



WORKING AT HEIGHTS POLICY

Mandatory - Quality Area 3

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for safe and appropriate ladder use at Yarralea Children's Centre. The policy ensures that all people who attend the Yarralea Children's Centre premises, including employees, children, parents/guardians, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors, are provided with a safe and healthy environment.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Yarralea Children's Centre is committed to:

- providing a safe and healthy environment for employees, children, parents/guardians, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors;
- ensuring the management group, staff and volunteers are aware of their health and safety responsibilities as employers, employees and volunteers;
- systematically identifying, assessing and controlling hazards and reducing risk at the centre; and
- providing training and resources to employers, employees and volunteers to support the adoption of safer work practices at the service.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, children, parents/guardians, students on placement, volunteers, contractors and visitors attending the programs and activities of Yarralea Children's Centre.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Everyone involved in an early childhood education and care service has a role to play in ensuring the service's operations are safe and without risk to the health and safety of all parties. In Victoria, health and safety in the workplace is governed by a system of laws, regulations and compliance codes that set out the responsibilities of employers and employees to ensure safety is maintained at work.

Falling from heights is a risk in children's services that exposes individuals to possible musculoskeletal injuries such as sprains, strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries. Falls from

heights also expose individuals to risk of mild, moderate and severe head injuries. Operating at heights over two meters represents a significantly increased risk of harm, should a fall occur.

It is expected that some work at heights will occur while maintaining indoor and outdoor areas in children's services. This work may occur during centre operating hours or outside of hours at organised events, such as working bees. Examples of situations where work at heights may be necessary include hanging children's artwork, retrieving equipment from storage or conducting routine care for and maintenance of the setting. At all times, it is essential for individuals to work within the limits of their ability and training and to use appropriate equipment and/or aids for reaching objects and/or working at heights.

The legal duties of an employer and employee, as outlined in the Yarralea Children's Centre Occupational Health and Safety Policy, apply to the Working at Heights Policy. This includes, but is not limited to, the obligation of the employer to ensure the safety of all individuals at the Centre and to implement appropriate control measures for hazards and risks and the obligation of employees to take care of their own safety and cooperate with guidelines and OHS practices.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Accident Compensation Act 1985 (Vic)
- AS/NZS 4804:2001 and 4801:2001 Occupational health and safety systems
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
 - Standard 2.3: Each child is protected
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
 - Standard 3.1: The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

4. DEFINITIONS

Duty of care: A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility of education and care services to provide children, staff, students, volunteers, contractors and anyone visiting the service with an adequate level of care and protection against reasonable foreseeable harm and injury.

Hazard: An element with the potential to cause death, injury, illness or disease.

Hazard identification: A process that involves identifying all foreseeable hazards in the workplace and understanding the possible harm that each hazard may cause.

Hazard management: A structured process of hazard identification, risk assessment and control, aimed at providing safe and healthy conditions for employees, contractors and

visitors while on the premises of Yarralea Children's Centre or while engaged in activities endorsed by Yarralea Children's Centre.

Harm: Includes death, or injury, illness (physical or psychological) or disease that may be suffered by a person as a consequence of exposure to a hazard.

Risk: The chance (likelihood) that a hazard will cause harm to individuals.

Risk assessment: A process for developing knowledge/understanding about hazards and risks so that sound decisions can be made about the control of hazards. Risk assessments assist in determining:

- what levels of harm can occur
- how harm can occur
- the likelihood that harm will occur.

Risk control: A measure, work process or system that eliminates an OHS hazard or risk, or if this is not possible, reduces the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

Working Bee: A dedicated period on a weekend in which volunteers come together to undertake work indoors and outdoors at Yarralea.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Preventing slips, trips and falls at work, WorkSafe Victoria (June 2017)
- Maintaining indoor and outdoor areas in children's services, WorkSafe Victoria (June 2021)
- Preventing slips, trips and falls, WorkSafe Victoria (May 2011)
- Falls prevention checklist, WorkSafe Victoria
- Maintaining indoor and outdoor areas in children's services, WorkSafe Victoria
- Early childhood education and care: Safety basics, WorkSafe Victoria
- Storing supplies and equipment in children's services, WorkSafe Victoria
- Guide to the OHS Act 2004, WorkSafe Victoria
- OHS in Early Childhood Services (ELAA): <https://www.ohsinecservices.org.au>
- WorkSafe Victoria: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Yarralea Children's Centre Policies

- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy

PROCEDURES

The Committee of Management is responsible for:

- ensuring that the service has a current Working at Heights Policy
- delegating roles and responsibilities to the Nominated supervisor and staff as appropriate
- ensuring that this policy is reviewed in conjunction with staff and families and kept up to date and in accordance with current legislation
- ensuring educators, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, students and others at Yarralea know where to access the Working at Heights Policy and comply with its requirements

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- developing a Working at Heights Policy in consultation with the Committee of Management ensuring educators, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, students and others at Yarralea know where to access the Working at Heights Policy and comply with its requirements
- providing suitable equipment for reaching objects or performing work above shoulder height
- ensuring step platforms and ladders are conveniently located for staff and volunteers to access them
- ensuring step platforms and ladders are stored away from where unsupervised children can access them
- arrange for replacement or repair of damaged step platforms and ladders
- provide employees and volunteers with information, instructions, training and supervision so that they fully understand safe practices for working at heights

