

Working to achieve a safe environment

Learning Guide

Written by

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Learning Outcomes:

- To identify duty of care responsibilities to children and staff
- To identify possible hazards and risks in the Out of School Care centre environment
- To take action to minimize potential risks

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Learning Guide Feedback Form

Using this Learning Guide

This guide has been written to assist you to learn through self paced study and facilitated professional development sessions held at your children's service.

It is recommended that a senior staff member is nominated to facilitate the PD sessions, however each individual has a responsibility for their own learning, and to assist the team as a whole to work and learn together.

Each person should individually read through the information provided, and then come together with their work colleagues to discuss their understanding of the information and work together to complete the "Putting ideas in practice" exercises. These exercises are always identified with the following symbol:



Putting ideas in practice

Write down your answers to the exercises where you see this symbol:



Sometimes you will be asked to complete an action, identified by this symbol:



Many of the practical exercises can be implemented at your centre, and should be used to add to and enhance your professional practice.

How did this Learning Guide work for you?

If you wish to provide feedback to the developers your comments would be most welcome. Please complete and return the feedback sheet at the end of this package.

Duty of care

What do we mean by duty of care?

In law you owe a duty of care to persons who are closely and directly affected by your actions and who you ought reasonably to have in mind when taking action.

You therefore need to ask yourself, who should you have in mind when you are operating your child care service?

- ✓ The children
- ✓ Their parents/families
- ✓ Your employees
- ✓ Your work colleagues
- ✓ Students on placement
- ✓ Visitors or volunteers
- ✓ Other people who may be at the centre

What are acceptable standards of care?

You have breached your duty of care if you have fallen below the acceptable standard of care.

This will be determined by:

- The risks inherent in the conduct ie. if there is a high probability of injury you must adopt a higher standard of care.
- The seriousness of the consequences should any risks eventuate ie. if the consequences are serious, more care and thus a higher standard may need to be observed.
- Whether the conduct conforms with existing standards ie. Children & Community Services (Outside School Hours Care) Regulations 2006, Quality Assurance Standards, Occupational Safety & Health Act 1984 and other legal requirements; the standard set by the majority of outside school hours care services; community expectations.

- Whether the service has kept up with changes in professional standards ie. ensure you follow latest literature and research.

Overview Occupational Safety & Health Legislation

- Occupational Safety refers to preventing accidents in the workplace ie. injuries, death resulting from falls, electric shock, machinery malfunction or misuse
- Occupational Health refers to prevention of illness that could be contracted while working or visiting a workplace ie. exposure to toxic or hazardous substances; to infectious diseases; to psychological stress that is related to work.
- Occupational Safety & Health laws are designed to eliminate or reduce the incidence of accidents or health risks in the workplace.
- OSH legislation within WA is: Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984, and Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996. These requirements are legally enforceable and fines and other penalties can be imposed if they are breached. Visit Worksafe through the Department of Consumer & Employment Protection (DOCEP) website: www.docep.wa.gov.au
- Codes of Practice are guides that give advice, strategies and information that help prevent accident or injury. They show what should be done to comply with the Act and Regulations.
- National Standards are developed by the Australian Safety & Compensation Council and refer to issues such as noise, asbestos, RSI etc. www.ascc.gov.au
- Standards Australia develop Australian Standards to give advice about design and use of safety equipment. www.standards.org.au



Putting ideas in practice

Take time to visit these websites, download any relevant materials, and discuss with your staff team the information available on each site.



Employers' Responsibilities for Occupational Safety & Health of employees

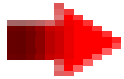
Employers:

- Owe a duty of care for the safety and health of everyone in the workplace.
- Must do everything that is reasonable and practical to remove or lessen risks of injury or sickness in the work environment.
- Must provide safe machinery and equipment that is maintained.
- Must provide adequate training to ensure staff can do the job safely.
- Must provide protective clothing and safety equipment that is required to do the job safely.
- Must provide information about health and safety matters.
- Must consult with designated employees about health and safety issues.

