



# A GUIDE TO WORK HEALTH & SAFETY IN CHILDCARE

A MANAGER'S  
HANDBOOK

*Prepared by  
Safety Champion Software*

*April 2020*

KEEPING CHILDCARE WORKERS SAFE & HEALTHY  
AT WORK ISN'T AS HARD AS YOU MIGHT THINK.

---

# CONTENTS

Health and safety trends in the childcare sector | 4

Your legal obligations | 5

Standards, codes and the law | 6

A simple framework to use | 8

Where to start | 9

Key risks and hazards for childcare workers | 10

Examples of other hazards to consider | 11

A checklist for success | 12

A final note | 13



# HEALTH & SAFETY TRENDS IN THE CHILDCARE SECTOR

Over the past decade or so, the face of health and safety in the childcare sector has changed. Some emerging issues to be across are as follows.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Rarely considered a decade ago, it is now clear that employers and managers in any industry must have a good handle on the psychosocial hazards and risks present in a workplace and have the tools in place to appropriately mitigate these risks. It is no longer acceptable for an employer or manager to ignore the mental health and wellbeing of workers.

## CONSULTATION AND WORKER ENGAGEMENT

There is now increased focus on consultation, improved feedback systems, and worker involvement in work health and safety practices. All workers must play a role in safety and must therefore be provided the tools and resources to support them. Think feedback loops and processes, review sessions, reporting apps and software, and more frequent training and information sharing.

## TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

There's been a significant shift towards harnessing technology, data, and analytics for improved safety performance. Apps and safety software are now the norm for organisations wanting to effectively engage their workers in their role in safety, and access critical data to improve safety in the workplace. But beyond this, there's now advancements in artificial intelligence, wearable tech products, robotics and automation. The future of tech in safety is well and truly here.

## A SHIFT TO ISO 45001

More than a simple shift to a new standard to replace the old, this is bigger and better. ISO 45001 marks the shift towards integrating management systems across health and safety, environment, and quality levels (HSEQ). This means that organisations can now develop integrated HSEQ systems and processes to align with the ISO framework. Done right, this means less duplication of processes and improvements in implementation and compliance.

# YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Whilst workplace health and safety law might seem scary, it can be broken down into some simple elements.

As an employer or person in charge, you must provide a safe workplace for all workers. This means that you must first know the hazards and risks associated with your business operations that may impact the physical and/or psychological health of your workers.

Then, you must actively work towards eliminating or reducing those hazards through appropriate risk control measures, monitoring and regular review. If you're not sure where to start, commence at the higher risk hazards first. If you do this well, you are performing in accordance with your legal duties. Simple.

## WHO IS CONSIDERED A WORKER?

A worker is a person who carries out work in any capacity for a business or employer or 'person conducting a business undertaking'. They can be:

- an employee
- a trainee, apprentice or work experience student
- a volunteer
- an outworker
- a contractor or sub-contractor
- an employee of a contractor or sub-contractor
- an employee of a labour hire company.

