



Work Health and Safety

In Education and Care Services

Child Australia is the Professional Support Coordinator in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This resource was funded by the Australian Government under the initiative of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program to support Australian Government Approved Child Care Services.

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the assistance and contribution of the staff and children from:

- Child Early Learning Centre Lockridge
- Leederville Early Learning Centre
- Kerri Simms Family Day Care, Butler
- Farrar Early Learning Centre, Darwin Northern Territory
- Treasure Island Child Care Centre, Cannington
- UWA Early Learning Centre, Nedlands
- Unicare - The University Child Care Club Inc., Nedlands
- Wanslea Family Day Care

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Disclaimer

This resource is based on the most current information available in March 2012.

In developing this resource we have referred to legislation and regulations, sought advice from professional organisations and reviewed contemporary research. This document should be used as a guide to compliment and develop service's existing policies and procedures. Services should always check the currency of information at the time of use and consider the information in this booklet in the context of their particular service.

This booklet can be accessed online at:

www.pscalliance.org.au



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About the *How To* series

The **How To** series has been created to offer professionals, working in the education and care sector in Australia, practical support to implement the National Quality Framework. The **How To** series consists of seven booklets promoting key areas of quality provision. Throughout each booklet, there are references to National Legislation (the Act and Regulations), the National Quality Standard, the Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being and Becoming) and the Framework for School Age Care (My Time, Our Place). The **How To** series can be used by a variety of professionals working in education and care services across Australia.

The introduction of the National Quality Framework marks a significant change in the way we, as a community, see children and their place in society. All professionals working in the education and care services are responsible for continuous improvement to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.

Whāia te iti kahurangi - Ki te tūohu koe, me he maunga teitei.

‘Pursue excellence – should you stumble, let it be to a lofty mountain’ (Māori proverb)



Introduction

Early childhood and outside school hours care services can be high risk environments, so thoughtful and careful planning is required to ensure that the work environment is safe, and that educators, families and visitors are protected. Responsibility for workplace health and safety is shared by employers and employees:

- Employers must provide and maintain a safe work environment and have effective policies and procedures in place to manage health and safety risks.
- Employees must ensure their own health and safety, and that of colleagues, families and all other visitors to the workplace. They must know and follow all health and safety policies and procedures, at all times.

Good policies and procedures are critical to ensuring a safe work environment and should be regularly reviewed and updated. Refer to *How to: Develop and Update Policies Successfully (without the stress)*, for more information on developing policies and procedures. All educators must be familiar with their procedures in order to keep the workplace safe.

This booklet will help you reflect on your current Work Health and Safety policies and procedures, and risk management practice in the workplace, and understand more about Work/Occupational Health and Safety Law and Regulations in your State or Territory.

Throughout this booklet, we use the term *work health and safety* rather than *occupational health and safety*, as this is increasingly common usage since the introduction of new model legislation in 2009.



Definitions

Work Safety and Health

Work safety and health (WSH) is concerned with protecting the safety, health and welfare of employees, visitors and clients. It encompasses the “whole person” - social, mental and physical well-being. WSH deals with both **safety** in the workplace, to reduce or minimise injury or disease, and with **the health and wellbeing** of employees, visitors and clients.

Your safety and health policies, procedures and your daily practices are your tools to foster a safe and healthy work environment. They also protect children and their family members, your suppliers, the local community, and any people who come into contact with your workplace.

Abbreviations and Acronyms Used in this Booklet

ACECQA - The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority established under the National Quality Framework www.acecqa.gov.au

Legislation - In this booklet, the term legislation refers to the Work Health and Safety/ Occupational Health and Safety Act, and Regulations in your state or territory.

NQF - National Quality Framework www.acecqa.gov.au

NQS - National Quality Standard www.acecqa.gov.au

OSHC – Outside School Hours Care

WHS – Work Health and Safety

Work Health and Safety Legislation

New Legislation – Harmonisation

Historically, Australia has had different Work Health and Safety Laws in each State and Territory. It had long been recognised that there would be advantages if the laws in each State, Territory and the Commonwealth were more consistent. Businesses that operated in more than one State or Territory would not have different sets of rules because of workplaces in more than one jurisdiction. Similarly, if workers moved between States, they would not need to learn new rules.

In 2009, the Model Work Health and Safety Bill endorsed common or “harmonised” legislation across Australia. This legislation included a model WHS Act, regulations, Codes of Practice and a national compliance and enforcement policy.

State and Territories are at different implementation phases and it is important for you to know the Legislation that applies to your service. To help you find this information, the national and State/Territory contacts are included on page 34. Safe Work Australia is the national body in charge of developing work health and safety and workers’ compensation policy.