Employees' Responsibilities

Employees:

- Are responsible for their own health and safety and that of others who could be affected by their actions.
- Must follow the employer's safety and health instructions and procedures.
- Must report hazards, situations which may present a hazard, injuries and accidents.
- Must co-operate with the employer on health and safety matters.



Putting ideas in practice

Task 1

Discuss the following scenarios with your staff team

1. A child with a severe allergic reaction to bee stings is enrolled at your OSHC centre. What are your duty of care responsibilities for this child?



2. The centre is located in a shared facility. All equipment and furniture has to be unpacked from a storeroom, and then packed away again each day. Some pieces of furniture and equipment are heavy and awkward to carry. What are the employer's duty of care responsibilities to the staff?

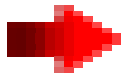


Identifying possible hazards and risks

Hazards are accidents waiting to happen.

Types of hazards:

- **Physical** – e.g. fire, noise, electricity, heat, cold, ventilation and moving vehicles that present risk of injury to the body
- **Chemical** – e.g. poisons, gases and other dangerous substances that pose risk of illness or other harm
- **Biological** – e.g. bacteria, viruses, infectious diseases, containing contaminated blood, allergens, mould or fungus that pose risk to health
- **Ergonomic** – e.g. confined spaces, manual handling, furniture or machinery design that can have an affect on the muscles or other parts of the body and cause injury
- **Human Behaviour** – e.g. alcohol or drug abuse, psychological stress or violent behaviour that can pose risks to physical and mental health.



Putting ideas in practice

Task 2

Discuss as a staff team which hazards are most common in your service. List the most prevalent hazards here.



Employee Responsibilities:

If an employee identifies a hazard they should:

- Take steps to protect those who are immediately threatened
- Report the hazard to the Occupational Safety & Health Representative and/or the employer
- Apply any appropriate knowledge from training, information or instructions

Employer Responsibilities:

The employer must ensure that when notified of a hazardous situation appropriate action is taken. If a hazard is identified the employer must:

- Take action to immediately eliminate or lessen the risk
- Perform risk assessment and risk control procedures
- Provide supervision and training for those at risk
- Give information and instruction about the type of hazard

Procedures for ensuring a safe environment for children and staff

Principle 7.2 of the OSHCQA Quality Practices Guide sets out indicators for promoting a safe environment for children and staff.

These include:

- The use of ***hazard checklists*** to check the safety of the building, grounds and equipment – some areas should be checked daily, (see example daily checklist page 13), whilst others may be weekly or monthly, depending on level of risk (risk assessment will be discussed in more detail later). Potential hazards are effectively controlled and made inaccessible to children.
- Documented ***emergency and evacuation procedures*** – this is also a requirement of the Children & Community Services (Outside School Hours Care) Regulations 2006. You are required to keep written records of each emergency drill.

Look at the Regulations and answer how often are you required to hold emergency evacuation drills?



- Policy on sun protection that is followed by all staff – staff should be positive role models by adhering to sun protection procedures whenever they are outside.
- Careful storage and use of dangerous chemicals including cleaning materials, medications, and other toxic or hazardous materials – centres should obtain Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all hazardous chemicals; develop First Aid Action plans for all dangerous products, and maintain a register of all hazardous substances kept on the premises.

List all the hazardous materials kept at your OSHC service here.



- Maintaining a healthy environment for children with asthma or other chronic health problems, and ensuring medications are safely administered in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- Ensuring children’s safety on excursions - this is also a requirement of the Children & Community Services (Outside School Hours Care) Regulations 2006. Special care needs to be taken in using public toilets to ensure children’s health and safety.
- Ensuring children’s safety when being transported by vehicle to and from school, or on excursions.
- Ensuring staff are properly trained to provide necessary first aid, and to use the services emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, and training records are filed and regularly checked to ensure currency of training.



Putting ideas in practice

Task 3

Discuss with your staff team how each of the above areas are managed in your OSHC service.



Develop a Daily Safety Checklist for your service

Task 4



Consider the potentially hazardous areas in your service and develop a checklist of areas that should be checked daily before the children arrive.

