

Ballina River Street Children's Centre

Workplace Health and Safety Handbook

General Responsibilities

Duties of employers under workplace health and safety:

The approved provider/nominated supervisor of the service (who is the employer) will so far as is practicable:

- Provide and maintain workplaces, and systems of work that do not expose employees to hazards.
- Provide adequate information, instruction and training to, and supervision of employees to enable them to work safely. Particular attention must be given in regards to new employees and young workers who may require higher levels of support depending on their age, experience and training.
- Consult and co-operate with Workplace health & Safety Representatives/officer and other employees at the workplace regarding workplace health and safety.
- Provide adequate personal protective equipment and clothing free of charge where hazards cannot be avoided.
- Ensure safe use, cleaning, maintenance, transportation and disposal of substances in the workplace.

Duties of employees under workplace health and safety:

Employees are required to take reasonable care to protect themselves and others in the workplace by:

- Following Workplace Health and Safety instructions.
- Reporting hazards, or situations which may present a hazard to the employer.
- Reporting work related injuries, or harm, to the employer.
- Co-operate with the employer on workplace health and safety matters.

Identifying and managing workplace hazards

Workplace Health & Safety Representative/Officer

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will encourage educators/staff to elect a WH&S officer to represent the employees' interests. The WH&S officer will have the day to day responsibility for raising health and safety matters affecting educators/staff and children of the service that come to their attention, to the approved provider/nominated supervisor, and will represent their work colleagues in dealing with the approved provider/nominated supervisor on matters relating to their health and safety concerns.

Workplace Health & Safety Officer

To ensure management's responsibilities in monitoring workplace health and safety in the workplace are fulfilled the approved provider/nominated supervisor may appoint a Workplace Health & Safety officer to oversee WH&S at the service, and report on WH&S directly to the approved provider/nominated supervisor.

Monitoring Health and Safety

The Workplace Health and Safety Officer will:

- Liaise with work colleagues on Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S) issues.
- Inspect the workplace and enlist work colleagues assistance in identifying WH&S needs and issues.
- Accompany any inspectors investigating WH&S at the service.
- Immediately investigate the scene and details of any accident, dangerous occurrence or risk of 'imminent and serious harm' to any person at the service.
- Keep informed on Workplace Health and Safety information provided by the employer about the workplace.
- Consult and co-operate with the employer on all matters relating to Workplace Health and safety.
- Attending training on the role of WH&S Officer .
- Report to the approved provider/nominated supervisor any hazards or potential hazards to which a person is exposed or might be exposed.

Recording of Incidents

All hazards or potential hazards within the service need to be reported and addressed immediately. If the hazard or risk cannot be solved immediately, educators/staff are to isolate it. All educators/staff and children in the service are to be alerted to the risk or hazard.

A **Hazard Report** will then be completed by the WH&S Officer with a record of action taken to address the incident, and a copy to the approved provider/nominated supervisor.

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will follow-up to ensure appropriate action has been taken to remove hazard or risk. If a solution needs to be explored further it will be discussed at a staff meeting.

In addition to physical risks, any procedural or work practice risk can be recorded on a Hazard Report and given to the approved provider/nominated supervisor for follow-up.

Educator/staff training

All educators/employees are to be instructed, trained and supervised in how to do their jobs safely. This includes safe methods for carrying out tasks, use of equipment, use of personal protective equipment, and what to do in the case of an accident or emergency.

A training program will be organised every 12 months to ensure all educators/staff can identify:

- Key elements of the NSW Workplace Health and Safety Act, including the content in general terms, responsibilities that apply to them, and consequences of failing to comply,
- The services Workplace Health and Safety procedures and policies.
- Workplace Health and Safety practices, including immunisation, hygiene practices etc.
- How to report hazards.
- How to have a say in safe work practices and procedures.
- How to use safety equipment e.g. fire equipment.

Consultation on Workplace Health and Safety Issues

Consultation between the employer and employees is a positive approach to managing workplace health and safety, as well as being a legal requirement.

A Workplace Health and Safety committee may be established by the approved provider/nominated supervisor to deal with matters such as policy development, rules and procedures, workplace health and safety training and emergency procedures. At least half the members of the WH&S committee will be elected educators/staff members. The committee will also include the approved provider/nominated supervisor who has authority to carry out any recommendations of the committee.

Workplace Health and Safety issues will be routinely discussed at educator/staff meetings and issues raised at these meetings reported to the approved provider/nominated supervisor for resolution where appropriate.

