



The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc.

Section 3 Rainbow Childrens Centre Workplace Health & Safety Policies (reviewed Oct 2012, reviewed and amended February 2018)

1) Rationale

Rainbow acknowledges and respects the right of all involved with the centre to a safe and healthy environment. As well, Rainbow recognises that a safe workplace and centre environment is in the best interests of the children attending the centre.

Under the Workplace Health and Safety Act, Rainbow Children's Centre Inc. is required to ensure a safe workplace for staff and a safe environment for children families and visitors to Rainbow Children's Centre.

2) Aim

Rainbow aims to ensure the centre's management and staff are aware of their responsibilities and duties in regard to the environment. In particular there is a requirement to

- a) Identify all hazards in the centre
- b) Assess the risks arising from those hazards
- c) Implement measures to eliminate or control those risks
- d) Provide instruction supervision and training to staff working in the centre
- e) Consult with employees and families on matters that affect the health, safety and welfare of employees, children, families or visitors at the centre.

3) Mandates

- a) Work Health and Safety Act & Regulation 2011
- b) Education & Care Services National Regulations 2018
- c) Food Act 1999

4) WH&S plan

a) Hazard identification

- i) The Management Committee must set up a sub-committee to report on hazards at least once each calendar year and may set up a sub-committee on a more frequent basis if required. The sub-committee shall inspect all areas of the centre and its operations. That sub-committee shall consist of the Director plus at least one other member of staff plus at least one member of the Committee. The sub-committee shall report to the Management Committee about the condition of the centre and the report shall identify any apparent hazards.

4 John Sharpe Street, EAST BALLINA NSW 2478

A.B.N 44 068 833 461

Rainbow Education & Care Phone(02) 66866621 rainbow@rainbow.nsw.edu.au

Rainbow Out of School Hours Care Ph(02) 66866621 ooshc@rainbow.nsw.edu.au

- ii) The staff shall be required to be active participants in the hazard identification process. The Committee shall ensure appropriate and adequate mechanisms are in place to easily allow staff to :
 - (1) deal with any hazard as required when it is first observed and ensure it poses as little further risk as possible, and to report the hazard to the Director
 - (2) have opportunities at staff meetings to discuss and become empowered to be confident about reporting and dealing with hazards

- b) Assess the risks arising from those hazards.** The annual report re hazards plus any further reports shall assess any new risks that were not apparent in previous reports or may reassess any risks if and when new information is obtained about those risks. The sub-committee shall require the Director to monitor publications within the early childhood sector and within general media to ensure the centre has up to date information about processes, equipment and supplies used within child care. When the Director or other members of staff or Management Committee become aware of any important new information about risks associated with child care, then the information should be brought to the attention of the Management Committee at the next available opportunity. The director shall review all accident/illness/injury registers and report to the Management Committee any changes made to processes or procedures as a result of that register.

- c) Implement measures to eliminate or control those risks.** The Hazard sub-committee shall use suitable formats (i.e. the templates provided by Workcover) to determine appropriate responses to all identified hazards. Those responses shall be dated at the time they are completed and should be reviewed at least every three years. The agreed procedures shall be endorsed by the Management Committee and shall be made known to staff. Printed copies shall be available at all times to both staff, families and any other suitable persons.

- d) Provide instruction, supervision and training to staff working in the centre.** All agreed procedures to ensure a safe environment at Rainbow shall be available at all times to staff and made known to new staff members. Common procedures, especially those determined to constitute the higher risks to staff or others shall be displayed in appropriate places in the centre to assist in reminding staff and others of the required procedures. Where agreed procedures involve new or high level skills, especially skills which may not have been taught in standard general early childhood education courses, the Management Committee shall ensure all staff are trained in those procedures on a regular basis. Employees must co-operate with their employer's by taking reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves, and others, and be careful not to misuse equipment and substances provided for the health, safety and care of others.

