance officer's visit lessened intimidation of emergency vehicles

Teacher evaluations received to date state that the program is excellent and has been developed at the children's level of understanding. The ambulance officer visit reinforced learning outcomes and children enjoyed interacting with the equipment.

Additional evaluation methods will include focus groups and consultative meetings with education boards.

The evaluation process will be assessed at the end of the first 12 months incorporating improvements for future revised editions of the program.

Sustaining change

It is important that every person in NSW understands how and when to call an ambulance, regardless of their age.

The continued delivery of this program will be supported through ongoing community consultation, evaluation processes and feedback. There are succession plans in place to develop and adapt the program for Year 5 and Year 6 students (ages 10-12 years). Relevant issues for this demographic will be addressed such as asthma, fall related injuries and inappropriate use of resources.

As the population ages, the educated children of today will become the informed adults of tomorrow.

Future scope

The implementation of education programs like Be an Ambulance Hero; Dial Zero Zero Zero would greatly benefit all areas of Health.

A child '000' caller who confidently knows their home address and phone number greatly assists the emergency call process and in turn creates a quick response to the patient and in turn, hospital assessment.

The program is already established as part of the school curriculum and is an initiative that could easily be adapted by other health providers.