Resolution of Issues

Wherever possible resolution of issues should happen at the service level with WH&S representative/officer and the approved provider/nominated supervisor. If a resolution cannot be found, the issue will be referred to the Workplace Health and Safety committee for further discussion.

If an educator/employee is concerned about a Workplace health and safety issue in the workplace they should:

- If in immediate danger, cease work in the area or hazard. Report the hazard or talk about the issue with WH&S officer.
- If the issue is still unresolved the WH&S officer will discuss the issue with the approved provider/nominated supervisor and with educators/staff at the Staff meeting and try to find a safe solution.
- If the issue is still unresolved the approved provider/nominated supervisor and the WH&S officer will take the issue to the WH&S committee for assessment of the risk.
- The WH&S committee will agree on ways to resolve the problem. If employees are at risk they will be given alternative work until the problem is solved.

As a final resort, where issues that involve a risk of serious and imminent harm to health, and where a resolution cannot be found, the WH&S officer, the employees or the approved provider/nominated supervisor may request an authorised Workcover inspector to attend the workplace.

Safety Audits

Safety Audits, or workplace inspections, will be carried out by the service educators/staff at least every 3 months to ensure all hazards or potential hazards are identified. Daily Safety Checklist will also be used to ensure a safe environment is maintained on a daily basis.

Where a physical hazard is identified, it will be documented on a hazard report and it should be referred to the WH&S officer who will refer this to the approved provider/nominated supervisor. The WH&S Officer will assess the hazard and implement appropriate action at the service level by taking action themselves, or by requesting the approved provider to take further action as required.

Where a procedural or work practice risk is identified, it should be referred to the WH&S officer who will document the risk on a Hazard Report and refer this to the approved provider/nominated supervisor. The issue will be discussed at the next staff meeting and a resolution found.

Should the WH&S Officer have any difficulty in ensuring any hazard is effectively dealt with, the approved provider/nominated supervisor will be immediately informed.

Once a hazard has been identified the next step is to assess its significance and priority. The significance of a hazard is the combination of the probability and likelihood of injury or illness from exposure to the hazard and the severity of the injury or illness that may result. How the hazard is assessed will determine what priority should be assigned to its elimination or control and subsequently what needs to be done to eliminate or control it.

Complete Workplace Inspections:

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will:

- Ensure the inspections are undertaken at least every 3 months, or sooner if the WH&S Officer believes this is necessary
- Involve educators/staff members in workplace inspections.
- Provide Daily Safety Checklists for each area of the service.
- Read and file Hazard Reports.
- Follow-up with WH&S Officer to determine that all hazards and risks have been eliminated or controlled.
- Assess any uncontrolled risks or hazards in regards to the significance and priority of the risk/hazard and take appropriate action.

Educators/Staff will:

- Report hazards and risks to the Nominated Supervisor or WH&S Officer.
- Complete Daily Safety Checklist.
- Assess the hazard and take appropriate action to eliminate the hazard or risk.
- Report any problems or hazards and action to eliminate them to the WH&S Officer or Nominated Supervisor.

Workplace Health & Safety Officer:

- Complete inspections and check Daily Safety Checklists.
- Complete Hazard Report for each identified problem.
- Refer all forms to the approved provider/nominated supervisor.
- Assess the hazard and take appropriate action to eliminate the hazard or risk.
- Discuss procedural or work practice risks at Staff Meetings and with the approved provider/nominated supervisor.

Safe work practices

Most accidents can be prevented with safe work practices. All work activity should be co-ordinated so that one task or aspect of the work done at the service does not endanger a person working on another task or other people within the service. This involves taking the following into account when planning activities or work responsibilities for the service.

- Lay out of service.
- Handling the storage of materials and equipment.
- Location and movement of everyone in the service.

Duty of Care

The approved provider/nominated supervisor recognise their duty of care to educators/staff; children and other visitors to the service. The approved provider/nominated supervisor will complete a Duty of Care Checklist to ensure that all duty of care responsibilities are completed.