- e) Consultation with employees and families on matters which affect the health, safety and welfare of employees, children, families or visitors at the centre.** All members of staff and all families using the service are expected to play an active part in communication safety issues. There shall be regular consultation held about health and safety issues within the standard communication systems of the centre. Such consultation shall include:
 - i) All staff members and families are asked to deal with any dangerous situation immediately upon its discovery and render the situation safe for children and other adults.

- ii) All staff members and families are asked to raise any urgent health and safety concerns immediately with the authorised supervisor to allow appropriate remedial action
- iii) All staff shall raise longer term concerns within the regular staff meetings. Those meetings shall allow opportunities for staff to raise safety issues, seek information about new products or equipment and review standardised operating procedures and processes.
- iv) Staff shall be invited to be a member of the hazard identification sub-committee.
- v) All staff shall be provided with a copy of any report developed by the sub-committee.

f) Responsibilities

- i) **Management Committee** The Management Committee shall be responsible for
 - (1) Reviewing the WH&S policy on at least a three year cycle
 - (2) setting up a sub-committee each year
 - (3) providing adequate resources for staff to ensure health & safety in the centre
 - (4) noting and acting in a timely manner on all H&S reports
 - (5) holding the Director and staff responsible for implementing all H&S policies
- ii) **Director** The Director shall
 - (1) Undertake all appropriate reviews of the centre's operations and report and address all subsequent matters of H&S concern
 - (2) Ensure all work in the centre follows agreed procedures
 - (3) Ensure all contractors and casual staff and other visitors are aware of H&S concerns, especially where those concerns may be different from other types of workplaces due to the presence of young children
 - (4) Ensure staff are trained as required in the use of all equipment and to undertake all necessary work procedures
 - (5) Ensure the Management Committee is made aware of the level of resources required for safe operation of the centre
 - (6) Monitor publications within the early childhood education field to remain aware and up to date re optimum ECE health & safety practices
 - (7) Develop in consultation with staff safe work practices for all centre tasks involving H&S risks to manage those risks
- iii) **WH&S sub-committee** The sub-committee shall consist of at least one committee member, at least one staff member and the Director. The staff members involved shall be trained in WH&S. The committee shall
 - (1) Monitor centre practices and procedures by regular inspections
 - (2) Investigate hazard reports and deal with matters as required
 - (3) Report to the Committee at least each year re WH&S compliance in the centre.
- iv) **Staff members**
 - (1) Contribute to the development of safe work practices
 - (2) Follow safe work practices
 - (3) Deal promptly with any high H&S risk found in the centre and report all H&S risks to the Director
 - (4) Contribute to staff meeting consultation processes re reviews of healthy and safe work practices
- v) **Families and parents**
 - (1) Follow instructions from staff and notices placed around the centre re safe work practices while in the centre

- (2) Raise any high H&S risk found in the centre with the Director or a staff member

vi) Contractors and sub-contractors

- (1) Provide evidence to the Director that all work carried out at the centre shall comply with relevant WH&S guidelines.
- (2) Ensure that all work in the centre is undertaken with recognition of the special circumstances of a work environment where there are young children. Liaise with the Director in recognising the special nature of the centre, the ways in which children's decisions are different to adults and an understanding of the likley actions of those young children in making decisions about work done at the centre.

vii) Schools

- (1) As per the requirements of the NSW WH&S system, as Rainbow shares premises used by local Dept Education & Communities schools, the centre assumes that each local public school used for a Rainbow OOSHC service shall be complying with all safety requirements and will undertake safety inspections in the normal course of operation of the school, for areas used by Rainbow services. The nominated supervisor shall liaise with each school, to ensure OOSHC staff are made aware of any ongoing issues or concerns re safety at the school.
- (2) OOSHC staff shall also provide reports to the school re any safety issues that may arise for OOSHC.