# STANDARDS, CODES & THE LAW

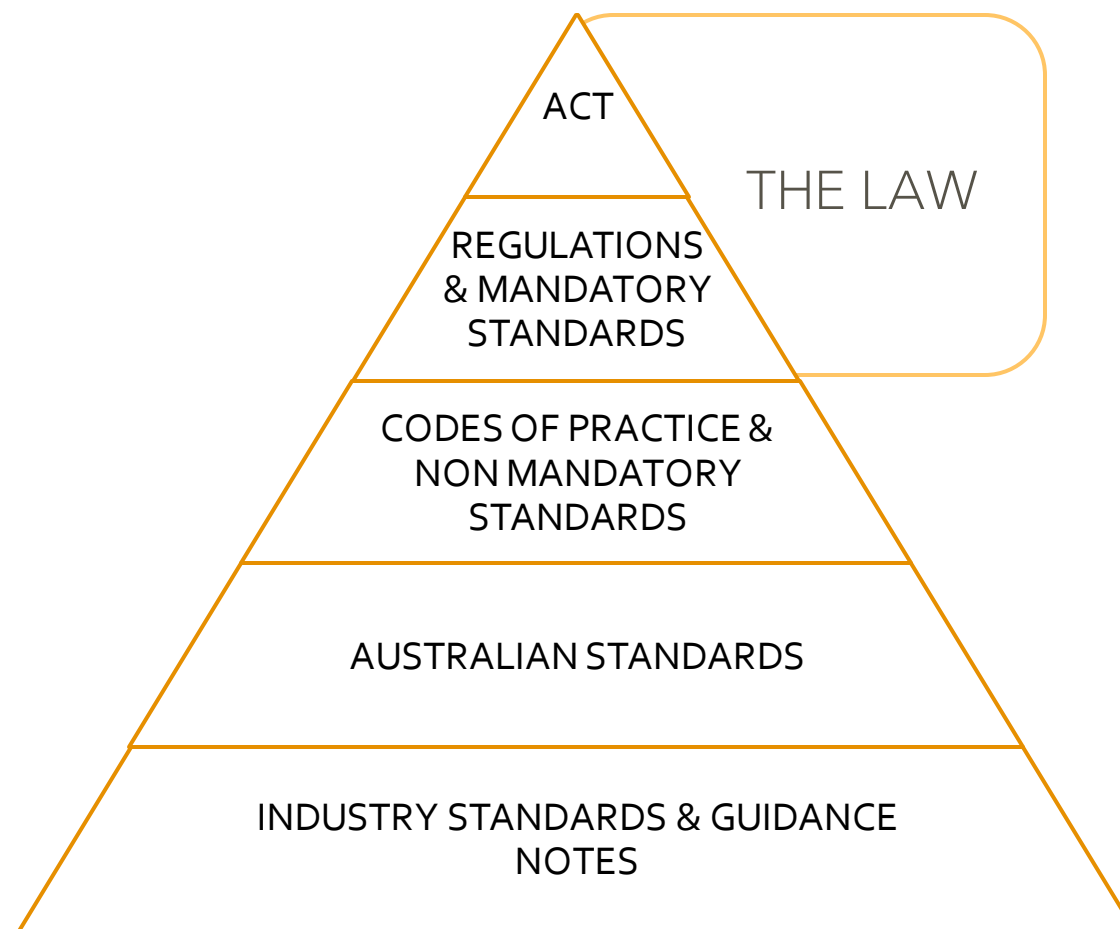
The legal jargon and related materials can sometimes confuse the matter. So here is an overview of the legislation, standards, codes and guidance documents, and what they can be used for.

## SELF-REGULATION

To begin with, it's important to understand that health and safety is self-regulated in Australia. This means that each organisation is responsible for establishing and managing how the work they undertake is to be done safely.

In the 1970s the legislation flipped from being *prescribed* to *self-regulated* for good reason. The way we work, and what we do for work, varies business to business. The prescribed approach could not keep up with the large number of hazards associated with differing workplaces, nor could organisations themselves keep up with the prescribed approach.

Self-regulation is about each organisation identifying how workers can be hurt by the activities of work and establishing controls to ensure that this risk is minimised and, ideally, does not happen at all.



# STANDARDS, CODES & THE LAW

The Act, Regulations and a selection of mandatory Australian Standards express this via the duties they place on businesses, senior managers and workers.

The core duty of the health and safety legislation is to protect workers against harm to their health, safety and welfare through the elimination or minimisation of risks arising from work. How this is done is to be largely defined by the organisation.

Key areas of focus should include:

- Risk - Have you identified what can hurt your workers, and established controls to prevent this from occurring?
- Consultation - How do you receive and communicate safety information across your business?
- Training - How do you make sure your workers are competent to undertake the inherent duties associated with their role?
- Incident - Do you have a process that outlines how, and to whom incidents are reported? Do you know what incidents need to be notified to your state or territory safety regulator?

The Codes, non-mandatory Australian Standards and Guidance Material have been developed to provide support and to guide organisations how they can manage these hazards and risks. Whilst they are not mandatory, organisations are encouraged to consider the direction provided within, to identify if there are “better” ways to manage foreseeable risk.

Sure, there are some activities that are defined within the legislation; however, this is often associated with high risk work - hot works, working at height, hazardous chemicals, hazardous manual handling, confined spaces, construction activities, etc.

Once you have established what you will do, to keep your workers safe, the simple stuff starts once these tasks are scheduled into [Safety Champion Software](#). The visibility of what has been done is clear, the worry of what comes next is taken care of.