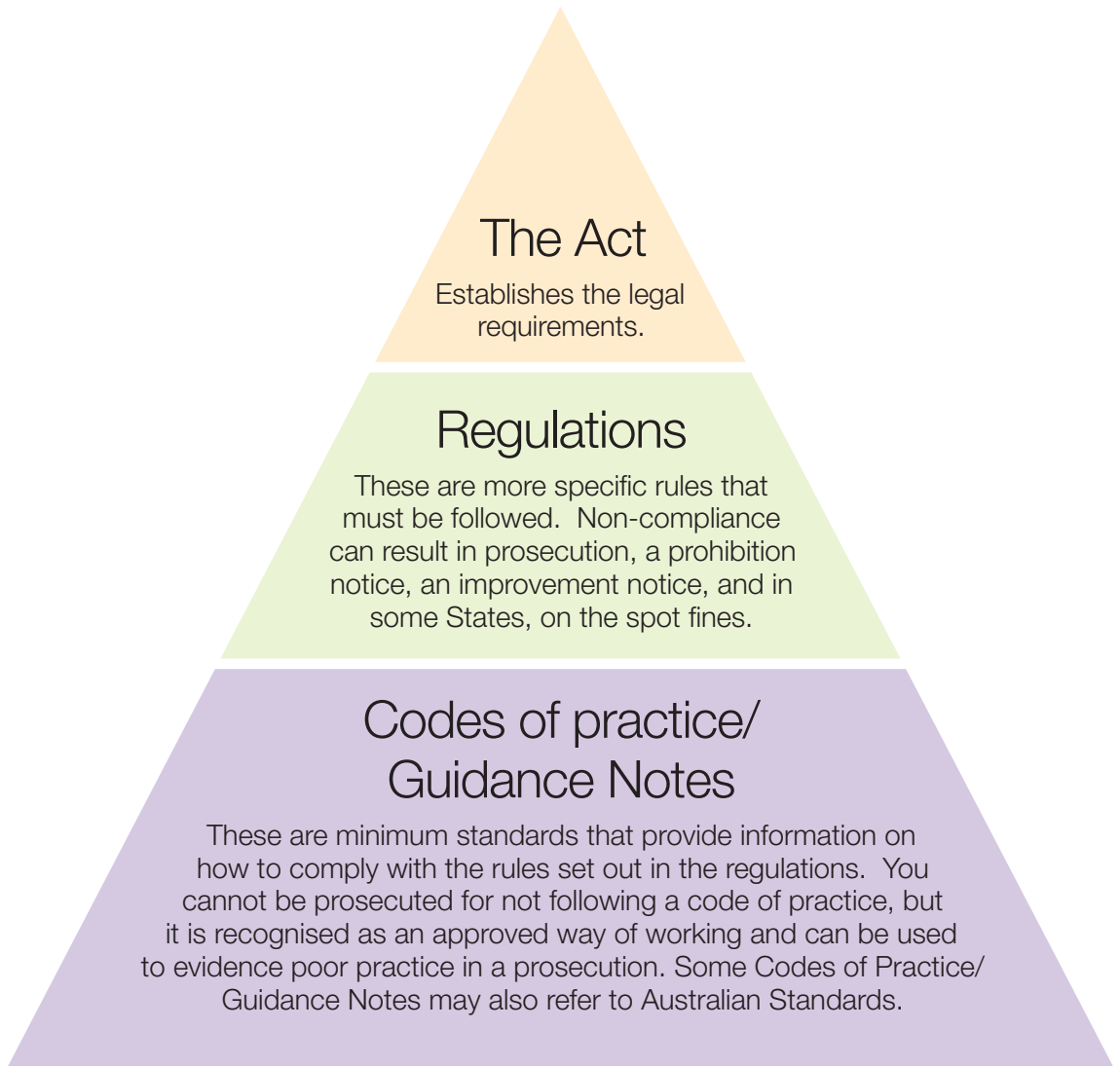
New work health and safety (WHS) laws have commenced in the following States and Territories, using harmonised WHS legislation instead of previous OH&S laws:

- Commonwealth
- Australian Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- Tasmania
- South Australia

Victoria and Western Australia are yet to develop new legislation.

Work Safety and Health Legislation Components

Each State and Territory has its own legislation typically comprised of the Act, Regulations and Approved Codes of Practice/Guidance Notes. To identify the legislation in your jurisdiction, contact your State/Territory work safety and health authority (see National, State and Territory Contacts page 34)



Why is Work Health and Safety Important?

Work health and safety is primarily concerned with the work place and the people who work within it. In early and middle childhood settings, this is strongly linked with your everyday practise. In early education and outside school hours care (OSHC) settings, our health and safety practices tend to focus on the needs of children. However, our services are workplaces too, so they need to meet all WHS laws to keep educators safe.

Every year, many educators are injured in early childhood workplaces and most of these injuries are musculoskeletal (sprains and strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries), caused by everyday activities like moving play equipment, lifting children and sitting on small chairs.

Work Health and Safety Legislation underpins a quality learning environment. You cannot have a high quality early childhood service if your work health and safety practices jeopardise the safety, health and wellbeing of staff, children, families and service visitors.