5) Safe work procedures

a) Nappy Change

- i) Staff will follow standard infection control procedures at all times in dealing with nappies including cleaning surfaces, hand washing and use of disposable gloves
- ii) The centre will ensure notices are posted in any nappy change area setting out standard procedures to be followed
- iii) Staff will be provided with child safe mobile steps, so that children are able to climb onto the change mat, thus reducing the lifting required.
- iv) The centre will require the use of disposable nappies by all families while at the centre to reduce the possibility of cross infection when changing nappies and to eliminate hygiene problems re storage of cloth nappies. Where a parent insists on using non-disposal nappies the centre will cooperate with the parent unless such usage poses an unacceptable risk to staff and/or other children and families. .

b) Cot rooms

- i) Cots will have drop sides so staff are not having to bend and lift inappropriately
- ii) Beds will be light and have with washable covers so they can be easily manipulated

c) Centre Furniture and fittings

- i) Centre furniture and fittings will be chosen with a view to safe usage by staff wherever possible taking into account the need to bend down or up and the weight of items to be carried or manoeuvred. Whenever possible and practical, mechanical aids, such as ladders and trolleys will be available to minimise lifting and stretching.
- ii) The centre will recognise that child sized furniture may not be suitable for use by adults and where possible suitable furniture will be provided for staff, especially in non-child areas such as offices. meeting rooms and staff rooms.

d) Emergency procedures¹

- i) Emergency evacuation plans and procedures will be clearly displayed near the main entrance and exit of each room used in the centre, including the administration and Director's offices. The evacuation plan and procedure will include routines and clear staff responsibilities. All staff, including relief staff, will be informed of the procedure and their specific tasks identified in their orientation into the centre. Staff will assess each situation individually when making a decision whether to evacuate the centre. In the event of an incident that requires evacuation a staff member will be appointed to liaise with the officer in charge of the appropriate emergency service re the nature and location of the emergency and further procedures to be followed.
- ii) Emergency lockdown plans will be clearly displayed near the main entrance and entrance and exit of each room used in the centre, including the administration and Director's offices. The lockdown plan and procedure will include routines and clear staff responsibilities. All staff, including relief staff, will be informed of the procedure and their specific tasks identified in their orientation into the centre. Staff will assess each situation individually in making a decision when a foreseeable threat of harm to staff, children or visitors necessitates a lockdown procedure.
- iii) Fire extinguishers will be installed and maintained in accordance with Australian Standards. Staff will be instructed in the operation of extinguishers but should only attempt to extinguish a fire if it is small, there is no threat to their personal safety, they feel confident to operate the extinguisher and all children have been evacuated from the building.
- iv) The centre will install and maintain adequate smoke detectors and fire blankets.
- v) Staff should be aware of bush fire danger and implement routine clearing of debris around the playground and inform the Director of any build up outside the centre's boundaries and inform the council to have debris cleared as soon as possible.
- vi) The centre will liaise with local fire authorities for advice and training in fire safety.

e) Accident, illness and incidents (including critical incidents)

- i) In the event of an incident, accident or illness occurring to a staff member in the centre the staff member who first becomes aware of the matter should assess the situation and respond in an appropriate manner. If the assisting staff member is not a first aider, then a first aider should be asked to give assistance.
- ii) Following the incident when it is safe to do so, the assisting staff member will complete an Incident / accident form to ensure an appropriate record of the matter and how it has been dealt with. The injured staff person will sign the form and take the top copy as their own record. The centre will retain records of accidents & incidents as required by law.

f) Provision of first aid

- i) If a staff member or visitor has an accident while at the centre they will be attended to immediately by a staff member who holds a current first aid certificate. In the event of an incident resulting in injury, which requires first aid, a qualified first aider will determine appropriate treatment to be given, and provide the first aid. First aiders can only administer first aid in minor accidents or to stabilise the victim until expert medical assistance arrives in more serious accidents.
- ii) The centre will ensure all regular staff have first aid certificates and will provide training for staff. The centre will maintain a list of all trained first aiders and ensure the list is displayed in the centre and near first aid kits. The list will show the date of expiry of staff first aid certificates and all staff are responsible for ensuring they let the centre know when their training needs to be renewed.