Area checked on: (date) _____/_____/____	Staff member signature	Check OK	Hazard Identified Action taken
Outdoor Check (list specific areas below)			
e.g. Outdoor climbing equipment – check for rough edges, nails, broken parts, soft fall raked evenly, guard rails secure etc.			
Indoor Check (list specific areas below)			
e.g. Emergency exits – clear of obstructions, can be opened in an emergency, clear access to exits etc.			

Assessing risks

Risk is the likelihood that a situation will result in harm.

To decide on the risk posed by the hazard you must establish:

1. What is the likelihood of an accident or incident occurring as a result of the hazard (check previous incidents or near misses)
2. What the potential threats to health and safety could be
3. How many people could be affected and for how long



Putting ideas in practice

Task 5

Using the above criteria, go back to the scenario of the child with a severe reaction to bee stings being enrolled at your OSHC service, and assess the risks to the child and any others that could be affected?



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Rate the risk using the table over the page.

Risk rating: _____

LIKELIHOOD OF INJURY OR HARM TO HEALTH	RISK RATING TABLE			
	CONSEQUENCES OF ANY INJURIES OR HARM TO HEALTH			
	Insignificant eg no injuries	Moderate eg first aid/medical treatment	Major eg extensive injuries	Catastrophic eg fatalities
Very likely	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
Moderate	Low	High	Extreme	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Highly unlikely (rare)	Low	Moderate	High	High

Now consider the scenario of the centre that has to be set up and packed away each day. Assess the risk of harm that could occur to the staff that are handling heavy or awkward pieces of furniture or equipment?



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Rate the risk using the table.

Risk rating: _____

Taking Action

Risk Control

Risk Control is the process of finding ways to eliminate or lessen the risks to health and safety.

Hierarchy of Control

- **Elimination** – remove the hazard entirely
- **Substitution** – substitute it for something safer if possible
- **Isolation** – isolate the hazard or enclose it so it poses less risk
- **Engineering** – modify the process or equipment to lessen the risk i.e. apply safety guards
- **Administrative** – changing work practices to reduce risk i.e. reduce amount of time exposed to the hazard
- **Protective clothing and equipment** – risk controlled by workers wearing gloves, helmets, protective eyewear or other safety devices – only used when other measures are not practicable or there is a need to increase protection.

Sometimes it is best to use more than one way of reducing risks.



Putting ideas in practice

Task 6

How will you control the risks to the child with a severe allergy to bee stings?



What type of controls does your strategy use? (Circle)

Elimination **Substitution** **Isolation** **Engineering** **Administrative**
Protective Clothing/Equipment

How will you control the risks to the staff that are handling heavy or awkward pieces of furniture or equipment?



What type of controls does your strategy use? (Circle)

Elimination Substitution Isolation Engineering Administrative
Protective Clothing/Equipment

Evaluate Controls:

Eliminating hazards and controlling risks is a team responsibility. Ensuring the care and safety of everyone in the service involves the constant vigilance of everyone, and an on-going evaluation of the controls that have been established.

As a staff team it is important to:

- Make sure your controls are effective
- Decide whether changing work procedures would make controls more effective
- Ask, does the risk control method used require extra training for staff?
- Consult the employees concerned with the risk regarding how well the risk control measures are working.



Putting ideas in practice

Task 7

Review the list of hazards you listed on page 8 of this Learning Guide.

What controls have you put in place to deal with these hazards?

Discuss with the staff team:

- Are the controls effective?
- Do you need to further change work procedures to make them more effective?
- Do staff need additional training to implement the controls more effectively?



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Duty of Care Risk Register

Download the **Duty of Care Risk Register** from the PSCWA website:

www.pscwa.org.au – click onto Free Essentials page

Read the article written by Marilyn Hopkins, to be found at the end of the resource.

Then complete the checklist by honestly answering the questions YES or NO.

The more times you can answer YES the more strategies you will have in place to minimize your risks.

If you answer NO to any questions, ask yourself what strategies you use to minimize the potential risk.