The National Quality Framework establishes the standards and learning frameworks to provide high quality inclusive education and care in early and middle childhood settings, which can only occur in a safe and healthy work environment. The NQF makes few explicit references to work health and safety as it is part of different legislation that sits alongside and compliments this framework.

Good work health and safety policies, procedures and practices ensure that:

- management fulfils its responsibility to provide a safe work place, without any negative impact on the health and wellbeing of employees;
- employees meet their health and safety obligations AND are safe in the workplace;
- children, families and all service visitors come to a safe workplace that protects their health and wellbeing; and
- the work environment supports quality early education and care.



Who is Responsible for Health and Safety in the Workplace?

Employers and employees have responsibilities for ensuring health and safety in the workplace.

Employers

Employers can include: not for profit organisations, private companies, community organisations, franchises, local governments or any other business that has management control of the workplace. Their fundamental responsibility is to provide a safe and healthy work environment. They must:

- protect the health and safety of workers and anyone else affected by workplace activities including children, families, contractors and visitors
- identify and control workplace health and safety risks for all people in the workplace including staff, children, families, contractors and visitors
- consult with employees on matters that affect their health, safety and welfare; and
- provide adequate training and supervision for all employees to work safely.

Employees

Everyone working in your education and care setting has a work health and safety responsibility and this includes contractors or agency staff. Employees must:

- carry out their work in a way that does not put their own health and safety, at risk, or that of others in the workplace
- identify and report potential workplace hazards
- report all work-related injuries
- implement service's policies and procedures; and
- participate in workplace consultation about health and safety matters.

Key Things to Consider about Work Health and Safety

When thinking about work health and safety, there are many considerations, including:

- ✓ The **legal requirements in your jurisdiction:**
 - Check which Act, Regulations and Codes of Conduct/Guidance notes apply in your state or territory. See the *Resources* section for relevant contacts in each jurisdiction.
 - You may be required to have a staff Work Health and Safety Representative.

- ✓ Your existing work health and safety **policies and procedures:**
 - A review is an essential starting point. For ideas on how to review your policies see *How to Develop and Update Policies Successfully (without the stress)*.
 - Implementation and monitoring of policies and procedures.

- ✓ **Consultation** about health and safety matters.

- ✓ Work health and safety **staff training:**
 - Induction.
 - Ongoing and “refresher” training.

- ✓ Your existing health and safety **risk management** process:
 - Hazard identification, assessment and management.
 - Accident and incident reporting.
 - Documentation.

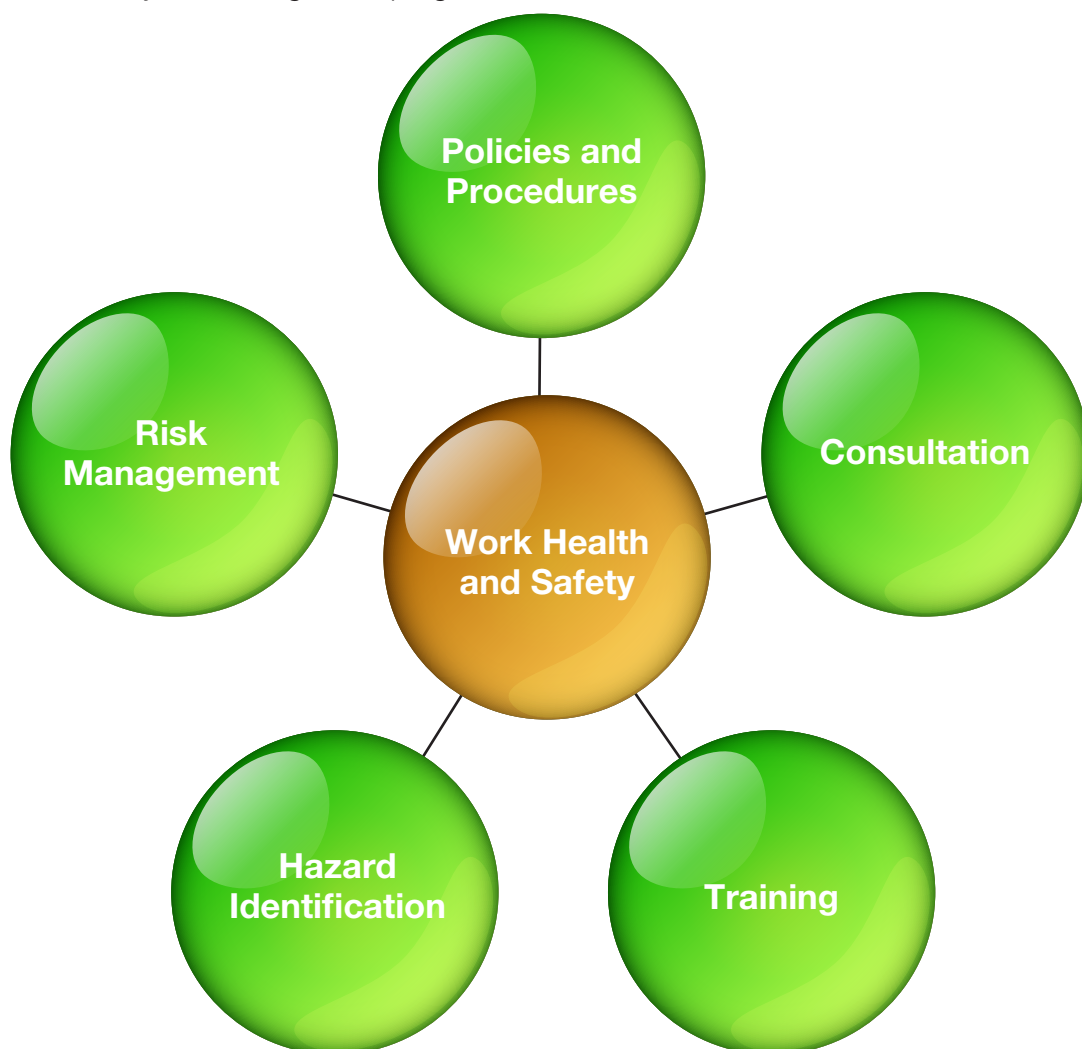
- ✓ **Your work setting:**
 - Design and layout of service.
 - Indoor and outdoor environment.
 - Workplace equipment and furnishings