iii) A fully stocked and updated first aid kit will be kept in designated areas in the children's rooms, staff room and outdoor areas. Staff will be asked to ensure they are familiar with the contents of the First Aid Kit. A separate travelling first aid kit will also be maintained to be taken on excursions or during an evacuation. All first aid kits will contain at least the minimum equipment as suggested by St Johns Ambulance Service, including a first aid manual. Cold packs will be maintained in the centre. The centre will appoint a first aid co-ordinator who will maintain an inventory of all the *kits* and will review and maintain the kits as required.

g) Contacting support services Lists of telephone numbers of emergency contacts, medical and poisons information will be maintained in the centre so as to be easily accessible in the event of an emergency. The centre will maintain a current subscription to an Ambulance fund.

h) Ongoing medical condition On employment, a staff person with an ongoing medical condition (e.g. anaphylaxis, epilepsy, asthma etc.) will be asked to complete a written agreement detailing how staff will proceed in the event that the staff person suffers an attack of that ongoing illness while at the centre. Assisting first aid staff will proceed as agreed in the event of any such illness. Nothing in this clause should be taken to mean that any staff member is obliged to disclose details of any medical condition.

i) Illness

- i) The child care centre environment is acknowledged as one in which there can be a high incidence of infectious disease (e.g. flu, diarrhoea, etc.) due to the closeness of a large number of young children without adequate understanding of cross infection concerns. Hence staff need to be very careful both in ensuring they do not pick up illness and that they do not contribute to the illness of others by attending work when sick. If a staff member is unwell they should not report for work. Staff should contact the centre as soon as possible to inform them that they are unable to attend work. If a staff person becomes ill or develops symptoms at the centre, the staff person will be asked to return home or to treatment.
- ii) Staff will be excluded from the centre if they are ill with any contagious illness. This includes diarrhoea and conjunctivitis. The period of the exclusion will be on the recommendations outlined by the Department of Health. A table of all contagious diseases and their exclusion periods is available in the staff folder. A doctor's clearance certificate will be required stating the staff person is fit for work, for all infectious diseases such as measles, mumps, diphtheria, hepatitis A, polio, tuberculosis, typhoid and paratyphoid before returning to the centre.

j) Sun protection¹

- i) The centre will follow the recommendations for sun exposure in northern NSW in developing its daily program and timetable.
- ii) Staff will be required to work outdoors each day, although the program will normally confine such work to outside the most dangerous period of sun exposure in the middle of the day.
- iii) Staff will be required to wear clothing when outside as recommended², which provides suitable protection from the sun. Such clothing includes: loose-fitting shirts or dresses with collars and sleeves (no midriff or singlet tops); trousers; or longer-style

¹ cancer council NSW website www.cancercouncil.com.au/ guidelines re sun safety, protective clothing and sunscreen use.

² [SunSmart Childcare: A guide for service providers](#) 2008 NSW Cancer Council and "Shade for Child Care Services", NSW Dept Health 2005.

skirts and shorts falling at least to the knees; and broad brimmed or legionnaire hats. Wearing these items is suitable both for personal protection and as a role model for children.

- iv) Sun protection cream will be available for staff to use and staff are required to apply it as appropriate both for personal protection and as a role model for children.
- v) Staff are requested to consider wearing appropriate sun glasses for eye protection while working outside as recommended by sun safety guidelines.

k) Infection control

- i) Staff are asked to familiarise themselves with standard infection control procedures. Those procedures will be available to staff and the centre will provide suitable facilities in all areas of the centre to ensure staff are easily able to follow that procedure.
- ii) Effective hand washing and drying and/or hand sanitising reduces the transmission of infectious diseases and is the best way to control infection in the centre.
- iii) Only designated sinks will be used for hand washing, located in each playroom and in the kitchen. Liquid soap will be provided, as well as paper towels and disposal bins throughout the centre. Posters which promote hand washing will be placed in prominent position above each hand washing area, including children's bathrooms. Staff are asked to wash their hands frequently during the day and especially before and after handling bodily fluids (either their own or children's).
- iv) Hand sanitisers will also be placed around the centre and can be used to sanitise hands as appropriate. When hands are not visibly soiled, or when staff are unable to easily reach a wash basin without compromising child supervision or staff:child interactions, the waterless hand sanitisers can be used if required to maintain appropriate hygiene..
- v) Disposable gloves will also be provided at suitable locations in the centre and staff are asked to use them when dealing with children's bodily fluids. Staff on outdoor duty should carry supplies of gloves and tissues to assist children to manage nasal discharges and dribble. Staff with cuts, open wounds or non-infectious skin diseases should take special care to cover their wounds and wear disposable gloves.

