

Manual Handling Policy

PURPOSE

In the delivery of direct care and support to people with disabilities it is not possible to eliminate hazardous manual handling however, it is the responsibility of all parties involved (staff, families, care givers and participants as applicable) to control any apparent risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.

This policy provides for the:

- Identification of potential risks to which employees may be exposed during their manual handling duties.
- Implementation of appropriate procedures to minimise manual handling work related incidents, injuries, or illness.
- The delivery of specific training programs to educate employees regarding best practice standards for manual handling for individual participants.
- Investigation and documentation of work-related manual handling incidents and the associated impact to staff and participants to minimise future risks
- Clarification of accountability and responsibility in relation to the provision of manual handling supports

SCOPE

Manual handling covers a wide range of physical activity. It includes lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, lowering, holding or supporting a person or object.

Hazardous manual handling is defined as tasks that involve:

- repetitive or sustained application of force;
- repetitive or sustained awkward posture;
- repetitive or sustained movement;
- application of high force;
- handling of people or animals;
- handling loads that are unstable, unbalanced, or difficult to hold.

POLICY

Headway Gippsland Inc, is committed to ensuring that all employees are properly educated and adequately resourced to minimise the risk of illness, incident or accidental injury related to manual handling at work. This commitment is an integral part of promoting good occupational health and safety practices which are consistent with legislative requirements.

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PROCEDURE

The following procedures are to be implemented to:

- Ensure that the organisation meets its policy objective of ensuring that all employees are properly educated and adequately resourced to minimise the risk of illness, incident, accident, or injury related to manual handling at work.
- Provide Headway Gippsland staff with information about, and training in, manual handling practices, appropriate to their duties. Training is aligned to Work-Safe guides provided for the Disability and Community Service Sector and training delivered by accredited trainers in Manual Handling and online training platforms.
- Provide training, which assists employees to –
 - Learn how to identify hazardous manual handling;
 - Understand the risks involved in hazardous manual handling and the need to use control measures;
 - Use appropriate manual handling techniques; and
 - Use equipment correctly and safely.
- Training may be provided through a range of mediums including face to face, on-line, via correspondence, peer training (shadow shifts) or a combination of face to face and on-line. If you think you need further training, identify a potential hazard or require more support, please contact your manager.
- Ensure Managers and staff -
 - Promote a culture of awareness aimed at identifying manual handling hazards, assessing the risks, developing solutions, or redesigning tasks to eliminate or reduce risk.
 - Encourage discussion amongst employees regarding manual handling tasks that they find difficult to do.
 - Report any hazard or manual handling risks, including unauthorised requests from families to undertake manual handling tasks to participants based on their preferences rather than to Worksafe standards
 - Respond promptly to address identified risks. Consult with employees, participants and carers and possibly other service providers, to develop effective and consistent manual handling risk controls.
 - Review injury records and incident reports to identify risks and ensure appropriate action has been taken to reduce/eliminate the risk.

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- Take all reasonable steps to determine and document the appropriate manual handling method for all relevant participants with specific manual handling needs.
- Ensure Headway Gippsland staff have access to the equipment necessary to provide safe manual handling practices.
- Request participants/families to maintain and service their lifting equipment and mobility aids ensuring safe use of hoists, wheelchairs etc.
- Promptly investigate, remedy, and document any Headway Gippsland employee incident or grievance regarding any manual handling issue.

See appendix for specific manual handling procedures

APPENDIX

Assisting people in Wheelchairs: A health and safety solution

<https://content.api.worksafe.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-06/ISBN-Assisting-people-in-wheelchairs-2010-01.pdf>

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A Health and Safety Solution 

Assisting people in wheelchairs

What is the problem?

The task of assisting people in wheelchairs has been associated with musculoskeletal injuries within the disability services industry.

What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of injuries to the back, neck, shoulders and wrists when assisting people in wheelchairs, particularly from pushing, pulling, bending and exerting high forces.

The common sources of risk include:

Equipment

- Wheelchairs that are not maintained or poorly maintained (eg flat tyres, brakes not working, loose wheels, castors and damaged upholstery/frame).
- Wheelchairs that are not suitable for the client and/or environment.
- Repairs and modifications conducted by unauthorised or unqualified people.
- Failure to charge electric batteries.

Task

- Effort involved in pushing the combined weight of the wheelchair and client.
- Pushing wheelchairs long distances.
- Transferring people in/out of wheelchairs.
- Pushing an electric wheelchair in free wheel mode.
- Driving electric wheelchairs when using attendant controls.

Environment

- Soft floor surfaces such as deep pile carpets, rugs, lino with soft underlay.
- Inadequate space to manoeuvre wheelchairs.
- Pushing wheelchairs over steep or uneven surfaces (eg grass, gravel, curbs, ramps).
- Controlling wheelchairs up and down ramps.
- Inadequate information about wheelchair accessibility.

What are solutions to the problem?

Implement a system to inspect and review the workplace and equipment, and identify any changes in the individual's needs.

If changes have been made or need to be made, employers should complete a re-assessment of the worker's tasks and environment.

Fix any safety issues as soon as possible so the worker's and client's needs are safely met.

