

## WHY DO WE NEED TO HAVE A WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY AUDIT? WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND IS IT REQUIRED?

I have recently had the pleasure of doing Workplace Health and Safety Audits at some Kindergartens, Childcare Centres, and Outside School Hours Care Centres. All the centres that I have visited so far are well organised with very efficient and qualified directors and staff.

However, there are always some Workplace Health and Safety issues that require attention. A Workplace Health & Safety Audit should be considered as important as a Financial Audit. Childcare facilities do not conduct their own financial audit. These are done by an outside provider.

On the prologue to the Workplace Health & Safety Report is the following statement

**The Assessor confirms that he is independent from the above Organisation Name and has no actual or perceived conflict of interest in completing this assessment report.**

A professional independent Workplace Health & Safety Audit is the best method of ensuring that the facility is able to address any safety issues and reduce any likelihood that an unknown or unseen safety issue could cause injury or other serious problems at the facility.

The aim of regular WH&S Audits is to recognise the safety issues, and to provide professional recommendations to correct the problems and remove any potential hazards.

There might be issues at a facility that are currently overlooked that require some attention to prevent the occurrence of a future serious incident.

Large industrial workplaces usually conduct a WH&S Audit every 6 months. I have done a few of those.

However, for childcare facilities, the general recommendation is that a WH&S Audit should occur at least every two to three years.

### ARE YOU ABLE TO PROVIDE ANY ASSISTANCE OR ADVICE IN THE CASE OF AN EMPLOYEE WHO HAS BEEN INJURED AT WORK, AND WORKCOVER WANT THEM TO HAVE A GRADUAL RETURN TO WORK

According to the current Queensland Workers Compensation Act

*"Employer's obligation to assist or provide rehabilitation (1) The employer of a worker who has sustained an injury must take all reasonable steps to assist or provide the worker with rehabilitation during the prescribed period for the worker. Maximum penalty—50 penalty units. (2) The rehabilitation must be of a suitable standard as prescribed"*

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A graduated return to work for an injured employee at a childcare facility is very different to a graduated return to work at a large corporation or government department.

Large organisations are usually more flexible with suitable duties choices for an injured employee. At a Childcare facility the safety and well being of the children and other staff at the facility is the important factor.

If the injured staff member is not able to perform the normal duties of caring for children at the facility, i.e. supervising play, and learning time, providing first aid etc., then it would be recommended that the injured employee remain on WorkCover payments as a supernumerary.

This means that the injured employee continues to be paid by WorkCover while on a graduated return to work. If the injured employee is able to perform their normal duties at the Childcare facility but with reduced hours, then the facility might consider paying for the hours worked, with WorkCover covering the wages for the time off work.

The usual expectation for a suitable duties, return to work program is that it will eventually progress to a full return to normal pre-injury duties.

If the type of injury and the degree of injury indicates that a full return to normal duties is unlikely then it would be recommended to discuss this with WorkCover.

The provision of a position description and full list of the normal duties to WorkCover will assist WorkCover and the treating medical practitioner to determine the possibility of a full return to normal duties.

#### **FOOD SAFETY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR US. WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU PROVIDE?**

Our advice would be for staff who handle food at the facility is to enroll in a QLD Government recognised food safety certificate course.

Below is a list of the current food handing certificate courses. The first is the basic food handling course, and the second is the supervisor certificate course.

The first would be recommended for a Childcare facility where food is provided by the parent/care giver. The second course would be recommended where more extensive food preparation is involved such as an Outside School Hours Care Centre or where food from a tuck shop is provided.

#### Clear to work - Food Handling Certificate

**Unit Code & Name : SITXFSA001 Use Hygiene Practices for Food Safety**

#### Clear to work - Food Safety Supervisor Level 2

**Unit Code & Name : SITXFSA002 Participate in Safe Food Handling Practices**

## HOW CAN WE PREVENT MANUAL HANDLING INJURIES?

OUR STAFF ARE REQUIRED TO PERFORM MANUAL HANDLING TYPE TASKS ON A REGULAR BASIS?

### IDENTIFY MANUAL HANDLING TASKS

- Talk to colleagues
- Conduct a walk through the workplace

### ASSESS THE LEVEL OF RISK ASSOCIATED WITH THE TASK

- Document manual handling in the OHS Risk Register
- Complete a risk assessment where the tasks or level of risk is uncertain

### IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT CONTROLS

- Talk to colleagues undertaking the task
- Implement risk controls
- Document risk controls
- Report all manual handling incidents on your workplace incident/ injury register.
- Always look for ways to reduce the weight of the items being carried, or use trolleys instead of lifting.

### 1) WHAT OH&S TRAINING DO YOU RECOMMEND FOR OUR STAFF?

OH&S induction training would be similar to my presentation in the webinar.

Here at CMSolutions we are in the final process of developing an online training program with relevant questions attached and a certificate of completion

### 2) WHAT ARE THE TOPICS COVERED FROM A SAFETY PERSPECTIVE AT AN EMPLOYEE INDUCTION?

Again the topics that I covered in the webinar presentation are similar to what I would recommend for an employee induction

### 3) HOW OFTEN SHOULD OH&S TRAINING OCCUR?

OH&S training should occur at the beginning of each new year, and or when a new staff member is inducted into the workplace.

### 4) WHEN DO INCIDENT REPORTS NEED TO BE COMPLETED?

Incident reports should be completed whenever an incident occurs.

Even if an incident occurs without any injury, an incident report with appropriate follow up investigation, could prevent a similar occurrence where next time there could be an injury. Prevention is always better.

**ANY COMMENTS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PROCEDURES ADDRESSING THIS ASPECT OF WHS? PARTICULARLY FOR SMALL ORGANISATIONS.**

Below is a list from the webinar on psychological hazards in the work environment.

- Workload
- Bullying
- Conflict with a colleague
- Discrimination and Harassment
- Performance and Management
- Violence or threats of violence
- Exposure to a traumatic event or incident
- Environmental Factors.

Psychological hazards are aspects of the work environment and the way that work is organised that are associated with mental disorders and/or physical injury or illness.

When psychosocial hazards are not effectively managed, they can negatively impact on organisational measures including productivity, absenteeism and turnover.

All workplaces should develop a policy on psychological and psychosocial issues in the workplace, to ensure that all staff are able to feel emotionally and psychologically safe at work.

Here at CMSolutions we are able to provide assistance to our members if these issues are affecting your work environment.