- l) General centre cleaning** The centre will be thoroughly cleaned each day by professional cleaners. The Committee shall develop an agreed cleaning schedule with the cleaner that ensures the centre cleanliness at least meets adequate and appropriate standards. Such cleaning shall not occur when children are present in the rooms and will be scheduled so as not to interfere with the everyday operations of the centre services.

m) Daily room cleaning

- i) The centre will employ a professional cleaner who will clean all areas every day.
- ii) As well, staff will undertake spot cleaning as required during the day. Such cleaning will target spills and soiling of play areas that require immediate attention, as well as toys used by very young children which may have been in contact with that child's bodily fluids (e.g. infants mouthing toys). As far as possible infants and toddlers should be discouraged from sharing mouthed objects. All toys that are mouthed are to be placed out of children's reach and washed and dried before being used again. The normal procedure for washing toys to be used on all occasions will consist of washing in hot soapy water and drying as appropriate, in line with Health recommendations about effective cleaning regimes. Please note such advice recommends against the use of disinfectants.
- iii) All surfaces, which are touched frequently - such as tables, bench tops, cots chairs etc will be cleaned with detergent and warm water daily. Tables and chairs will be

wiped clean throughout the day, after use and before and after meals. Staff are to adhere to an agreed colour code system for clothes and buckets in the room for cleaning.

- iv) The centre does not allow the use of potties for toilet training, as the child-sized toilets already available are suitable for young children. The centre considers potties present an unacceptable hygiene hazard in a toilet used by multiple children. Toilets will be wiped over with hot soapy water if soiled and dried with paper towelling.
- v) The normal nappy changing procedure will include the use of individual impermeable overlays on a soft washable nappy change mat. Nappy changing mats will be wiped after each nappy change. The area will be thoroughly cleaned each afternoon and on each occasion that bodily fluids from children are spilled on the change pads or bench tops.
- vi) All linen – nappy pad overlays, towels, nappy change bottom wipes, face washers, dish clothes etc. are to be laundered after use. All soiled cloths will be placed in a bleach cleaning solution for an appropriate period prior to laundering.

n) Kitchens The centre shall ensure all cooking staff are fully aware of appropriate hygiene, food handling and kitchen cleaning routines. The centre shall ensure that the rosters for cooking staff allow adequate time for appropriate cleaning and food handling procedures and that appropriate materials are available to allow such procedures.

o) Hazardous materials³

- i) The centre recognises that the safety of children visitors and staff can be compromised by the use of machinery, chemicals or other activities while children are present. However such activities may need to occur during operating hours. Firstly urgent repairs may be necessary during the day or the trades' people working in the centre may not be available out of hours. As well there can be educational benefits for children in seeing and being aware of the processes which occur around them in their world. When hazardous machinery, chemicals and other activities are used or undertaken while the service is in operation, staff will ensure appropriate action is taken to manage that hazard.
- ii) Where potentially dangerous products equipment or substances have to be used in the centre, the staff will ensure children cannot have access to that danger. The centre will ensure :
 - (1) children will be cared for in areas away from any potential short term danger
 - (2) long term dangers will be eliminated
 - (3) dangerous products are stored away from children
 - (4) dangerous procedures will occur outside the hours children are present or outside areas children have access to
 - (5) the grounds are regularly assessed for plants which may present a danger to children
 - (6) sources of information about dangerous products will be monitored (e.g. industry publications, websites, health & safety newsletters) to ensure the centre is up to date with information about such dangers.
- iii) The centre will eliminate where possible or minimise they use of chemicals in normal operations in the centre. All staff will be made aware on orientation to the centre, of any potentially dangerous products, and where these are stored. All such products

