Interactive Training Services

Community Care

A Guide to Managing Workplace Health & Safety Risks



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References

Victorian Home Care Industry OH&S Guide (WorkSafe, 2005)

Working Safely in Visiting Health Services (WorkSafe, 2006)

Working Safely in Community Services (WorkSafe, 2005)

AS/NZS 3760:2010 - Electrical Testing & Tagging Standard

Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace, Code of Practice (Safe Work Australia, 2023)

Control of Work-related Exposure to Hepatitis and HIV (Blood-borne viruses) Code of Practice (NOHSC, 2003)

Psychological Health Compliance Code (WorkSafe Vic 2025)

Controlling OHS hazards and risks – A handbook for workplaces (WorkSafe Vic, 2007)

Hazardous Manual Tasks (Code of Practice), 2018

Hazardous Manual Handling Compliance Code (WorkSafe Vic 2019)

Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (National)

AS/NZS 4360:2004 - Risk Management Standard

Foreword

The Community Care Industry covers the provision of domestic and personal care services to clients who are often elderly, people with a disability or a child-care environment. A large number of tasks undertaken by a carer on a daily basis involve considerable manual handling. The risk of sprain/strain and overuse injuries to carers needs to be managed effectively which is often difficult, given that these services are typically provided in clients homes. Workplace Health and Safety awareness and understanding is critical, particularly as some community carers work in isolation. Even in a child-care environment, carers are often required to perform tasks on their own, particularly considering the number of children that may be in their care.

This manual has been prepared in response to injury statistics indicating that duties in the Community Care Industry expose Carers to a wide variety of risks.

Home Care, Personal Care, Family Day Care and Child Care, all have one thing in common. The work environment constantly changes and each workplace presents a unique situation in terms of Workplace Health and Safety, particularly when the service is provided in an "in-home" work environment. Each home has a different physical environment and presents its own set of hazards and risks, in addition, the physical environment may change from visit to visit.

Personal Care Workers also have an added element of risk due to the fact that they are sometimes caring for frail elderly people and people with disabilities. These people may live with a range of physical and intellectual disabilities, increasing the likelihood of risk, particularly relating to musculoskeletal type injuries due to the sometimes unpredictable movement and/or behaviour of the client. Care plans should be developed prior to attending any home and reviewed in conjunction with clients to ensure that the carer is familiar with the clients individual requirements. These should be reviewed regularly as the client's capabilities of performing certain tasks independently may alter.

Children's Services Workers may also encounter children with additional needs. An Action Plan or Risk Management Plan is developed prior to the child attending to provide that special care the children may require. It is vital that the Risk Management Plan also takes into consideration the ability and requirements of the Worker.

Equipment design and use, plays a critical role in the level of risk. This manual will look at some of the more commonly used equipment types and workplace conditions that Community Care workers encounter when carrying out tasks within a home environment.

The aim of this manual is to provide:

- Carers with a clear understanding of the hazards associated with their tasks and provides practical examples of risk reduction strategies to manage those risks;
- Supervisors/Team Leaders with a training and induction tool;
- Community Care Assessment Officers with guidance as to the hazards in an in-home environment;
- Suggested control strategies/techniques for managing those risks;
- General Workplace Health and Safety awareness and guidance, plus
- Gives Workers an opportunity to assess their knowledge of company Policy & Procedures.

Note: This Manual is to be used for Guidance purposes only.

How to use this manual

Section A

Section A provides workers with some general information relating to legislation, risk factors that may contribute to injury, how to manage those risks and minimise the likelihood of injuries from occurring and maintaining workers health and wellbeing.

Section B {Home Carers)

Section B describes many of the tasks performed by Home Carers.
This section may be used by workers as a guide, and by employers as an assessment and/or training tool.

Each task activity allows you to identify the hazards, assess whether a risk is present and provides you with practical risk reduction strategies.

Provision has also been made to allow employers to note action that could be taken to manage those risks.
(Please note, these are not classified as your organisation's formal risk assessments)

Section C {Personal Carers)

Section C describes tasks that performed by Personal Carers.
This section may be used by workers as a guide, and by employers as an assessment and/or training tool.

Each task activity allows you to identify the hazards, assess whether a risk is present and provides you with practical risk reduction strategies.

Provision has also been made to allow employers to note action that could be taken to manage those risks.
(Please note, these are not classified as your organisation's formal risk assessments).

Section D {Other Community Care Tasks)

Section D describes tasks that may be performed by the above care providers, plus workers in Children's Services.

Each task activity allows you to identify the hazards, assess whether a risk is present and provides you with practical risk reduction strategies.

This section may be used by workers as a guide, and by employers as an assessment and/or training tool.

Provision has also been made to allow employers to note action that could be taken to manage those risks.
(Please note, these are not classified as your formal risk assessments).

Section E {Appendices)

Appendix A

Appendix A provides a sample Hazard Checklist. This checklist is designed to assist Assessment Officers identify hazards that may be present in a typical home environment, and assist with the development of control measures necessary to provide a safe working environment for the Carer and Client.

Appendix B

Appendix B provides a sample Hazard Checklist for the personal care environment.

Appendix C

Appendix C provides a sample Child Care Daily Hazard Checklist.

Appendix D

Appendix D provides a sample Action Checklist which may be used for all tasks to determine what action is required to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Appendix E

Appendix D provides possible risk reduction strategies for managing Work-Related Violence issues.

Appendix F

Appendix F, is a self assessment tool for carers to assist them in evaluating their Occupational Health and Safety knowledge. This may also be used by employers as an induction assessment tool.

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