- ✓ **Staff supervision:**
 - Do your supervisory practices ensure that employees are not placed at risk?

Best Practice Guidelines

A simple five part approach will help you develop and sustain a safe and healthy work environment:

1. Work health and safety policies and procedures
2. Consultation with employees on health and safety matters
3. Staff training
4. Hazard identification and workplace assessment
5. Safety risk management program



Policies and Procedures

All services should have a policy on work health and safety, and on matters that affect children's safety. Some other work health and safety matters you could consider are:

- ✓ Emergency planning
- ✓ Critical incident management
- ✓ Emergency equipment
- ✓ First aid
- ✓ Accident and incident reporting
- ✓ Workplace inspections
- ✓ Hazard identification & control (Risk Assessment & Hazard Register)
- ✓ Chemicals & hazardous substances
- ✓ Electrical safety
- ✓ Environmental issues
- ✓ Ergonomics
- ✓ Kitchen safety
- ✓ Ladder safety & working at heights (fall prevention policy & procedures)
- ✓ Manual handling
- ✓ Personal safety (aggression from clients, working alone)
- ✓ Harassment and bullying
- ✓ Workplace stress
- ✓ Plant safety (machinery and equipment)
- ✓ Preventive maintenance
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Slips, trips and falls
- ✓ Technology safety issues
- ✓ Vehicles and transports
- ✓ Injury management



Some or all of these matters may be relevant in your workplace. Refer to *How to Develop and Update Policies Successfully (without the stress)* for ideas and Policies for the NQF: Policies in Practice on the PSC Alliance website (www.pscalliance.org.au). The sample policies provided are intended as a guide only for individual service policy development.

Consultation

Effective consultation occurs when information on matters which may affect health, safety and welfare, is shared with employees. They must be given the opportunity to express their views and opinions so that these can be taken into account when decisions are made about work health and safety. In most Australian jurisdictions, consultation is a legal requirement, so it is important to establish mechanisms which suit your workplace and comply with your legal requirements.

Examples of WHS consultation and communication processes:

- Notice boards
- Emails
- Intranet
- Daily discussion
- Staff meetings
- Staff newsletter
- WHS Representative(s)
- WHS committee



Thinking about my practice

1. What consultation mechanisms are in place at my workplace?
2. How can we improve consultation and communication about work health and safety?

Brainstorm

Staff Training

Employees receive ongoing training in the workplace through their day-to-day learning and activities, although WHS should be a part of your overall early childhood or OSHC service training program. An effective training program should include ongoing training in safe systems of work and emergency procedures.

WHS training should be included in:

- Any induction training undertaken at the service.
- Ongoing supervisor and management training.

WHS training includes:

- On-the-job training facilitated by co-workers, supervisors, managers or employers.
- Instruction on WHS responsibilities and daily practices.
- Specific hazard training.
- Work procedures and skills training (such as manual handling practices).
- Emergency procedure training (such as evacuation drills).
- First aid training.
- WHS Representative training.



Most WHS training can be conducted in the workplace however you may want to consider a formal training program for your WHS Representative. For WHS training to be effective and to have a sustained impact, you must also have good supervision to embed learning into day to day practice.

Thinking about my practice

1. What are my responsibilities regarding work health and safety?
2. How could I explain these responsibilities to a new staff member?

Brainstorm

Hazard Identification

A hazard is a source of potential harm or a situation that could cause, or lead to harm to people or property. Work hazards can be physical, chemical, biological, mechanical or psychological.

Table 1 gives a brief overview of these categories and provides some examples.