³ In developing this policy relevant information was considered from Kidsafe (kidsafe.com.au), Heath & Safety in Childrens Services (published by UNSW School Public Health & Community Medicine 2003) Childsafety Qld (childsafety.qld.gov.au), "Childcare and Childrens Health", Centre for Community Child Health Victoria and Staying Healthy in Childcare (published by NHMRC 2005)

(e.g. cleaning materials, disinfectants, etc.) and other dangerous materials (tools, toiletries, first aid equipment and medications) will be stored in the appropriate areas, inaccessible to children and in appropriate containers. Material Safety Data Sheets will be maintained on any such product stored in the centre. Cleaning and hazardous products will not be stored near foodstuffs or where storage of these food products might contaminate foodstuff. Staff should always read the label before using any sprays, cleaning material or chemicals and be aware of appropriate first aid measures. Poisons information phone contact numbers shall be clearly labelled on all telephones and all staff educated about the importance of referring to the service as required.

- iv) As all staff will be trained in first aid, staff will be aware of dangerous products and appropriate first aid treatments. The Director and WH&S officer will monitor industry publications and other sources for new information about any products found to be dangerous to children.

p) Pest control

- i) Pest control solutions should initially be undertaken using non-chemical methods such as physical removal, trapping, maintaining a clean environment, and use of less harmful products. Low irritant, environmentally friendly sprays to be used minimally and only when adequate ventilation, and preferably not in the presence of children.
- ii) Kitchen and food preparation areas and storage will be cleaned and maintained daily. Equipment and especially food items will be properly stored so as not to attract pests and vermin. Rubbish bins and disposal areas will be emptied and cleaned daily.
- iii) Should any pests or vermin be identified then staff should alert the Director as soon as possible and action will be taken to rid the centre of the problem.

q) Storage of equipment All playrooms will be equipped with storerooms and suitable storage containers and devices. Such equipment will be selected with regard to the safety of staff and their ability to lift and manipulate equipment. A storage system will be implemented to insure easy access and uncluttered storage of all equipment. Ladders and or steps will be provided if necessary to provide easy access to higher shelves. Equipment is to be neatly packed away at the end of each session or day as appropriate. Storage areas will be cleaned and tidied at least twice a year or when necessary

r) Toilets All toilet facilities will have access to a sink or basin for hand washing and will have soap and paper towelling. Toilets, hand basins and kitchen facilities will be cleaned daily and immediately after any other significant contamination.

s) Rubbish bins Rubbish bins with fitted lids will be made available in all areas of the centre and will be emptied on a regular basis and as often as necessary to ensure they do not overflow. All rubbish and left over food should be placed in bins.

t) Heating, ventilation and lighting

- i) The environment at Rainbow will be monitored to ensure that staff and children are comfortable, that the room temperature is adjusted according to the season. Windows will be opened to allow air in and a breeze (in summer) if possible. Provision of natural light will be enhanced as much as possible. The available lighting will be adequate to allow staff and children to see adequately although lighting levels may be adjusted during the day to lower levels to create certain moods associated with the needs of the educational program and appropriate care of children. Staff are to take

special care at times of low lighting in moving around the rooms. Staff will not undertake reading or writing tasks in low lighting levels.

