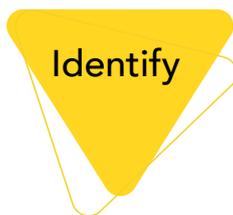


# Risk assessment and management

The *Education and Care Services National Law* requires you to 'ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children... from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury' (Section 167). Taking precautions involves carrying out risk assessments within your service to assess the risks and plan how to manage them. This resource offers a simplified guide to the process.



- **Identify the hazard** or potential hazard.
- A hazard is anything that could cause harm or have a negative impact, such as broken or dangerous equipment, a poor practice or systems (e.g. not keeping track of WWCC / training requirements).
- Be vigilant in monitoring your whole service environment - if you see anything that may be dangerous now or in the future, assess it.
- In practice: This can be done with a watchful eye, being aware of possible risks in the service environment, through your daily checklists, and making it a regular topic at team meetings.



- Once you have identified the hazard you need to **assess the risk** of harm or potential harm.
- Your assessment should look at:
  - How likely is it to happen?
  - How often might it happen?
  - How serious is the outcome?
- In practice: You can use the risk matrix overleaf to help you.



- **Manage the risk** by eliminating it or minimising the impact using control measures.
- See overleaf for explanations and examples of control measures.
- In practice: Your service procedures, hazard control log (risk assessment register) for documenting, and WHS inspections will help with your control measures.



- Once you have managed the risk you need to **evaluate** the current risk or potential harm - how well is it eliminated or managed?
- If not, look at an alternative control measure. Is this the best possible outcome?
- In practice: Evaluate using your safety checklist and the risk matrix overleaf whether the risk has been reduced.



- **Reviewing** and ongoing monitoring of the risk or potential harm is needed to ensure it continues to be managed as a low risk.
- Through this process you need to be vigilant in scanning and assessing the risk within your service.
- In practice: This can be done in daily safety checks, your regular WHS inspection, and making it a regular topic at team meetings.

## Risk Matrix

A risk matrix is a way to assess the hazard and potential risk. You can work out the importance and priority prior to managing the risk.

Will this happen?	If this happens, what are the consequences?		
	Minor risk <i>Unlikely to cause long-term problems – just fix it.</i>	Moderate risk <i>Complete a risk assessment and go ahead if risk is worth accepting.</i>	Significant risk <i>Risk that needs careful planning and consideration before going ahead. Involve others in decision-making, follow policy guidance and practice, identify roles and responsibilities.</i>
Unlikely	Low	Moderate	High
Possible	Low	High	Extreme
Likely	Moderate	High	Extreme
Almost certain	Moderate	High	Extreme

## Control Measures

These are the actions you can put in place to manage and reduce the risk.

Hierarchy of control		Explanations/examples of control measures
Level 1	Elimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove the hazard, e.g. broken toy or damaged equipment.</li> <li>Change the practice, e.g. deliver goods directly to the kitchen to eliminate manual handling.</li> </ul>
Level 2	Substitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace heavy items with those that are lighter, smaller and/or easier to handle.</li> <li>Replace damaged equipment with new equipment.</li> </ul>
	Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Isolate unwell children from the whole group.</li> <li>Barricade off a wet floor until dry to avoid slip hazard.</li> </ul>
Level 3	Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use ergonomic cots with a higher base height to reduce manual handling and back injuries for educators.</li> <li>Provide adult sized chairs for educators.</li> </ul>
	Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rotate educators between different tasks to avoid repetitive strain.</li> <li>Arrange workflows to avoid peak physical and mental demands towards the end of a shift.</li> </ul>
	Personal protective equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use gloves for all hygiene issues.</li> <li>Wear closed-in shoes to avoid injury, and wear hats and sunscreen outside.</li> </ul>

## Examples of risk assessments

- A broken toy – you **observe** the hazard as the children are playing and the toy is broken. On the spot you do your **assessment** as the toy is now a risk to the children. You **manage** the risk by taking the toy away and eliminating the risk. Your **evaluation** is the hazard is removed. You may look at repairing the toy or replacing the toy and your **review** would take place when this happens.
- Nappy changing procedure – you **identify** the potential risk of lifting young children to the change mat throughout the day. You **assess** it as a high risk due to the frequency and consequences. As the nappy changing cannot be eliminated it is **managed** with educators:
  - undertaking manual handling training
  - sharing the nappy changing throughout the day
  - installing a step ladder to reduce the lifting within the routine.

On **evaluation** this has reduced the risk of injury to educators. **Review** and monitor to ensure the control measures are applied consistently.

- An excursion to the park – once you have your idea, use an excursion risk management plan (such as the template on the [ACECOA website](#)) to organise and do a risk assessment. Crossing the street to get to the park and the lack of footpath are **identified** and **assessed** as a high risk. This is **managed** with a plan to have a higher ratio of educators attend, an alternate route via traffic lights for the crossing and a footpath, and careful orientation and expectations around behaviour with children and educators. This is **evaluated** as an acceptable risk and during the excursion it is monitored and **reviewed** for future excursions.