Staff OHS representative is responsible for:

- routinely checking, as part of scheduled OHS walk throughs, that step platforms and ladders are in good working condition (i.e. stable, with intact non-slip treads and stoppers)
- responding to staff reports of unsafe conditions so that issues can be identified and addressed promptly

Certified Supervisors and other educators are responsible for:

- taking care of their own safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their actions
- using the correct equipment when working at heights
- following instructions and training received to maintain safe indoor and outdoor work practices

Students on placements, volunteers, contractors and parents/guardians at the service are responsible for:

- being familiar with this policy
- co-operating with reasonable OHS rules implemented by the service
- not acting recklessly and/or placing the health and safety of other adults or children at the service at risk

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any change to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Yarralea Children's Centre Advice for Working at Heights

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Yarralea Children's Centre and Yarralea Childrens' Centre Committee of Management on 25th October, 2022.

REVIEW NOTES

N/A



Yarralea Children's Centre

ADVICE FOR WORKING AT HEIGHTS

How to use this document: This document is intended to help employees and volunteers assess and manage risks associated with working from heights below two metres in and around Yarralea Children's Centre. Any work required at heights above two metres should only be conducted by a trained employee or contractor of Yarra City Council.

1. AVOID WORKING AT HEIGHTS

Where possible, avoid working at heights. This might include keeping frequently-used items stored below shoulder height so that climbing is not necessary to access them. Consider using a pulley system, as pictured below, to raise and lower string-lines from ground level to display artwork (*Source: WorkSafe Victoria*). Where possible, avoid using ladders or step platforms when children are in the room or area. Children can attempt to climb or play with ladders and platforms, putting the user and children at risk. If ladder or step platforms are needed when children are in the room or area, direct children to stand at a distance if they are interested in watching. On occasion, ladders or step platforms are provided for children to use (i.e. to place a block on a tall structure). If a ladder or step platform is being used by children, they must be closely supervised by a staff member, one child at a time, and adhering to the safety protocols below.



2. CHOOSE APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT AND CONDUCT SAFETY CHECKS BEFORE CLIMBING

Step platforms provide a larger, more stable work surface than ladders and should be used if their height is sufficient for the task without over-reaching. Before being used, step platforms and ladders should be checked for signs of damage. This might include missing, cracked, broken, loose, worn or warped parts. Check that the ladder has non-slip feet and treads. Report any missing or damaged items to the centre co-ordinator and staff OHS representative. Before climbing, check for hazards in the space around where the step platform or ladder will be used. This includes checking for electrical items, protruding items or any other objects nearby that would create an additional hazard should a fall occur. Ensure that the surface the step platform or ladder will be placed on is clean, dry and even.

3. ADHERE TO SAFETY PROTOCOLS WHEN WORKING AT HEIGHTS

| ✓ ALWAYS | ✗ NEVER |
|--|---|
| Use a step platform or ladder to access items above shoulder height. | Use tables, chairs, play equipment or milk crates to reach high objects. |
| Check that the step platform or ladder is in good working order before climbing. | Climb a ladder or step stool that is not in good working conditions. |
| Place the step platform or ladder on a flat, even surface. | Place a step platform or ladder on top of furniture or use objects to stabilise ladders on uneven surfaces. |
| Check that the step platform or ladder is placed on a clean and dry surface. | Climb a step platform or ladder that has been placed on a contaminated surface (i.e. one that is covered in paper, grease, mud or dust, water). |
| Set up the step platform or ladder in the fully open position with the spreaders locked. | Climb a step platform or ladder that is closed or partially open. |
| Wear non-slip footwear when climbing a step platform or ladder. | Climb a step platform or ladder without wearing appropriate footwear. |
| Move the step platform or ladder as close as possible to the area you wish to reach. | Overreach by moving too far either side of the step platform or ladder. As a guide, your belly button should not move beyond the side rail. |
| Choose the step platform or ladder that is an appropriate height. Stand no higher than the second tread located below the top plate. | Overreach by straddling the ladder or standing on the top two rungs of a step platform or ladder. |
| Face the step platform or ladder when ascending, descending and standing on it. | Face away from the ladder when ascending, descending or standing on it. |
| Ascend and descend the step platform or ladder one level at a time. | Jump from the step platform or ladder. |
| Maintain three points of contact with the step platform or ladder. When moving on the step platform or ladder, have contact with two feet and at least one hand OR two hands and one foot at all times. When working on the step platform or ladder, have two feet and one other point of contact, such as hands or thighs leaning against the ladder. | Lose three points of contact with the step platform or ladder. |
| Ensure one person at a time uses the step platform or ladder. | Have multiple users on the ladder at the same time. |
| Place or pass items beneath you before descending a step platform or ladder. | Carry items while ascending or descending the step platform or ladder. |
| Avoid fatigue hazards by taking frequent breaks when working at heights. For example, when tidying storage areas. | Work on a ladder for lengthy periods or perform work while standing on a ladder that involves bending, twisting, reaching, lifting, pushing or pulling. |