# A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK TO USE

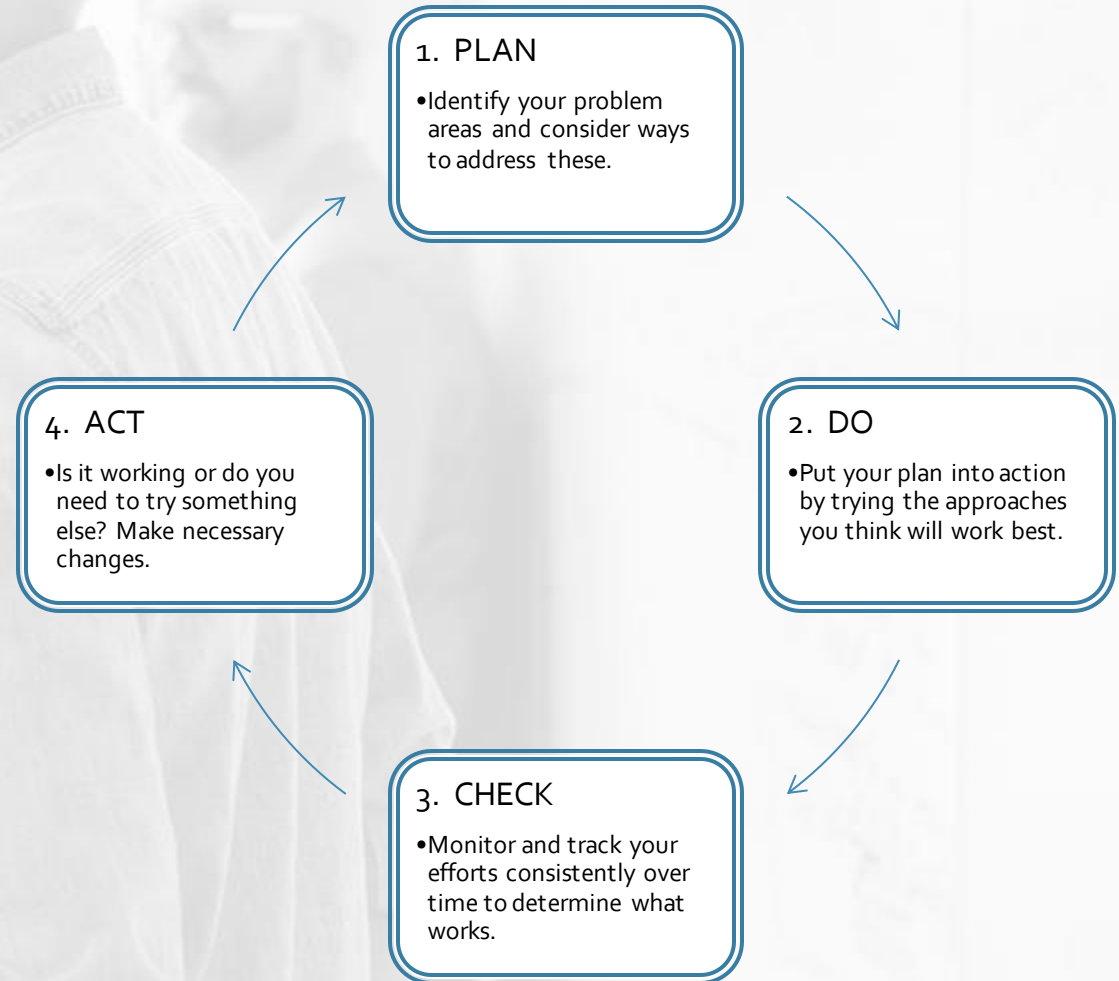
Once you understand your legal obligations and how the guidance materials work, you'll need a framework under which you can implement your safety management system.

Now this one is an oldy, but a goody. The "Plan, Do, Check and Act" framework can be applied in any workplace, anywhere in the world.

The key to this framework is that it is a continuous improvement cycle. That is, it works best when it functions on an ongoing basis and when actions move from one cycle to the next. A continuous improvement cycle for work health and safety ensures that you established the best approach possible to successfully reduce the risk of harm to your workers and other person who may be affected by the work undertaken.

Importantly, it helps you to meet your legal duty to ensure that you have provided a safe workplace for your workers.

[Safety Champion Software](#) can assist you with doing just this - keeping a continuous improvement cycle going for health and safety at your workplace.







## WHERE TO START

When you have a good handle on your legal obligations and how it all works, you may next wonder... where on earth should I start?

We've said it before, and we'll say it again - the best step you can take is to start with identifying hazards and risks. First, consider all the ways your workers can get hurt in your workplace. This includes both physical and psychological aspects.