Type of hazard	What does this include?	Examples	What could happen?
Physical	Floors, stairs, steps, ladders, fire, falling objects, slippery surfaces, manual handling (lifting, pulling, pushing), noise, heat and cold, radiation, poor lighting, ventilation.	Children's beds placed in an open area, wet bathroom floors, lifting children for nappy changes.	Trips, slips and falls, Manual handling injury (soft tissue/back injury)
Mechanical and or/electrical	Electricity, machinery, equipment, washers and dryers, kitchen appliances, motor vehicles.	Lint accumulation in dryers can be a combustion hazard. Frayed power cords or unplugged power points are an electrical hazard.	Fire, electric shock, electrocution.
Chemical	Includes substances such as acids or poisons, cleaning agents, dusts and fumes.	Cleaning chemicals, Medication.	Fire, explosion, poisoning.
Biological	Includes bacteria, viruses, mould, mildew, insects, vermin and animals.	Sick staff or children attending the service, Contaminated food, mice infestation.	Cross-infection, food poisoning.
Psychosocial	Workplace stressors.	Bullying, children's needs exceed skill or confidence of educators, insufficient management support.	High stress levels (staff and children), compromised care practices, failure to be inclusive.

Table 1: Types of Hazards

How Can You Identify Workplace Hazards?

There are probably many things that you are already doing that will help you identify some of the major hazards in your workplace. A few examples include:

- Daily safety checks of your indoor and outdoor environment and your equipment.
- Common patterns that emerge from your accident/incident and illness forms to identify a common risk indicator for developing a plan of action to minimise occurrences.
- Knowledge of illnesses and infections prevalent in your local area.
- Regular safety audits tailored to your service.
- Your hazard reporting procedure for educators and families.
- Your food safety plan.
- Your infection control policy and procedures.

Thinking about my practice

1. How do I identify and report hazards in my workplace?
2. What are the biggest hazards in my workplace?

Brainstorm

- ✓ Hazards exist in all services from the work environment, the equipment you use and your work systems and practices.
- ✓ Everyone in the workplace is responsible for hazard identification.
- ✓ You need to be aware of hazards so you can begin to manage them.
- ✓ Poorly managed hazards are the main cause of health and safety problems and accidents.
- ✓ Eliminating or controlling hazards is the best way to build your safety awareness and reduce illness and injury in your service.

Safety Risk Management

To ensure a safe and healthy work environment, it is important to identify potential safety or health risks within the work place, and then eliminate or control those risks. This is known as **risk management** and it applies in all work places across all industries. Risk management helps to create a safe work environment and reduce accidents, incidents and illness by **identifying** possible hazards, **assessing the risk** presented by each hazard, **controlling or managing the risk** (as far as possible), and **monitoring** how effectively you do this.

This is a continuous improvement cycle and your policies and procedures should detail the practices that you adopt to control or manage risks in your workplace.



Figure 1: Safety Risk Management Cycle

Identify the hazard

We have already discussed hazard identification on page 16 of this booklet.

Assess the risk

Think about the potential hazard and **the consequence** that may result. To help you do this, consider:

- Will someone be injured?
- If someone gets injured, how bad is the injury likely to be?

Decide **how likely** it is that this consequence will occur. To help you do this, consider:

- Has it happened before?
- Have people been injured before?
- What measures are in place to prevent it happening again?
- How reliable are these measures?
- How often will the task/activity be performed?

Use a risk matrix for an overall risk rating. For an example of a risk matrix, see the Guide to the National Law and National Regulations (p.174).

Suggested Activity

As a team, select two or three identified hazards. Use the risk matrix to assess the level of risk posed by these hazards.

Brainstorm

Control or Manage the Risk

Decide how you will manage or control the risks in your workplace. Work health and safety literature identifies a *Hierarchy of Controls* that range from hazard elimination to hazard management by using personal protective equipment. This hierarchy is shown in Table 2.

You may need to use a combination of the controls in this hierarchy for a hazard. As we go down the list of control options the controls become less reliable and require more work to ensure that they are sustained and effective.

Control	How does it work?	Example
Eliminate	Remove the hazard altogether.	Remove clutter in a corridor to eliminate a tripping hazard; Discard unrepairable damaged equipment to avoid injuries.
Substitute or modify	Replace hazard with something less dangerous.	Replace non-drop side cots with drop sides; Replace toxic cleaning agent with non-toxic cleaning agent.
Isolate	Remove hazard from contact with people.	Lock away medication; door barriers; respectful exclusion of children with communicable diseases.
Engineering controls	Redesign equipment, use guards or other equipment.	Put steps in the nappy change area; child-proof locks for kitchen cupboards; guards for power points.
Administrative controls	Policies and procedures including training and supervision.	Staff induction to work health and safety, manual handling training, exit signs, food safety program.
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	Place a barrier between the person and the hazard.	Gloves, hairnets, aprons, sunhats and sunscreen.

Table 2: Hierarchy of Controls

Suggested Activity

As a team, and using the previously identified hazards, decide what controls you would or could use to manage these hazards. Decide what will be most effective and how this will be implemented. Where do your strategies lie on the hierarchy of controls?