Good Housekeeping

Good housekeeping at the workplace is essential. Many accidents occur as a result of cluttered floor space, slippery floors, untidy work areas and a lack of maintenance to the buildings and equipment. To help maintain a safe workplace educators/staff will:

- Keep all surfaces at the service clean and tidy.
- Document maintenance requirements for floors and other surfaces.
- Keep aisles, exits and stairs free of clutter and report issues relating to poor lighting and signage of these areas
- Control minor spills of all substances, even if non-dangerous substances are involved.
- Check tools and equipment to ensure their proper installation and maintenance.
- Report on issues relating to inadequate storage areas or inappropriately stored equipment.
- Ensure difficulties with lighting are reported and addressed.
- Handle and dispose of wastes in the appropriate manner.(refer to Staying Healthy in Childcare Ed. 4)
- Label dangerous materials clearly with appropriate warning signs.

Manual Handling

Manual handling and lifting form an integral part of work within our service. Manual Handling means any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any people, animals or objects.

Ways to reduce the risk of injury should be followed including:

- Identifying potential hazards e.g. heavy or long piece of equipment, high or low shelves, unpredictable actions of children etc.
- Assessing the risk of each hazard e.g. how often is the equipment used? How awkward is it to carry? Which children may become distressed or angry? etc.
- Controlling the risk using the control hierarchy (See below in Making Hazards Safe).
- Monitoring the control measures to ensure they are effective.

At Staff Meetings educators/staff members should discuss as a team the identified hazards and use these steps to develop control measures to reduce exposure to the risk.

Ballina River Street Children's Centre has a **Two People Lift (label) strategy** to control manual handling of heavy or awkward equipment. The educator/staff team will need to assess whether each piece of equipment requires one or two people to lift safely without placing unnecessary strain on backs. Once decided a sticker is placed in a prominent position (on each piece of equipment/ or near the equipment).

All pieces of equipment labelled Two People Lift must be stored between floor and waist height. Smaller pieces of equipment can be stored on high or low shelves. A set of steps should be used to reach higher places.

Storage boxes should also be assessed and only half filled if the contents are heavy i.e. books, magazines.

Whenever an educator/staff member has to lift they should;

- Bend knees and tuck in bottom
- Keep back straight
- Keep load close to the body
- Avoid twisting the body as they lift.

Heavy or awkward equipment should preferably be moved when children are not around.

Before lifting children educators/staff should always ask themselves, "Do I need to lift the child, or is there an alternative?" where there is no alternative, plan the lift, always give yourself a secure base to avoid being pushed over, and consider the following;

- Get down to the child's level, or get the child to step up to your level.
- Hold the child close to you.
- Use your previous experiences with the child to anticipate how the child will react.

- Be prepared for jerky, unexpected movements, particularly if the child is distressed. Ensure another educator/staff member is on hand to assist before trying to comfort or restrain the child.
- If needing to carry a disabled child, discuss the process with an occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

Before lifting, educators/employees should:

- Acknowledge how much they can safely lift. Know their limits.
- Practice how to lift safely.
- Ask for help if in doubt.

Educators/Staff Immunisations

The service recommends that all educators/staff should be up to date with all vaccinations that are recommended for adults, as well as those special vaccinations which are recommended because of increased risk of exposure in the service workplace. These include: measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and also diphtheria and tetanus for people over 50 years. Educators/staff that are planning pregnancy need to be vigilant about determining their immunity to these diseases and to Cytomegalovirus (CMV), Parvovirus, and Toxoplasmosis, which may affect the unborn child or cause miscarriage or still birth. (as per information from Staying Healthy 5th Edition p.66-67, stored in staff room)

The risk of non-immunisation will be discussed with educators/staff during their orientation to the service, and at least on an annual basis at educator /staff meetings. A record of each educator/staff member's immunisations will be kept on file, and will be reviewed annually.

Clothing and Footwear

Educators/staff must adhere to the service's policy on appropriate clothing and footwear, as this has been developed both to ensure educators/staff are not putting themselves and others at risk by wearing clothing and footwear that may cause injury, and to maintain the professional image of the service. Information about what constitutes appropriate and safe clothing for the service setting will be regularly discussed at Staff Meetings, and through notices posted in the Staff Room on notice board. Educators/staff will be reminded to wear clothing that is suitably loose to give freedom of movement when involved in manual handling activities.

Cleanliness and Hygiene

Cleanliness and Hygiene are important to prevent the risk of diseases and infection spreading to children and educators/staff. All educators/staff will be oriented to the service's health policies, and the service will complete a Cleanliness and Hygiene Checklist every 3 months.

Educators/staff will be particularly vigilant in following cleanliness and hygiene principles when handling any dangerous materials to avoid dermatitis and other injuries to health.

