

Background

Manual handling means any activity requiring the use of force exerted by the person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry, or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person or object.

Manual handling injuries may be caused by the above activities. Injuries can include back strains and similar strains and sprains in parts off the body such as the neck, arm, shoulder, and knee.

Manual handling injuries also encompass overuse injuries or, as a result of falling during manual handling, bruising or laceration.

Policy statement

This policy works to ensure a healthy and safe work environment and prevent or minimize manual handling injuries to educators by using mechanical aids, team lifts and safer handling methods.

Strategies and practices

- As working with children is physically demanding, it is wise to do warm up exercises for three to five minutes before starting work. Muscles and tendons are more likely to be damaged when cold. Simple exercises to warm and stretch all the major muscle groups will help prevent injury.
- In addition, regular exercise such as walking, tennis, golf or aerobics will help build up muscles but anyone with neck, back or muscular problems should see a doctor before exercising.

TO HELP PREVENT INJURIES, THERE ARE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MANUAL HANDLING IN THE WORKPLACE:-

The employer, in consultation with educators will: -

- Annually provide you with training in manual handling and back care as required by legislation.
- Display in the staff room written information regarding manual handling and any updates as required.
- Make sure equipment and containers are designed and maintained to be, as far as workable, safe and without risk to health and safety when manually handled.
- Make sure that the work practices involving manual handling and the work environment are designed to be, as far as workable, consistent with safe manual handling activities.
- Identify, assess, and control all risks associated with manual handling in each workplace.
- Clearly mark any equipment which requires more than one person to lift or move it.

PRINCIPLES OF PREVENTING MANUAL HANDLING INJURIES

Eliminate or reduce the amount of manual handling.

- Reduce the amount of bending, forward reaching and twisting in all tasks.
- Reduce worker fatigue.
- Keep all equipment in good working order.
- Keep the workplace environment safe.

TO HELP PREVENT MANUAL HANDLING INJURIES

- Kneel down rather than bend down. For example, helping a child to do up a shoelace.
- Sit down rather than bend. For example, if a child needs comforting, sit down on the floor and encourage the child to sit on your lap.
- Sit in an appropriately sized chair or on the floor. A suitable chair allows an adult to sit with upper

Managing Manual Handling and Back Care

legs horizontal to hips and feet flat on the floor.

- Carry children only when necessary. The correct way to carry a child is with one arm under the child's buttocks and the other arm supporting the child's back. At the same time, hold the child facing you, as close to your body as possible. Adults should try to avoid carrying a child on their hip because this can strain the back. When lifting awkward loads, be careful to lift with a balanced and comfortable posture.
- Minimise the need to reach above shoulder level. If necessary use a step ladder.
- Avoid extended reaching forward. For example, leaning into low equipment boxes.
- Share the load if the equipment is heavy, long, or awkward.
- To lift a child out of a cot, lower the cot side, lean against the cot and raise the child as close as possible to your body. Do not stretch over and lift.
- When sliding, pulling, or pushing equipment that is not easy to move, e.g., trestles or gym mats ask for help and organise a team lift.
- Where possible, rearrange surroundings to meet the needs of both children and adults. Remember these needs when buying furniture and equipment or upgrading facilities.
- Use equipment and furniture that can be moved around as safely and easily as possible.
- To complete lengthy writing tasks, e.g., curriculum planning, sit at an appropriate adult sized chair at an adult sized table.

AVOID TWISTING WHILE LIFTING

Many injuries result from twisting while lifting. To avoid this: -

- Move equipment when children are not around.
- Rearrange storage so that it is easier and safer to replace and remove items.
- Lift only within the limits of your strength.
- Use beds and equipment that are easy to move.
- Make sure you can see where you are going when carrying equipment or children.
- Be especially careful when lifting a child with special needs.

AVOID ACCIDENTS WITH CAREFUL HOUSEKEEPING

- Good housekeeping means fewer accidents. Check that: -
 - The floors and other walking surfaces are uncluttered, even and non-slippery.
 - The workplace is tidy.
 - There is adequate space to perform each task.
 - Equipment is maintained regularly.
 - Lighting is adequate.

HOW TO LIFT SAFELY

- Place your feet in a stride position.
- Keep your breastbone as elevated as possible.
- Bend your knees.
- Brace your stomach muscles.
- Hold the object close to your centre of gravity, i.e. around your navel.
- Move your feet not your spine.
- Prepare to move in a forward-facing direction.
- Ask for help when it is not possible to lift on your own.

Managing Manual Handling and Back Care

HOW TO ORGANISE A TEAM LIFT

- Ask a colleague who is willing and able to help.
- Ideally the colleague should be fairly well matched with you in size and strength.
- Agree on a plan of action.
- A coordinated movement during a lift is important.
- Timing is important for co-ordination.
- One person should act as a team leader and 'call' the lift.

HOW TO ASSESS THE CORRECT STORAGE AND SHELVING HEIGHT

Correct storage and shelving height is important to prevent slips, falls and strains. To check the height at which it is safest for each individual to work, stand with feet together and hands by sides: -

- The best height range for handling loads is around waist level
- The acceptable height for lifting is any point between the individual's knuckle and shoulder
- Seldom-used objects can be stored at the shoulder-to-raised arm height (use ladders to avoid stretching).
- Avoid storing objects at a level between an individual's knuckles and the floor.
- Mechanical aids such as ladders and trolleys should be used where possible to avoid lifting.

Additional safe practices for babies

- Take extra care when taking children out of the cots, ensure the side of the cot is down before lifting the child out.

Responsibilities of parents

- N/A

Procedure and forms

- Educators Accident/Illness Register
- Staff Injury Incident Report Form

Links to other policies

- Staff Injury Policy
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- Workplace Rehabilitation Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2018

Regs	12	Meaning of serious incident
	85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
	89	First Aid kits
	90	Medical conditions policy
	136	First Aid qualifications
	146	Nominated supervisor
	161	Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record
	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

QA	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.2.2	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
	7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service

Sources

- Safe Work Australia: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/> accessed 24 June 2025
- WorkSafe QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/> accessed 24 June 2025

Further reading and useful websites

- Manual Tasks - Safe Work Australia: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/manual-tasks> accessed 23 June 2025
- Slips, Trips and Falls - Safe Work Australia: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/slips-trips-and-falls> accessed 23 June 2025
- Ergonomics - Safe Work Australia: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/ergonomics> b
- Workplace Health & Safety 2022 <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/australian-work-health-and-safety-strategy-2012-2022> b

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018.	January 2019
2	15 February 2019	Kaylene Harper	Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites.	February 2020

Managing Manual Handling and Back Care

3	30 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites.	January 2021
4	14 October 2020	Kaylene Harper	Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites.	October 2021
5	28 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy	September 2022
6	29 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Reviewed policy Accessed resources and added information	29 September 2023
7	23 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Reviewed Policy Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites.	August 2024
8	1 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	July 2025
9	24 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Reviewed policy and updated sources and useful websites.	June 2026