If you do not have strategies in place, discuss the potential risks as a staff team and identify strategies that will help you to manage the possible risk.

Answers to Tasks

Task 1:

1. To understand the child's allergy and be prepared to respond to an allergic reaction should one occur. To take steps to protect the child from his/her allergens.
2. To ensure staff do not injure themselves or others whilst packing or unpacking the storeroom each day.

Task 5:

Child with bee allergy

1. During times when bees are active the risk is high if the children are outside, especially if playing without shoes, or whilst eating. Check previous accident/illness records to determine if bee stings are more prevalent at a particular time of year. Check outdoor area to determine if there is any vegetation that is attracting bees.
2. Potential threats to health and safety could be life threatening for the allergic child; high stress for staff which could lead to accidents or health issues; other children could be stung.
3. People that could be affected are: the child with the allergy; staff could be under stress; other children could be stung by bees.

Risk rating: Extreme

Staff setting up and packing away

1. Accidents are more likely to happen when staff are moving the heaviest and most awkwardly shaped items, or when a staff member is trying to set up alone; or when lifting items from or onto high shelves. New staff are also at greater risk of injury.
2. Potential threats to health and safety include injury to backs, joints, ligaments, muscle strain, sprains or trips.
3. All staff that are involved in setting up or packing away are at risk, and could be affected by long term injuries that could keep them off work for significant periods of time.

Risk Rating: High/Extreme

Task 6:Child with bee allergy

1. Ensure an Emergency Action Plan is completed by the child's parent and doctor, and staff are trained in responding effectively to an emergency.
2. Ensure staff have current First Aid qualifications.
3. Ensure children always wear shoes when playing outside.
4. Take action to remove any bees nests in the vicinity of the centre.
5. Restrict outdoor activities during times of high bee activity.
6. Obtain expert advice regarding bee attracting plants in the outdoor area and take action to eliminate bee attracting plants if possible.
7. Debrief staff after any incident and discuss staff concerns at staff meetings in order to seek additional strategies to alleviate staff stress.

Type of controls used: Isolation; Administrative; Protective clothing/equipment

Staff setting up and packing away

1. Train all staff in safe manual handling techniques – take special care to train new staff.
2. Display posters illustrating correct lifting techniques near the store room.
3. Regularly remind staff of the need to use safe lifting techniques at staff meetings.
4. Reorganise the store room to ensure the heaviest furniture and equipment is stored at waist level or on the ground, and lighter items are stored on higher shelves.
5. Use a trolley and casters to assist in moving furnishings and heavy items.
6. Implement a 2 person lift policy – put stickers on all items that should only be lifted by 2 people.
7. Ensure staff rosters require at least 2 people to be rostered on, to complete setting up and packing away tasks.
8. Where possible replace heavy or awkward items with lighter, easier to move items.
9. Monitor records of injuries to staff caused through manual lifting tasks, and take action to remind or retrain staff in correct lifting techniques.

Type of controls used: Substitution; Engineering; Administrative

References

Other learning guides in this series:

Effective Communication – Learning Guide by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy, published by PSCWA 2006

Building Trust and Confidence through Leadership Learning Guide by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy, published by PSCWA 2007

Encouraging Parent Involvement Learning Guide by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy, published by PSCWA 2006

Other relevant resources:

Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance – Quality Practices Guide, by National Childcare Accreditation Council 2003

Duty of Care Risk Register, by Sandy Morton, published by PSCWA 2006

The First Step – Managing safety and health hazards in your workplace, published by Department of Consumer and Employment Protection & WorkSafe.

Learning Guide Feedback Form

Your feedback will help us to improve our learning materials so they are more useful to you. Please rate the following criteria on a sliding scale of 1 (good) to 5 (poor) by circling the appropriate number.

	Good				Poor		
clear language	1	2	3	4	5	language unclear	
easily understood	1	2	3	4	5	confusing/difficult	
relevant	1	2	3	4	5	not relevant	
exercises useful	1	2	3	4	5	exercises of no use	

Please add any other comments you wish to add about the learning guide:



Name (optional): _____

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