Monitor and Review

Risk management is an ongoing process similar to the programming cycle. Risks must be systematically monitored and management strategies reviewed to ensure that they continue to be effective and contribute to a safe and healthy work environment. New hazards can emerge over time resulting in control strategies becoming ineffective and therefore may require updating.

Documentation

To help you monitor the effectiveness of your risk management strategies and controls, you will need to keep some systematic records. These records will help you assess how successful you have been in controlling your work health and safety risks. Many of these records may also be a licencing or regulatory requirement in your jurisdiction.

The following records (at a minimum) should be maintained:

- Work place safety audits;
- Accident/incident/injury reports;
- Worksheets/checklists used to identify hazards (related to your hazard identification and reporting process);
- Risk assessments and control measures implemented;
- Maintenance records for buildings and equipment;
- Electrical tagging details;
- Fire equipment audits;
- Evacuation drills;
- Professional development undertaken by staff relating to work health and safety; and
- Immunisation status (NQS Quality Area 2.1.4) and medical clearances of all educators.

Check the legislation in your jurisdiction to see if you need to keep additional records.

Ideas for Practice

Hazardous Tasks in Early Childhood and OSHC Services

The *Children's Services Occupation Safety and Health Compliance Kit* (2011) identifies six common hazardous tasks regularly performed in early childhood and OSHC services. This publication has excellent fact sheets (downloadable and printable) that describe the risks involved in these regular tasks, and offers practical solutions and ideas to improve safety. Most of these tasks present a physical risk of soft tissue or muscle injury.

The six most common hazardous tasks in the children's services sector:

1. Lifting children in/out of cots and highchairs or on/off change tables

- Bending, twisting and reaching to lift children due to the design, placement or characteristics of cots, highchairs or change tables.

2. Working at low levels - Awkward postures, tripping or falling due to sitting on children's furniture or the floor.

3. Moving equipment - Lifting, moving, carrying, pushing or pulling heavy or awkward indoor and outdoor play equipment.

4. Storing supplies and equipment - Tripping, falling or being hit by falling objects due to overcrowded or poorly designed storage areas. Bending, lifting, twisting and using high or unexpected force to move heavy or awkward objects.

5. Using office areas - Awkward body postures due to poorly designed, cluttered or inappropriate office areas. Tripping, falling or being hit by falling objects due to poorly designed office areas.

6. Maintaining indoor and outdoor areas - Falling from height while standing on chairs and tables to display artwork. Tripping or falling over toys or on poorly maintained, uneven or wet floor surfaces.



Manual Handling (Physical Hazard)

Manual handling refers to any form of lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, nursing and, or holding children or objects. Educators routinely undertake a wide range of manual handling tasks in their day to day work and this is a key hazard in early childhood and OSHC settings.

The risk of injury increases when manual handling tasks are frequent, repetitive, last a long time and are performed with poor posture or technique.



TIPS: To prevent manual handling injuries

- Provide manual handling training that encompasses everyday practices, e.g. lifting children and nappy changes.
- Practice safe lifting and carrying.
- Use aids such as trolleys and step ladders.
- Store heavy and awkward items close to where they are needed.
- Use equipment and furniture suitable for adult use, e.g. adult sized chairs.

Slips, Trips and Falls

Good housekeeping can reduce hazards that could potentially cause injuries – particularly slips, trips and falls.



TIPS: To minimise slips, trips and falls

- Conduct daily safety checks of building, equipment and toys.
- Clean spills immediately and display safety signs in hazardous areas.
- Keep all walkways clear.
- Pack away toys and equipment when not in use.
- Fix damaged floor coverings and broken tiles.
- Encourage older children to recognise and report hazards.

Communicable Diseases (Biological Hazard)

Infections are common in children and many people can be infectious without actually showing any signs or symptoms themselves. Educators regularly comfort and support sick children and are frequently exposed to the risk of catching a communicable disease. Good hygiene practices are essential to reduce cross-infection. Ways to minimise the spread of infection can be sourced from *Staying Healthy in Childcare* (2005)

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommend that educators be immunised against:

- Hepatitis A
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)
- Varicella (if they have not had chicken pox)
- Pertussis (whooping cough)

Pregnant staff in Children's Services (Physical/Biological Hazard)

Educators who are pregnant should be made aware that some infections can affect an unborn child, particularly rubella, chicken pox and cytomegalovirus. This information should be in the Employee Handbook, as this can be a common risk in early childhood settings, given the age and gender profile of most employees.

The health and safety of pregnant employees must also be considered when rostering or allocating work. For example, it may be unwise to place a staff member who is pregnant in a 0-2 room where ongoing lifting is required.

TIPS: To minimise the spread of infection

- Have an occupational immunisation program.
- Ensure good hygiene practises (hand washing, disposable gloves).
- Train staff in infection control and hygiene practices.