- ii) All heating and cooling systems will be checked regularly to ensure safety and reliability. Adequate ventilation will be provided at all times. Windows will be maintained to ensure easy opening and closing and insect screens provided where suitable.
- iii) Security lights will be placed around the centre that clearly provide unobstructed views of the doors, car park and surrounding areas. The lights will be on each day from dark till after the time all centre activities cease.

u) Building equipment repairs and maintenance

- i) The centre receives virtually free access to the centre buildings, which are owned by Ballina Shire Council. In exchange, the centre is required to maintain the buildings appropriately, both in terms of short term repairs and a long maintenance and replacement program. Provision will be made in the budget for regular maintenance and repair work. Buildings and all equipment will be maintained in a safe, clean condition and repaired or replaced if required. The centre and equipment will be regularly checked to ensure that they are in a good and safe condition, comply with relevant Australian Standards and have appropriate soft-fall surfacing maintained.
- ii) All electrical appliances, plugs, sockets, power cords or extension leads will be checked on a regular basis to ensure they remain safe. All electrical points/sockets will be fitted with child proof caps when not in use. Electrical circuit breakers will be installed and maintained.
- iii) All contractors will need to supply proof of their own public liability insurance and work safe certification before work commences at the centre.
- iv) When staff become aware of any safety issues, damaged or broken equipment or potential hazards, the problem will be removed if possible or cordoned off to prevent access until repair or replacement can be organised.
- v) Should the centre be considered unsafe or a health risk, then notice will be given to parents and all relevant parties and the centre closed until the problem has been rectified.

v) Manual handling and back care

- i) The centre acknowledges that the work of child care workers involves heavy lifting and that child care workers are at risk of suffering back and other related injuries. As well, good child care practice includes staff members working often at the level of young children and hence staff will be required to sit, squat or kneel at a child's level.
- ii) Staff will be asked to analyse their work and determine tasks which involve heavy lifting and which may need a special management plan. That plan may include sharing the work with other staff, using mechanical aids and using multiple staff to accomplish some tasks
- iii) To avoid injuries, staff will be provided with information and if necessary training in task requiring kneeling, bending, lifting and carrying.
- iv) Staff will designate equipment which should be moved only by a team lift with a label to show how many people are required to move the object safely
- v) Staff will seek assistance to lift a child when necessary.

w) Stress management The centre acknowledges that stress can be a significant hazard in a child care workplace⁴. Staff must remain alert at all times to ensure the safety and best

⁴ Workcover Authority NSW & Community Services NSW, Child Care Information 1994

“Managing stress in child care services” S Tansey, 2008, Putting Children First NCAC magazine.

<http://www.familymanagement.com/childcare/practices/stress.reduction.practices.html> 1999

interests of children. The workload in a centre is constant and large numbers of children are demanding. Staff are exposed to information about families and family situations which at times places staff in awkward and uncertain positions. These and other situations in the childcare workplace create stress.

- i) The centre will monitor the levels of stress reported by staff in the centre and take positive steps to understand and alleviate the stress suffered by individual staff members acknowledging stress levels differ for each person
 - ii) The centre will assess situations which have been identified with high stress levels and determine methods of managing those tasks and situations in ways to minimise stress.
 - iii) The Director will implement measures to minimise stress arising in the centre, recognising that poor communication, lack of clarity in staff roles, inadequate breaks, repetitious work etc can lead to higher staff stress levels.
 - iv) Staff will be encouraged to discuss stress above their personal comfort level with the Director or the Committee's staff liaison member as soon as possible.
- x) Footwear** The centre acknowledges that staff are handling furniture and other equipment and working in an environment with numerous trip hazards and so protective footwear is recommended by WH&S authorities. However, to be truly effective protective footwear needs to be fully enclosed shoes with hardened material around the toe area. Such footwear is however unsuitable to our climate and work environment. Many families (children and adults) come to the centre in minimal and sometimes no footwear, which is a reflection of the culture in a beachside area and the warm climate and families may feel intimidated by staff wearing safety shoes. As well, the centre learning environment requires staff to work closely in interactions with children. In learning experiences with children, including water, sand and soft fall play, hard shoes would be awkward and inappropriate and would easily become soiled and uncomfortable. Staff are also an important role model to encourage children's involvement in messy play. In such role modelling to children, staff often need to wear no shoes at all to encourage young children to be involved, especially those children who may be tactile defensive. Hence the centre management considers there are many sides to this matter and staff wearing footwear which is 'safe' may actually inhibit their ability to do their job properly. Hence
- i) The centre will allow staff to make a choice of footwear which reflects the need to balance foot safety while doing their job against personal comfort and practicality in the child care environment.
 - ii) Staff may sometimes remove footwear while at work when undertaking certain activities which cannot readily or appropriately be done with shoes on.
 - iii) Staff should choose their own shoes for use at work, recognising the need to balance comfort and practicality while at the same time offering reasonable foot and toe protection.
 - iv) Footwear that does not allow an employee to turn, move quickly or remain involved in active situations (e.g. thongs, high heels, flimsy sandals etc) are not considered suitable.
- y) Immunisation⁵** The centre acknowledges that staff working in child care are exposed to the dangers of cross infection from working closely with bodily fluids and discharges of

