

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Best Practice – Quality Area 3

To view the full version of this policy (including attachments); please speak to the staff at your early learning service.

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

Overarching Policy Statement:

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning has a moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for employees, children, parents, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors. This policy reflects the importance Uniting Early Learning places on the wellbeing of employees, children, parents, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors, by endeavouring to protect their health, safety and welfare, and integrating this commitment into all of its activities.

Uniting Early Learning is committed to ensuring that:

- the management group, staff and volunteers are aware of their health and safety responsibilities as employers, employees and volunteers;
- systematic identification, assessment and control of hazards is undertaken at the service;
- effective communication and consultation form a fundamental part of the management process to encourage innovative ways of reducing risk in the service environment;
- training is provided to assist staff to identify health and safety hazards which, when addressed, will lead to safer work practices at the service;
- it fulfils its obligations under current and future laws (in particular, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*), and that all relevant codes of practice are adopted and accepted as a minimum standard.
- all services work within the procedures outlined in the SafeCare Guide (refer to Attachment 2 – Sources)

Purpose:

This policy provides guidelines and procedures to ensure that:

- all people who attend the service premises of including employees, children, parents, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors, are provided with a safe and healthy environment;

all reasonable steps are taken by the Approved Provider, as the employer of staff, to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of employees at the service.

Each Founding Agency Policy, Procedure, Practice Manual or Form continues to have effect on and after the Date of Establishment as Uniting to the extent that it is not inconsistent with a Uniting Level 1 & 2 Policy and until such time as Uniting replaces it.

Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

The Approved Provider has a duty of care to all employees, children, parents, volunteers, students, contractors and any members of the public who are at the workplace at any time. The OHS Act is specific regarding the duties of an Employer (i.e. Approved Provider) as being to provide and maintain a workplace that is safe and without risk to the health of employees. The Employer must also ensure other individuals, such as families and visitors, are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from the organisation's activities. Employees (i.e. staff and management of the service) should be regularly consulted about OHS matters that will, or will likely, affect them directly, including identifying hazards and assessing risks, and making decisions about risk control measures.

The OHS Act places the responsibility on employees for being responsible for their own safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their actions. They should co-operate with reasonable OHS actions taken by the employer, including following guidelines, attending OHS-related training, reporting incidents, co-operating with OHS investigations, encouraging good OHS practice with fellow employees and others at the service, and assisting the employer with conducting OHS inspections during operating hours.

Scope:

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, children, parents, students on placement, volunteers, contractors and visitors attending the programs and activities of the service.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.

Background and Legislation:

Everyone involved in an early childhood education and care service has a role to play in ensuring the service's operations are safe and without risk to the health and safety of all parties. In Victoria, health and safety in the workplace is governed by a system of laws, regulations and compliance codes that set out the responsibilities of employers and employees to ensure safety is maintained at work.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act) sets out the key principles, duties and rights in relation to workplace health and safety. The *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007* specify the ways duties imposed by the OHS Act must be undertaken and prescribe procedural/administrative matters to support the OHS Act, such as requiring licenses for specific activities, or the need to keep records or notify authorities on certain matters¹.

Attachment 2 contains a list of the legislation and sources relevant to this policy, including Acts and Regulations.

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Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to occupational health and safety issues;
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required;
- notify parents at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)).

Definitions:

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Duty of care: A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility of education and care services to provide children, staff, students, volunteers, contractors and anyone visiting the service with an adequate level of care and protection against reasonable foreseeable harm and injury.

Harm: Includes death, or injury, illness (physical or psychological) or disease that may be suffered by a person as a consequence of exposure to a hazard.

Hazard: An element with the potential to cause death, injury, illness or disease.

Hazard identification: A process that involves identifying all foreseeable hazards in the workplace and understanding the possible harm that each hazard may cause.

Hazard management: A structured process of hazard identification, risk assessment and control, aimed at providing safe and healthy conditions for employees, contractors and visitors while on the service premises of or while engaged in activities endorsed by the service.

Material safety data sheet: Provides employees and emergency personnel with safety procedures for working with toxic or dangerous materials. The data sheet includes all relevant information about the material such as physical properties (e.g. melting/boiling point, toxicity and reactivity), health effects, first aid requirements and safe handling procedures (e.g. personal protective equipment, safe storage/disposal and management of spills).

OHS committee: A committee that facilitates co-operation between an employer and employees in instigating, developing and carrying out measures designed to ensure the health and safety of employees in the workplace.

Risk: The chance (likelihood) that a hazard will cause harm to individuals.

Risk assessment: A process for developing knowledge/understanding about hazards and risks so that sound decisions can be made about the control of hazards. Risk assessments assist in determining:

- what levels of harm can occur
- how harm can occur
- the likelihood that harm will occur.

Risk control: A measure, work process or system that eliminates an OHS hazard or risk, or if this is not possible, reduces the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited on: 1/7/2017

Review Date: December 2017

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- *Child Safe Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*