

D-29 Manual Handling

NQS

QA. 3.1.2	Upkeep.
QA. 7.1.2	Management systems.

National Regulations

Reg. 103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
Reg. 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

Policy Statement

We aim to ensure the identification, assessment and control of all Manual Handling tasks performed by staff is in accordance with the requirements of the Workplace Health and Safety legislation to reduce the risk of injury in the workplace.

This is to prevent the occurrence of musculoskeletal injuries caused by manual handling tasks in the workplace. This procedure covers any lifting, restraint, pushing, pulling, or moving of loads of repetitious movement that could result in musculoskeletal injuries.

Related Policies

- Concord OSHC Policy A-15: Role of Management Committee
- Concord OSHC Policy B-6: Indoor Environment
- Concord OSHC Policy C-3: Staff Orientation and Induction
- Concord OSHC Policy D-28: Workplace Health, Safety and Environment
- Concord OSHC Policy D-34: Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Control
- Concord OSHC Policy D-35: Workplace Inspection

Procedure

The Management Committee and Nominated Supervisor are responsible for ensuring that the risk of injury as a result of Manual Handling tasks is minimised by complying with relevant legislative requirements for Workplace Health and Safety.

The Nominated Supervisor, in consultation with Management, will:

- ensure that manual handling posters and information are available for staff, reminding them of the importance of using safe lifting practices. Such information can be sourced through SafeWork NSW.

- be responsible for identifying any tasks requiring manual handling and ensuring safe operating procedures are in place to address them.
- Reinforce implementation of manual handling training and ensuring all staff work in accordance with the standard/safe operating procedures.

Staff will:

- only move heavy objects as a team
- ensure all equipment is as readily accessible as possible without needing to stretch too far or bend too low
- adhere to all weight and height limits when using portable ladders
- try not to twist their backs when carrying or lifting
- ensure the floor space is uncluttered and free from trip/slip hazards (see B-6 Indoor Environment Policy)
- try to store heavy items at waist height as much as possible
- ensure they do not lift any children, unless in an emergency – in emergency situations, two staff at minimum will lift any children requiring assistance
- report to Management if they have not been trained or there is no suitable equipment available to complete the manual handling task.

Manual Handling will be included in the monthly hazard/risk assessment (see D-28 Workplace Health and Safety Policy) and Centre practices reviewed regularly to reduce risk of injury.

Identification/Assessment and Control

The following will be used as a guide within the service to assist in reducing the risk of injury:

- **Identification** of the risks of all manual handling tasks
- **Assessment** of different risk factors and their likelihood
- **Control** of the risk through policy/practice review, use of mechanical aids where possible and the provision of training and information to staff

Staff members will be offered Manual Handling training, as applicable, to give them the skills and abilities to be safe at work. The Committee will ensure funds are earmarked in the budget for such training.

What kind of injuries can result from manual handling?

Unsafe manual handling may cause a range of injuries, including:

- muscle sprains and strains – sudden onset and gradual onset
- injuries to muscles, ligaments, intervertebral discs, and other structures in the back
- injuries to soft tissues in the wrist, arms, shoulders, neck, or legs
- abdominal hernias

Some examples of Manual Handling problems in childcare

- Lifting of children at awkward angles or too heavy for an individual Bending
- Lifting / bending - task repetition Adopting poor postures due to limited space in change or sleep area, twisting or overreaching to move / restrain children
- In and out of Cots
- Moving equipment from storage areas
- Lack of knowledge of lifting techniques, not knowing when to perform a team lift, or keep the load close to the body when walking and carrying
- Performing manual handling tasks such as lifting, pushing, and pulling, carrying, and holding on a repetitive basis for an extended time with limited variation in the type of work performed

Lifting by hand

Manual handling injuries are minimised if the correct techniques are used and the body is in good physical condition. This applies to sudden injuries and to gradual onset injuries caused by repetitious movement

How much can be lifted?

Lifting ability partly depends on the body's condition, including flexibility and strength, and physical make-up – fitness for the task. Building up strength by a regular exercise program and stretching your body before doing any heavy or awkward manual handling task can assist with minimising the risk of injury; this is equally applicable to early learning.

Sizing up the load:

Consider size, shape, ability to grasp, height, and distance to be transported.

Lifting correctly

There are a number of key principles to be applied to correct lifting.

- Keep feet approximately shoulder width apart or parted--one alongside the object and one behind the object, so that you can stand as close to the object as possible. Comfortably spread feet give greater stability
- Keep back straight. Use the squat or half kneel position to do so but remember that "straight" does not mean absolutely "vertical". A straight back helps keeps the spine, back muscles, in correct alignment
- Tuck in chin so the neck and head continue the straight line and keep spine straight and firm
- Grasp the object with the whole hand for maximum strength. Fingers alone have very little power. Wearing gloves is recommended
- Keep eyes looking straight ahead and neck and shoulders squared and upright. Keep knees bent and use your legs to begin to straighten your body to take the weight of the load
- Tuck elbows and arms in and hold load close to body. When the arms are held away from the body, they lose much of their strength and power. Keeping the arms tucked in also helps keep body weight centred
- Keep body weight directly over feet. This ensures better balance
- Never twist the trunk - always move your feet to align with direction of travel

Note: When setting the load (invariably the child in your care) down, use the same lifting steps in reverse.

Change of Direction

To change direction, lift the object to the carrying position and turn the entire body including the feet. Never twist the body as this is a common cause of back injury

Team Lifting - for equipment etc.

- When two or more people carry one object, adjust the load so that it rides level
- When team lifting, designate one person to give the signal when to lift
- When team lifting make sure that you and your lifting partner are of similar strength

Remember:

The important principles for safe manual handling are

- Avoid twisting your body while turning with a load
- Maintain a straight back wherever possible
- Use strong leg muscles to help lift the load
- Use assistive equipment when provided to help move the load
- Avoid high reaching and high lifting. Use a suitable, sturdy platform to reach the load
- Do not catch or throw loads
- Check for overall weight and shape, nails, splinters, rough strapping etc.
- Always maintain good visibility- particularly in areas with poor sight lines slopes or stairs

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2017
- Privacy Act 1988
- Safe Work Australia <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>
- Network of Community Activities Factsheet – ‘Workplace Health and Safety – Overview’
- Network of Community Activities Factsheet – ‘Risk Assessment and Management’
- Network of Community Activities Factsheet – ‘WHS “Hotspots” in OOSH’

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