Stress (Psychosocial Hazard)

No workplace is stress free, however high levels of stress can cause a variety of health issues. It is important to recognise that workplace stressors can damage our health and wellbeing, and to seek to eliminate or control hazards as far as possible.

Some physiological responses to stress:

- Increased blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Rise in heart rate
- Stomach ulcers
- Digestive disorders
- Headaches
- Fatigue

Some emotional and behavioural responses to stress:

- Tension, anxiety or depression
- Increased workplace conflict and aggression
- Absenteeism



TIPS: To minimise stress

- Have adequate staff, resources and training for all required tasks.
- Maintain open communication and encourage supportive peer relationships.
- Ensure educators take scheduled breaks and regular annual leave.
- Provide information about workplace bullying – and what to do about it.
- Ensure educators understand your conflict resolution and grievance policy and procedures.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Chemical Hazards

Many chemicals and hazardous substances are used in early childhood and OSHC settings. Educators exposed to dangerous products risk poisoning, inhalation, swallowing and irritation to the skin and eyes.

TIPS: To control chemical hazards

- Clearly label all chemicals.
- Store chemicals safely and out of reach of children.
- Read the material safety data sheet (MSDS) and have information readily available with first aid instructions.
- Use all personal protective equipment provided.
- Read and apply instructions for use e.g. use correct dilution.
- Display warning signs where dangerous products are stored.



Colour coding materials and equipment to minimise spread of infection.

Electrical Hazards

Electrical hazards are not foremost in our minds in an early childhood environment, yet most services have a large range of electrical equipment which can be dangerous if not treated properly.



TIPS: To control electrical hazards

- Ensure the service has a RCD (Residual Current Device).
- Maintain electrical equipment in good working order. Don't use any equipment with any sign of damage to the equipment, the cord or the plug. Tag equipment in need of repair.
- Have equipment checked by a qualified electrician and tagged to notify the date of inspection.
- Avoid use of double adapters and power boards.
- Train staff in the use of all electrical equipment.
- Put safety plugs in unused power points.
- Keep electrical cords untangled and out of reach of children.

Emergency Procedures

Emergencies can occur in any early childhood or OSHC setting including such things as fire, bomb threat or serious injury. The emergency may be unique to your service such as a particular child having a severe reaction to a previously unknown allergen or a cyclone. All educators must know what to do, and how to prepare and support children should the situation be prolonged, or in the event of evacuation.

TIPS: For emergency response

- Display the emergency evacuation plans and have regular drills.
- Ensure smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and fire blankets are available and tested regularly.
- Train educators in emergency procedures and use of emergency equipment.
- Include emergency procedures in staff induction, employee handbook and regular staff meetings.
- Ensure updated parents/guardian contact details are readily available.
- Ensure emergency numbers are displayed. These numbers include Poison Info, SIDS, SES, Local Snake Handler, Cyclone Alert, Local Bush Fire Authority, Health Direct, Crisis Care, Police, Fire and Ambulance.
- Provide resources such as “Managing Emergency Situations In Education and Care Services” (a PSC Alliance online resource) to educators so that they are informed on managing emergency situations.

Injury Management

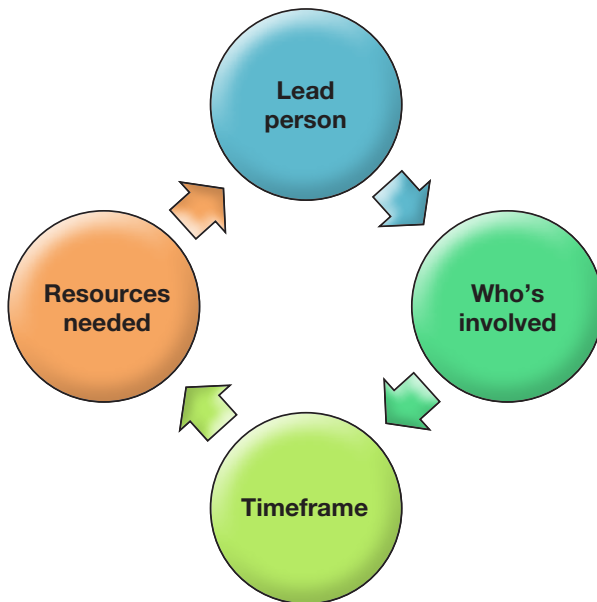
Should an employee sustain workplace injury or illness, their return to work needs careful management. Where there has been a workers' compensation claim, a return to work plan will generally be developed in consultation between the employee, employer, the relevant insurance company representatives, rehabilitation provider and medical professionals treating the employee.

It is very important to ensure that any work restrictions placed on the employee by their treating physician are observed and that they are not required to undertake duties that will exacerbate their injury. Depending on the severity of the injury, the employee may need to return on reduced hours and gradually increase their work time to the pre-injury hours.

The employee's rehabilitation provider and the employer's insurance company can provide information about the rights and responsibilities of both the employee and the employer in achieving a successful return to work after an injury.

