

Developing Pretend Play Skills in Children - Assessment & Intervention

ONLINE (each module over 2 sessions)

Assessment – Thursday 6th & Friday 7th August 2026

Intervention – Thursday 27th & Friday 28th August 2026

Each session 3 hours (with 30 min break)

9:00am – 12:30pm (AustEDT)

**Brisbane/Sydney/Canberra/Melbourne/Hobart - 9:00am – 12:30pm (AustEST) – Darwin/Adelaide - 8:30am – 12:00noon (AustCST) -
Perth – 7:00am – 10:30am (AustWST)**

Play has always been part of learning and growing, as well as providing enjoyment and fun. Play is an important measure of children's development, as it encompasses emotional, social, cognitive and language aspects. Research has indicated a significant relationship between the quality of children's pretend play during the preschool years, and their cognitive skills, social skills, language, literacy, and problem-solving ability in early primary school and beyond.

Pretend play develops in layers of complexity over time, influencing all aspects of child development, including a greater sense of self-awareness, a greater awareness of others and provides an opportunity for connection through building relationships.

Play therefore provides an effective therapeutic approach that can be utilised by speech pathologists and occupational therapists to support children and their families to reach their goals, in a developmentally sensitive and meaningful way.

This workshop will be provided in two modules:

Assessment Module - this introductory module will provide participants with an understanding of the complexity and importance of pretend play, as well as the multiple skills observed as children engage in play. Participants will gain knowledge of the development of pretend play skills from 12 months to 5 years, and identify changing layers of complexity that are unique to every child's developing profile. The assessment module will focus on clinician's being able to observe a child's play; and understand and interpret this information within the child's family, social and cultural systems.

Participants will be provided with an overview of evidence-based tools used to assess children's play including the *Pretend Play Enjoyment - Developmental Checklist* (PPE-DC), and the *Animated Movie Test* (AMT).

This module will be practical with case studies and video analysis used to illustrate examples of how play can be understood and the child's strengths identified during assessment.

Intervention Module - this module will provide participants with a clinical reasoning framework for the inclusion of play in therapy sessions; use of play as a therapeutic modality drawing on Karen Stagnitti's *Learn To Play* principles; as well as skills/strategies to design and implement intervention programs that will develop children's pretend play skills. Strategies will also be given to build parental/caregiver's capacity to foster their child's imaginative play skills and ability to play independently.

The workshop will also include considerations for play as a therapeutic modality for a variety of clinical groups/clinical environments including children who have experienced trauma, children with autism and working in schools.

To register for the Intervention module, participants will be required to have knowledge of the development of pretend play and assessment of pretend play through attendance at a *Developing Effective Play Skills in Children – Assessment* workshop (or similar)

NB This workshop is designed for occupational therapists and speech therapists that work with children and families. It is providing an understanding of the importance of Pretend Play as a therapeutic tool and intervention modality. Although the workshop will provide an overview of *Learn to Play* principles as part of the clinical reasoning framework for intervention, to gain accreditation as a *Learn to Play* therapist, clinicians need to engage in specific specialised training.

This workshop is suitable for both occupational therapists and speech pathologists.

Workshop Delivery

Participants will be expected to complete the workshop requirements via an integrated system of pre-workshop reading material and online workshops (2 per module). The online sessions will use a mixture of information presentation, case studies and practical small group activities. Participants will be responsible for having access to the Internet for some or all of the workshop content.

- **Self-study** - Participants will need to allocate **1 -1.5 hours** prior to each of the online group sessions (including between Session 1 and 2 of the individual modules) to complete pre-reading, case study preparation and self-reflection tasks.
- **Workshop Manuals** participants will be mailed a hard copy of the workshop manual/s which will include
 - some pre-reading to assist with consolidating knowledge with regard to the importance of play
 - presentation notes, covering the online presentation content as well as the case studies used in the self-study and interactive components of the presentation sessions.
- **On line presentation** – using Zoom videoconferencing, participants will have the opportunity to link into two presentation sessions per module (with 30 min break mid-session). Sessions will also include interactive components (ie group discussions, case studies and Q&A sessions) to assist with integrating participants newly acquired knowledge and skills. Participants will be emailed the link (including password) to the workshop presentation sessions.

Workshop Recording

Please note to safeguard the copyright of material presented, maintain the confidentiality of case discussions and the privacy of participants, **this workshop WILL NOT be recorded.**

About the Presenter



Dr Siobhan Casey - is a paediatric occupational therapist with experience in working with children, their families and teachers in a variety of settings. In 2018, Siobhan was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy from Deakin University. Her research primarily focused on understanding the developmental processes that occur for self-regulation and pretend play capacities in supporting resilience in children. Her prior research included identifying important markers and processes for change, for children with Autism participating in the *Learn to Play* program.

Siobhan has presented on pretend play development at conferences both nationally and internationally and enjoys delivering training to a wide range of audiences interested in promoting the opportunity for pretend play development in children. Siobhan has previously worked in early intervention community settings, private practice and specialist development schools. She is currently working within a mainstream school setting, supporting the implementation of pretend play within the curriculum. Siobhan continues to research the impact of pretend play development on global developmental functioning and has further interests in researching the role of pretend play development in supporting positive health and wellbeing across the lifespan.

Registrations for this workshop are now open at www.zimei.com.au. Further workshop enquiries can be directed to Zi Mei Events on info@zimei.com.au or (07) 3358 3689