To do this best, ensure you consult with your workers. Set up a brainstorming session with representatives of your team or, even better, your whole team. You could work in smaller groups and then come together to share what you've identified.

Some key considerations for hazards and risks specific to childcare workers are on the next page.

# KEY HAZARDS & RISKS FOR CHILDCARE WORKERS



## CARRYING, LIFTING & MOVING

Lifting, carrying, and moving children, furniture, toys, equipment and other objects in the workplace can cause strain and injury.



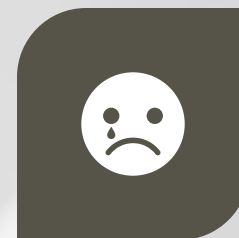
## BENDING & SQUATTING

Muscle strain and joint / ligament injury can be caused by repetitive bending, kneeling, and squatting as workers are working at the low level to reach children or objects.



## SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS

Muscle strain, joint injury, and bone fractures or breaks may result from slips, trips and falls due to uneven ground, toys and other objects found on the ground, and general work at the level of children.



## STRESS, BULLYING & HARRASSMENT

Work related stress may result from factors such as work demands, low control, poor support structures, ill-defined roles, and poor organisational culture. Bullying and harassment is commonly reported.



## COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Diseases that spread from person to person are common in childcare during play and interaction with children. Diseases may be common colds, flu or gastroenteritis.

## EXAMPLES OF OTHER HAZARDS TO CONSIDER

- Air quality / ventilation
- Animal bites
- Biological hazards
- Bullying
- Cash handling
- Chemical / dangerous goods
- Contagious illnesses
- Confined spaces
- Customer aggression or violence
- Driving
- Dust
- Ergonomic
- Environmental (flood, bushfire, lightning)
- Excessive noise
- Fatigue
- Fire
- Forklift / mobile plant
- Hot works
- Hazardous manual handling
- Lighting (poor / inadequate)
- Plant and equipment
- Psychosocial aspects
- Remote or isolated work (including those working from home)
- Slips, trips and falls
- Traffic management
- UV radiation / outdoor work
- Waste management
- Working at height
- Working with electricity
- Workplace violence
- Young workers

# A CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

TO DO
✓ Add hazard and incident reporting processes to your worker induction program
✓ Add safety to the agenda for all operational meetings (at least once per month), and regular team meetings to keep it top of mind for all workers
✓ Hold a session to identify how workers can be injured or hurt in your workplace, and establish what could be done to better manage these risks
✓ Get Workers Compensation Insurance in all states or territories in which you have workers
✓ Display "If you are Injured Poster" in your workplace - if in NSW, VIC, Tas, QLD
✓ <a href="#">Sign up to Safety Champion</a> 's GO FREE or Paid Plans and let this easy-to-use software help you maintain a strong continuous improvement cycle for safety
✓ Establish an evacuation assembly point and ensure your team know where it is
✓ Establish the location of your closest Medical Center and ensure your team know this information
✓ Purchase all relevant PPE (i.e. gloves, masks, sunscreen, etc.) and establish processes to ensure it is in good working order
✓ Get all electrical equipment tested and tagged, and establish processes to ensure this is done at regular intervals



# A FINAL NOTE

If you are reading through this handbook and wondering what your organisation is doing to effectively manage work health and safety, try the following;

- ✓ Ask your boss what work health and safety practices and processes are in place
- ✓ Consider whether you know how you can report incidents and hazards you see in the workplace - if you don't know, ask
- ✓ Question when the last time was that your management team provided an update on work health and safety to all staff
- ✓ Encourage your organisation to seek guidance and support from leading health and safety professionals, like [Action OHS Consulting](#)

Remember everyone in Australia has the right to a workplace that is safe and healthy for all workers.



IN SHORT, IT'S ALL ABOUT ENSURING YOU ARE PROVIDING A  
SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR WORKERS.

---



# A SIMPLE GUIDE TO WORK HEALTH & SAFETY

*April 2020*

## CONTRIBUTORS

Craig Salter, Principal & Lead OHS Auditor

Elaine McGuigan, Senior OHS Consultant  
& Lead Auditor

Mary Kikas, Senior OHS Consultant &  
Ergonomist

---

Enquiries:

[hello@safetychampion.com.au](mailto:hello@safetychampion.com.au)

1300 1 CHAMP | 1300 124 267

[safetychampion.com.au](http://safetychampion.com.au)

Melbourne, Sydney, Australia