Policy

Staff will minimize the risk of back injury by applying principles of back care and correct lifting and carrying techniques.

Background

Child care staff are at risk of work related ergonomic injuries particularly back injuries related to lifting and carrying children, bending, reaching and not using adult size furniture.

Practices

To minimize the risk of back injury in staff and to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, staff will:

- Have adult height sinks and change tables or change children on the floor using correct nappy change procedures.
- Have adult size toilets for themselves;
- Have self-help toilet facilities for children such as properly approved safety steps or stools;
- Use small chairs with good back support instead of squatting or bending for interactions with children;
- Use adult chairs for feeding infants;
- Use beds that are lightweight and stackable with washable mattresses;
- Have shelving, filing cabinets, and storage cupboards at suitable height to avoid stretching;
- Use a trolley for laundry and have clothesline at a reachable height;
- Use mechanical aids where suitable, ensuring they are not a safety hazard for lifting and moving;
- Have adult size furniture for adults in offices and where adults do not usually
interact with children;

- Where possible, kneel rather than bend down, to avoid neck and back problems;

- Carry children only when necessary, in the correct way – with one arm under the child’s buttocks and your other arm supporting the child’s back. Keep the child as close to your body as possible and avoid carrying the child on your hip because this may strain your back;

- When lifting awkward loads, be careful to lift with a balanced and comfortable posture;

- Minimise the need to reach above the shoulder level and use a stepladder;

- Avoid extended reaching forwards e.g. leaning into low equipment boxes;

- Share the load if the equipment is heavy, long or awkward;

- When lifting babies out of cots, stand close against the cot and raise the child as close as possible to your body, do not stretch over and lift;

- Get help with moving heavy or difficult equipment;

- Use furniture that can be moved around safely, easily and comfortably as possible;

- Undertake training and read information on back care and safe lifting techniques;

- Place lighter items higher on shelves;

- Lift or move furniture using at least 2 people;

- Where possible, arrange children’s activities/sleep around furniture/equipment to minimize manual handling;

- Minimise lifting children by having steps/foot stools in areas where lifting of the children is likely to be needed, such as nappy change area; and

Central Canberra Family Day Care will provide manual handling training for staff and display/provide posters showing correct lifting techniques and develop strategies for minimizing risk.

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