Making Hazards Safe

Identified hazards should be eliminated, or their effects minimised as soon as possible. Where a hazard exists the control hierarchy should be followed. The best outcomes will be achieved using the controls at the top of the hierarchy. In some cases a combination of the controls is the most practical and effective way to control the hazard.

Control Hierarchy:

1. ELIMINATE the hazard.
2. SUBSTITUTE a less hazardous alternative. (e.g. use a less dangerous chemical where possible, or replace equipment e.g. pedestal fan for ceiling fan).
3. ISOLATE the hazard. (e.g. put the noisy piece of equipment outside, or out it in separate room)
4. Use ENGINEERING CONTROLS (e.g. install air-conditioning to ease excessive temperatures, or install residual current devices to guard against electric shock)
5. Use ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS (e.g. reduce the time anyone spends near the hazard, or provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing)

PPE should only be used as a last option and where hazards cannot be removed. In the Early Childhood service (BRSCC) duty of care towards the children is a key responsibility and therefore it would not be generally accepted to operate a service in an environment where hazards cannot be removed. One exception will be the use of gloves to protect educators/staff and children from the spread of infections in the service.

Hazardous Materials

Whilst the use of some dangerous substances will be unavoidable in the day to day operations of the services, these will be minimised wherever possible by choosing products which are least hazardous and assessing if one product can have more than one use, thus reducing the number of products required. Common dangerous substances which the service may come into contact with include; cleaning liquids and powders, paint, solvents, glue, antiseptics, and medications. These substances are dangerous and must be handled and stored appropriately.

Chemical products will be stored in a locked, well ventilated cupboard (because of fumes), that is away from food and drinks (fumes can be absorbed) and making it possible for children or unauthorised adults to reach and touch. Substances will be kept in their original containers, with labels intact. Substances that may react to each other will be stored separately.

A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is to be kept for all dangerous products. These sheets are available from manufacturer and tell you: what is in the product; what the health hazards are; the safest way to handle and use the product; first aid advice; how to clean up a spill of the product; and safe ways to dispose of the product.

Educators/employees are required to use these substances according to the manufacturer's written instructions (on the MSDS).

Educators/employees must also ensure they do not eat or drink while working with dangerous substances; wash their hands with soap and water after using the substances; and always wear protective gloves or other required protective clothing when using dangerous materials.

Emergencies, Accidents & Injuries

All educators/employees should be oriented to the service's accident and emergency procedures.

Employees should:

- Be aware of the location of the first aid boxes.
- Know who is qualified in First aid.
- Understand the procedures in the case of reporting an accident or injury in the workplace.
- Have access to a mobile telephone for accident and emergency situations.

The employer/approved provider/nominated supervisor will ensure employees are provided with information and training in the location of fire equipment, their uses and limitations and correct method of operation.

Emergency evacuation plans are clearly displayed near main entrance and exits and in each play room at the service, to be followed in the event of a fire, natural disaster or other emergency. All educators/staff are oriented to the plan. Safety drills involving educators/staff and children will be practiced at least four times a year at different times of the day. An Evaluation of Emergency Evacuation Drill will be completed after each drill and a copy kept at the service.

The NSW workplace Health & Safety Act requires employers to report injuries in the workplace and diseases contracted in the course of the employees work to the Commissioner.

Employers are required to report injuries and disease promptly, on the prescribed forms (Workcover), so that action can be taken to prevent similar injuries or diseases occurring, and so that an investigation into the cause can be undertaken.

Educators/employees are required to report any injury or accident to themselves, to the approved provider/nominated supervisor. An Educator/Employee Injury/Accident/Illness Report must be completed promptly and forward to the approved provider/nominated supervisor for:

- All workers compensation claims;
- Notification of a minor injury or accident;
- A "near miss" when action needs to be taken to ensure that an accident does not happen in the future.

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will ensure that copies of all injury reports are kept for the required period of time.

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will ensure that appropriate workers compensation cover is available to all employees and that employees understand the importance of reporting injuries or illness which occur during the course of their work. Employees will also be informed about deadlines for completing workers compensation forms (check QBE Insurance information).

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will ensure that injured employees are provided with appropriate rehabilitation and health care services.

Resources:

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Law 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations

National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care 2010

Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

National Health and Medical Research Council – Staying Healthy in Child Care – 4th Edition 2005

Retrieved 16th March 2011, from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au>

NSW Work Cover Authority www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Staying Healthy 5th Edition –Preventing Infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services, 18 February, 2013 p.66-67