The risk of injury can be eliminated or reduced by the following safety measures:

Equipment

- Involve workers in assessment and selection of a wheelchair in relation to:
 - the client's needs
 - worker safety
 - environment where wheelchair will be used
 - ease of operation for client and workers
 - need for attendant controls on electric wheelchairs.
- Regularly maintain and inspect wheelchairs (eg checks on tyre pressure, brakes, controls, tyre wear, fabric/structure, charging point and battery condition). If the wheelchair is client owned, include this requirement in the service agreement.

Task

- Develop procedures to identify the safest movement of the wheelchair and client.
- Provide workers with training in the use of wheelchairs including:
 - going up and down curbs, controlling on slopes, managing small lips of ramps, turning
 - practical supervised training exercises at a range of community locations (cafes, train stations, cinema)
 - information provided by manufacturer and/or supplier if available.

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(Health and Safety Solution continued overleaf)



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Environment

- Assess floor surfaces for minimal friction to assist ease of movement. Where necessary, modify existing flooring.
- Provide adequate space to manoeuvre (eg appropriate door widths).
- Develop and implement a system so if changes are made to the home or environment, the organisation providing the support is notified (eg installation or removal of a portable ramp, home renovation).
- Conduct a pre-visit assessment of accessibility before engaging in community-based activities.
- Avoid sand, loose stone or dirt paths when using indoor wheelchairs.

The problem



Pushing wheelchairs over steep, uneven or soft surfaces can put the worker at risk of injury to the back, neck and shoulders.

A solution



Outdoors, avoid sand, loose dirt, dirt paths when using indoor wheelchairs. Indoors, avoid thick pile carpet and rugs and firo with soft underlay.

Further information

WorkSafe Advisory Service

Toll-free 1800 136 089
Email info@worksafe.vic.gov.au
worksafe.vic.gov.au

Related WorkSafe Health and Safety Solutions

- *Moving and supporting people with a disability*
- *Supporting people with personal hygiene care*
- *Handling wheelchairs in and out of vehicles*
- *Occupational violence*
- *Moving/lifting objects*
- *Vacuuming*
- *Mopping*
- *Cleaning bathrooms*
- *Making beds*
- *Work related driving: Transporting people and moving equipment*

Related publications

- *Department of Human Services, Accommodation standards and design guidelines – Shared supported accommodation, 2004*
- *Victorian home care industry occupational health and safety guide, 2005*
Available from
worksafe.vic.gov.au and health.vic.gov.au

Australian Standards

- *AS/NZS 3856:1998, Hoists and ramps for people with disabilities – Vehicle-mounted – Product requirements*
- *AS/NZS 2640:1994, Portable ramps for vehicles*
- *AS3693 – Wheelchairs—Nomenclature, terms and definitions*
- *AS3695 – Wheelchairs—Product requirements*
- *AS3696 – Wheelchairs*
- *ISO 10542-1:2001, Technical systems and aids for disabled or handicapped persons – Wheelchair tie down and occupant – restraint systems*

Manual Handling Policy

A Health and Safety Solution



Moving and supporting people with a disability

What is the problem?

The task of moving and supporting people with a disability has been associated with musculoskeletal injuries within the disability services industry.

What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of injuries from strains to the back, neck and shoulders when bending, twisting, lifting, pushing, pulling and exerting high or unexpected forces.

The common sources of risk include:

Task

- Exerting high forces to lift, transfer or move people where no equipment or aids are available.
- Moving unexpectedly or with abrupt forceful motions such as when preventing people from falling.
- Working in an awkward position for sustained periods (eg assisting with meals or dressing/undressing).
- Managing unpredictable client movements or behaviours such as seizures, expressions of strong emotion or self-harm.

Equipment

- Unsuitable equipment or aids.
- Faulty equipment or aids.
- No equipment or aids.

Environment

- Insufficient space for workers to use equipment.
- Equipment or aids stored in inaccessible locations.
- Inappropriate working heights.
- Thick carpets or soft underlay on floor.
- Different floor levels.
- Uneven surfaces.

These issues should be considered during the initial assessment of the person's needs and if they pose a risk, must be controlled prior to the provision of service.

What are solutions to the problem?

The risk of injury to workers can be eliminated or reduced by the following safety measures:

Equipment/aid provision and use

- When supporting a person who requires minimal physical support, equipment to reduce the risk of injury to workers may include:
 - hand/grab rails
 - electric stand chair
 - modified/specific chair
 - leg lifter
 - bed stick
 - dining chair with lockable wheels
 - walking aids such as a frame or stick.
- When supporting a person who is able to partially assist, additional equipment to reduce the risk of injury to workers may include:
 - electric hi-lo bed
 - standing hoist to lift person into a supported standing position, to transfer from one location to another, or when assistance is required
 - mobile sling hoist to lift and transfer people short distances
 - slide sheet
 - slide board
 - hi-lo change table
 - height-adjustable ergonomic chair for workers
 - sock/stocking applicator
- When a person requires full support, additional equipment to reduce the risk of injury to workers may include:
 - overhead tracking hoist to move person from the floor, chair or bed
 - wheelchair with electric motor.
- Ensure transfer equipment and aids are:
 - suitable for the task
 - easy to use and manoeuvre
 - maintained in good working order.