Getting Started

A good way to approach work health and safety, and risk management planning is to consider the process as a project. Therefore you will need to decide who needs to be involved, the timeframe and the resources necessary. Work health and safety planning can be time consuming so it is useful to break the task into manageable portions that can be worked on by a small team and referred back to others for review and consolidation. This approach must be planned and managed by the lead person to be effective. Usually this person will be the Coordinator or Director as the employer has overarching responsibility for providing a safe and healthy work environment.



The five part approach outlined in this booklet provides a framework. An easy approach is to begin with your policies and procedures and then move down the list and you will find that many parts are inter-related.

1. Work health and safety policies and procedures
2. Consultation with employees on health and safety matters
3. Staff training
4. Hazard identification and workplace assessment
5. Safety risk management program

In developing your risk management plan, remember that it is not possible or practical to address all the hazards in an environment at once. As a starting point, you should try to focus on the **moderate to high risk** items. Policy review and risk management are both ongoing processes and are a key part of the management and administration of any high quality early education service.

How do you know if you have it right?

Here is a process you can follow to test if your risk management planning and associated policies, procedures and controls, are going to be effective:

- ✓ Choose 2 or 3 hazards
- ✓ Review your policies, procedures and controls
- ✓ Apply them to a practical scenario and see if the procedures are realistic in your environment
- ✓ Consult with staff
- ✓ Change or update the policy, procedure or controls as necessary
- ✓ Assess the risk with consideration of your controls (adapt risk assessment if needed)

Once you are confident in your work health and safety policy, procedure and controls

- ✓ Give information to staff and train them to ensure their work practices are safe
- ✓ Monitor and evaluate

Summary

Everyone is responsible for safety in the work place. All jurisdictions have their own legislation so refer to your States/Territories act, regulations and approved codes of conducts/guidance notes. Contact your local authority for clarification on the legislation that applies to you.

Adopt a five part approach:

- ✓ Develop and maintain work health and safety policies and procedures
- ✓ Consult with all employees on health and safety matters
- ✓ Conduct regular training on work health and safety matters
- ✓ Identify workplace hazards
- ✓ Implement a safety risk management program

Your work health and safety policies and procedures will guide your daily practice and relevant information should be included in:

- ✓ your Parent Handbook
- ✓ your Staff Handbook

References

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Staying Healthy in Child Care (2005). *Preventing Infectious Diseases in Child Care*. Fourth Edition. Australian Health and Medical Research Council.

WorkSafe Victoria, (2011). *Children's Services – Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Kit: How to control the risks from common hazardous tasks in the children's services sector*. Retrieved from <http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au>.

WorkSafe WA Guidance Note. *Reducing the Risk of Infectious Diseases in Child Care Workplace*. Retrieved from <http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe>.

National, State and Territory Contacts

Your National, State and Territory Contacts are the key places to obtain information and resources to help you improve the health and safety of your workplace. Those States with the largest number of early education and care and OSHC services tend to have the most resources and information targeting work health and safety in the ECEC sector.

Safe Work Australia

Phone: 02 6121 5317

Web: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

New South Wales

WorkCover Authority of NSW

Information Centre: 13 1050

Switch: 02 4321 5000

Web: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Western Australia

WorkSafe Western Australia – OHS Authority

Switch: 08 9327 8777

Web: www.safetyline.wa.gov.au

Victoria

Victorian WorkCover Authority

Advisory: 1800 136 089

Switch: 03 9641 1555

Web: www.workcover.vic.gov.au

South Australia

SafeWork SA

General: 1300 365 255 (South Australia callers not using mobile – local call cost)

Switch: 08 8303 0400

Web: www.safework.sa.gov.au

Tasmania

Workplace Standards Tasmania

Local Rate: 1300 366 322 (Callers inside Tasmania)

Switch: 03 6233 7657

Web: www.wst.tas.gov.au

Queensland

Workplace Health and Safety

Information: 1300 369 915

Switch: 07 3225 2000

Web: www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace

Australian Capital Territory

WorkSafe ACT

Switch: 02 6205 0200

Web: www.worksafe.act.gov.au

Northern Territory

WorkSafe

Free call: 1800 019 115 (free call to the Response Group from all phones, including mobiles, Australia wide).

Switch: 08 8999 5010

Web: www.worksafe.nt.gov.au

Professional Support Coordinators National Alliance
www.pscalliance.org.au

Australian Capital Territory
Communities@Work
www.actpsc.com.au

New South Wales
Children's Services Central
www.cscentral.org.au

Northern Territory
Child Australia
www.childaustralia.org.au

Queensland
Health and Community Services Workforce Council Inc.
www.pscq.org.au

South Australia
Lady Gowrie Child Centre
www.pscsa.org.au

Victoria
Gowrie Victoria
www.gowrievictoria.org.au

Western Australia
Child Australia
www.childaustralia.org.au

Tasmania
Lady Gowrie Tasmania
www.psctas.org.au