⁵ Health & Safety in Childrens services pages 194-196, and the Australian Immunisation handbook, NHMRC, 2003,

⁵ <http://www.safety.uwa.edu.au/policies/immunisation>,
http://www.candk.asn.au/workshops_and_conferences/past_papers/health11.pdf,
<http://www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Immunisation/healthcare-workers-april06.pdf>

children. While every precaution is taken in the centre in terms of infection control procedures and practices, there remains a risk for staff. The centre recognises that health authorities recommend that child care staff consider a range of immunisations and other practices to minimise the possibility of contracting a disease from the workplace. The centre :

- i) Recommends that staff familiarise themselves with the recommendations of relevant health authorities and consider undergoing relevant immunisation. The centre will provide copies of such recommendations for staff.
- ii) Makes no recommendations about any such immunisation or other treatment and considers it a matter for each staff member and her/his medical practitioner to decide the most appropriate individual treatment or precautions.
- iii) Agrees to consider any request from staff for subsidisation of the whole or part of the costs of such treatments.
- iv) While the centre respects that staff may choose not to be immunised⁶ it does not consider that the centre families should have to pay for that decision when circumstances and health recommendations mean that the non-immunised employee has to be excluded from the workplace.
- v) In the event of an outbreak of an immunisable disease and the Centre is directed by a relevant public health authority to ensure non-immunised persons do not attend the centre,
 - (1) an employee who is not immunised against that disease is required to
 - (a) clarify their immunisation status if necessary; and
 - (b) inform the Association that they are not immunised, and
 - (c) take whatever steps are necessary to obtain the appropriate immunisation; and
 - (d) inform the association if their medical practitioner indicates there is a period of exclusion within which they should not attend the centre; and
 - (e) provide documentary evidence of their new immunisation status and any period of exclusion required; or
 - (2) an employee who is not immunised against that disease and is not prepared to be immunised must inform the Association of their non-immunised status and the employee will be excluded from attending the centre as per the recommendations of Public Health authorities.
 - (3) an employee who does not wish to disclose their immunisation status to the centre will be considered to be not immunised, and the employee will be excluded from attending the centre as per the recommendations of Public Health authorities.
 - (4) An employee who is unable to attend the centre during the period of exclusion as they are not immunised or prior to their immunisation taking effect:
 - (a) Is required to utilise any available annual leave entitlements for the period of exclusion; or
 - (b) may take leave without pay for the period of exclusion; or
 - (c) will be stood down without pay for the period of the exclusion if unwilling to take leave.
- vi) Alerts staff members who are or who may become pregnant to think carefully about medical recommendations relating to various diseases (e.g. rubella, CMV) which may not be particularly serious for adults but which may be very serious and risky for a foetus. Staff in this situation should definitely seek medical advice and raise the matter with the Director who can discuss with the staff member ways to minimise any WH&S risks associated with a pregnancy.

⁶ Staying Healthy in Childcare 4th Ed reprinted Dec 2006, p35-36 infectious diseases issues for staff

¹Work Health and Safety Act 2011 <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00305>

Acecca Quality Area 2 <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard/quality-area-2-childrens-health-and-safety>