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(Health and Safety Solution continued overleaf)



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Environment

- Reduce clutter.
- Provide adequate working space.
- Use furniture and equipment that is light, compact and easy to move where necessary.
- Assess floor surfaces for suitability for moving any wheeled equipment and make appropriate modifications if required (vinyl or low pile carpet).
- Store equipment in a convenient location.
- Adjust transfer surfaces to support movement at approximately the same level (eg from bed to wheelchair).

Task

- Allocate two workers for transfers for a person who requires full or partial assistance.
- Develop and implement a system so the transfer

of a person will not proceed until a second worker is available.

- Develop and implement a system to regularly seek information from the worker to check if the work environment, tasks or person's needs have changed or need to change.
- Regularly review the person's mobility and behavioural requirements with worker and person to identify potential changes to client care, update relevant documentation and occupational health and safety controls.
- If changes have been made or need to be made, employers should complete a re-assessment of the worker's tasks and environment. Fix any safety issues as soon as possible so the worker's and person's needs are safely met.
- Train workers in using equipment, aids and specific task or work instructions. Update the training regularly.

The problem



Exerting high forces to lift, transfer or move people where no equipment or aids are available.

A solution



Mobile electric hoists may be used for tasks such as lifting people from bed to chair, chair to toilet, bed to trolley and up from the floor.

Further Information

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worksafe.vic.gov.au

Related WorkSafe Health and Safety Solutions

- Supporting people with personal hygiene care
- Assisting people in wheelchairs
- Handling wheelchairs in and out of vehicles
- Occupational violence
- Moving/lifting objects
- Vacuuming
- Mopping
- Cleaning bathrooms
- Making beds
- Work related driving: Transporting people and moving equipment

Related WorkSafe publications

- Manual Handling Code of Practice, 2000
- Transferring people safely

Other related publications

- Victorian home care industry occupational health and safety guide, 2005
- Department of Human Services, Accommodation standards and design guidelines – Shared supported accommodation, 2004

Available from worksafe.vic.gov.au and health.vic.gov.au

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A Health and Safety Solution



Supporting people with personal hygiene care

What is the problem?

Providing support with personal hygiene tasks, such as showering or toileting, to people with a disability has been associated with musculoskeletal injuries in the disability services industry.

What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of injuries from strains to the back, neck and shoulders when bending, reaching, twisting and exerting high or unexpected forces.

The common sources of risks include:

Task

- A mismatch between the assistance required by the person and the documentation identifying their physical support needs.
- Aids and equipment not being provided and/or used when assessed as necessary.
- Unexpected and unplanned movement by the person.

Environment

- Inadequate space to shower/bath/toilet the person.
- Wet or slippery floors.

Equipment

- Unsuitable equipment or aids.
- Faulty equipment or aids.
- No equipment or aids.

These issues should be considered during the initial assessment of the client's needs and any risks identified should be controlled prior to provision of service.

What are solutions to the problem?

The risk of injury to workers can be eliminated or reduced by the following safety measures:

Systems

- Identify hazards and address the risks associated with bathing, toileting or showering the person with a disability, taking into account the level of support the person requires
- Conduct an individualised assessment regarding the physical support needs of the client, including equipment and aids required

- Identify and implement risk control measures and integrate occupational health and safety (OHS) controls into the client's support plan (This information can also be recorded in a separate OHS plan)
- Provide workers with information, instruction and training on the client's physical support needs, including OHS controls
- Encourage the person with a disability to actively participate and/or contribute to physical support tasks where possible.
- Implement systems to:
 - regularly seek information from the worker to check if their work environment, tasks or client's needs have changed, or need to change
 - re-assess the tasks and environment
 - update and document the client's physical support plan
 - monitor the implementation and use of OHS controls so the worker's and client's needs are safely met
 - provide a system so workers can report any changes or safety issues to their employer
 - provide workers with training in specific tasks or work instructions.

Equipment/aid provision and use

- Equipment or aids to support a person with a disability and undertake personal hygiene tasks are:
 - assessed as suitable for the task
 - appropriate for the space (eg hoists or shower chair)
 - available, easy to access from storage, set up and use
 - installed or supplied prior to service commencing
 - maintained in good working order
 - assessed as appropriate for the needs of the person with a disability and safe for use by the worker.

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(Health and Safety Solution continued overleaf)



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RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/workplace-injury-rehabilitation-and-compensation-act-2013/035>

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/occupational-health-and-safety-act-2004/032>

Transferring People Safely Guide 2nd Edition Work Safe Victoria 2009

https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/211273/ISBN-Transferring-people-safely-handbook-2009-07.pdf

Working Safely in Community Services Work Safe Publication

2006 <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/working-safely-community-services>

Victorian Home Care Industry Occupational Health and Safety Guide 2005

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/Victorian-home-care-industry-occupational-health-and-safety-guide>

Compliance code: Hazardous manual handling Work Safe Dec 2019

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-hazardous-manual-handling>