

Sample Work Practices for a Centre

In the daily program of an early childhood education and care centre all care should be taken to identify and remove hazards and risk. By following WHS policies, procedures and instructions as well as careful thought about routine practices, a very safe environment can be constructed.

These work practices provide a sample of what should occur in a centre as a mean of trying to reduce the likelihood of accidents and injuries. These practices can be regarded as good housekeeping.

CHEMICALS

Containers used for storing chemicals must be clearly labelled and specific, e.g. do not store bleach in a soft drink bottle. Chemicals must be stored in a secure place that children cannot access.

Areas where chemicals and solvents are used should be well-ventilated and the correct usage clearly marked and follows. The dangers of the chemical must be clearly understood by all workers. The industry standard source of chemical information, Safety Data Sheets, must be available to all staff and consulted before purchasing materials and in case of emergencies or incidents.

SDS covers the the effect of the chemical ingredients if these make contact with skin, or are swallowed, inhaled or splashed in the eyes. It also provides first-aid instructions, safe handling instructions and storage precaution..

Anyone using chemicals in the workplace must ensure the following practices are adhered to:

- SDS is consulted and users have knowledge of the product;
- Users are aware of the potential hazards and the first-aid requirements
- The product's label is checked for accuracy and additional usage/storage instructions;
- The required PPE such as boots, gloves, aprons, goggles and masks are used when handling the chemical;
- All chemicals (e.g. cleaners, paints, pesticides and fuels) are stored in a locked room or cupboard that children cannot access. Note that there may need to be trays used to collect any chemicals if leakage occurs during storage.)
- Different types of chemicals are stored separately, i.e. with space and in different trays. Some chemicals may interact with each other so this occurs to minimise the risk.

- The selecting of least possible hazardous chemical that will do the job. This is both environmentally sensible but also a major preventative function in protecting children from the effects of chemical contact. (e.g. Why use bleach when vinegar has the same cleaning effect?)

ELECTRICAL POWER

Be sure that plugs, sockets, power cords or extension leads are in good repair and working order.

Power plug protectors should be used as well as earth leakage detectors where possible.

Do not use 'double adapters' as they may contribute to a power overload.

AIR FLOW and VENTILATION

Poor ventilation can lead to symptoms such as headaches and irritability. Rooms need to be well ventilated with sufficient breeze or mechanical cooling equipment (i.e. fans or air-conditioning) to ensure pleasant conditions.

Ventilation equipment must be well maintained, i.e. Air-conditioning filters should be cleaned and/or replaced regularly.

EXITS, ENTRANCES AND PASSAGE WAYS

Risks can be minimised by keeping the floors, aisles, exits and stairs clear and in good repair.

Floors should be swept or vacuumed regularly, be clutter free, not slippery and have properly secured floor coverings.

FIRE EQUIPMENT

All staff are trained in the use of fire extinguishers.

Emergency drills occur at a minimum of every three months (Education and Care Services National Regulation 97), and any fire escapes are clearly identified.

Emergency numbers and information should be clearly displayed next to every telephone.

RUBBISH

Adequate numbers of rubbish bins with lids, each lined with plastic, are available. Each bin is emptied regularly during the day and the contents removed to the appropriate outside receptacle. Bins are cleaned and disinfected at least each day.

FURNITURE

Chairs are selected on the criteria of support and maintenance of good posture. Workers should use furniture suitable for adult weight, while appropriate child sized furniture appropriate to age and development of children is provided for children's use.

Stackable chairs are limited to six high and are lifted off one at a time.

OUTDOOR AREAS

Outdoor play areas meet the standards required, e.g. construction materials is of the required standard, equipment is of appropriate size for the children who use it. Play areas have an appropriate ground coating where required, e.g. rubber matting.

Garden plants are non-toxic with no sharp or spiky leaves or thorns.

Area is inspected prior to children accessing it, e.g. once in the morning and then again after lunch before children are let into the area for final play.

SUNSMART

Workers and children will always wear hats when in outdoor areas. Where it is medically appropriate (i.e. allergies) the use of a SPF 30+ sunscreen will occur.

PLAY EQUIPMENT

All equipment is to be cleaned weekly and subject to maintenance checks at set periods, i.e. within a maximum of each four week period. and maintained regularly.

Large equipment, e.g. climbing frames, balance beams and gymnastic mats, should be handled as team. This is not a single person task.

Storage areas are easily accessible and limits are evident in the height of storage areas. .

NAPPY CHANGING AREAS

Portable steps are provided so that toddlers can climb up and onto the change area with assistance. This minimises the need for workers/carers to lift and bend.

SUSPENDED RESOURCES AND DISPLAYS

Centres often hand student work or stimulus materials from ceilings, etc. When doing so care needs to be taken to ensure these materials are not in a position where they impede traffic through the centre. The materials also need to be fixed securely so young children cannot pull them down or dismantle the items.

AGGRESSION

As in any situation aggression and violence are often the result of strong emotions. Sometime the stimulus or underpinning reason for the behavior is clearly visible to workers; other times it must be inferred from the knowledge of the child and the situation.

Aggression may be faced from both sets of clients: the children in care and the parents related to the children.

When faced with an adult expressing violence and aggression, a worker must always ensure their duty of care has priority, i.e. the safety of the children and the worker. Calling for assistance in the first action and where prolonged asking for a Police response is mandatory.

MANUAL HANDLING

Manual handling includes any lifting, carrying, putting down, pushing and pulling that you do with your body. Manual-handling injuries are one of the most common WHS issues.

Manual-handling injuries can arise from many activities, including lifting children, office-based administrative tasks, moving furniture and equipment and tasks such as cleaning.

Many factors, including weight, increase the likelihood of injury. Some of these factors include:

- movement and action
- weight and force
- characteristics of the load
- posture
- equipment used
- duration of the task
- frequency of the activity
- aspects of the work environment
- the age of the worker.