

WHAT?

Undertaking a risk assessment means evaluating or deciding which risks are significant and how they should be addressed. Risk assessment is one part of risk management.

It involves critical reflection on the benefits and hazards identified within the service, such as an experience, excursion, practice, piece of equipment or learning environment.

If your assessment highlights a possible risk, this does not mean that the experience or excursion cannot proceed, or that a resource cannot be used. Identifying and prioritising actions and responses as categorised by the level of control required to secure, manage, reduce or eliminate the risks is what is required.

Risk Assessments are written documents and should be developed in conjunction with educators, coordinators and families.

A hazard refers to a situation or element that could result in an individual getting injured or harmed.

Not every hazard will have a harmful outcome. Understanding the likelihood and potential severity of harm is essential in mitigating hazards without unnecessarily restricting risk and challenge from the learning environment. Recognising the possibility and potential severity of harm will help to determine whether the hazard needs to be managed and to what extent.

Examples of possible hazards:

- an open water trough in a play space is a potential hazard if adequate supervision is not maintained
- a broken piece of equipment that is unstable, unsafe or has sharp edges may be a potential hazard if not repaired, replaced or removed
- an incident or outbreak of a possible infectious disease may be a hazard if the appropriate infection control measures are not put in place.

WHY?

An organisation cannot manage a risk that it does not identify. You cannot control all risks at all times, however a risk assessment will ensure you treat the risks identified. The absence of incidents/accidents does not mean there are no hazards. It is often found that hazards with devastating consequences are not addressed until the incident has occurred – hence the need to identify hazards in every care setting and excursion.

HOW?

1. Establish the context – consider:
 - Is the risk related to an activity, emergency situation, or object?
 - What the activity is – e.g. a playgroup at another Educator's home; a visit to the local school during school hours; an excursion to a themed venue; an emergency within your care environment, etc.
 - What your objectives are – socialisation of children; viewing of a particular event, creating awareness of object, etc.
 - Where it takes place – in public; on licences premises; in a physically challenging location, etc. ○ Identify persons who will be influenced by it, including children, adults, general public.

A risk is any situation where the outcome is uncertain, where there is a chance that harm will occur. A risk of harm to someone occurs when a hazard can't be removed. If a hazard can't be eliminated, the potential for injury must be minimised and the risk managed on an ongoing basis

A risk assessment compares the risk itself with the possible benefits the risk has to children's learning, development and wellbeing.

This is an approach to risk assessment in which risks and benefits are considered alongside each other. It allows approved providers, nominated supervisors, educators and staff to meet their legislative obligations, while promoting a reasonable, balanced approach to play, learning and leisure.

The first step in completing a risk assessment is to identify the hazards and risks within your service or during an excursion. Be vigilant in monitoring your environment. If something that may be dangerous now or in the future is observed or identified, move to step 2 and document the possible hazard or risk.

- There are potentially many types of hazards within children's education and care service and while on an excursion.

2. Assess

After identifying the hazards and risks that exist at your service the next step is to assess the risk of possible harm to children, staff and others. Use the risk matrix to:

- assess the hazard
- assess the possible harm, likelihood, consequence and seriousness of the hazard
- identify any potential risks or benefits of undertaking the activity/experience for children’s learning, development and wellbeing

When assessing the risk of possible harm, it is important to consider the following:

- How likely is it to happen?
- How often might it happen?
- How serious is the outcome?
- What are the possible consequences?
- Are there any potential benefits to children’s learning, development and wellbeing?

3. Manage

In step 2, the likelihood, consequences, seriousness and possible benefits of the identified hazards and risks were identified and documented.

The next step is to identify and introduce an appropriate level of control measures within your service to manage the risk or hazard. Control measures are strategies and actions to be implemented to manage, eliminate or reduce hazards and potential risks. Control measures significantly reduce the likelihood of the hazard or risk causing harm.

3a. Evaluate the likelihood of a hazard occurring

Likelihood	Description
Rare	Very unlikely – the event may occur only in exceptional circumstances
Unlikely	Improbable – the event is not likely to occur in normal circumstances
Possible	Potential – the event could occur at some time
Likely	Probable – the event will probably occur in most circumstances
Almost certain	Very likely – the event is expected to occur in most circumstances

3b. The risk matrix also includes five levels of consequences:

- Insignificant
- Minor
- Moderate
- Significant
- Major

This takes into account the potential impact of an event and how it might affect the safety and wellbeing of children, families, staff and the wider community.

When analysing the consequences of a potential event occurring, it is important to consider the vulnerability of individuals who might be affected. For example, very young children or children with a disability may be particularly vulnerable as they are less able to act to protect their safety, health and wellbeing.

3c. *Risk Rating Matrix* A risk matrix is a useful tool to use during the risk assessment process. It helps in identifying the level of risk by looking at the likelihood that a negative event may occur, and the severity of the consequence should it occur.

Risk Matrix						
Consequences	Likelihood					
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
	Major	Moderate	High	High	Critical	Critical
	Significant	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Critical
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
	Minor	Very low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Insignificant	Very low	Very low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

4. Identify hazard control measures

- o What strategies do you currently have in place to manage this hazard?
- o What additional strategies could be used to manage this hazard?
- o Additional strategies should be influenced by the level of risk of the hazard.

The risk control measures will always include adherence to Service Policies and Procedures, Educator and Care Services and National Regulations etc.

Hierarchy of control		Examples of control measures
Level 1 (Most effective control measure)	Elimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the hazard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broken toy or damaged resources to be disposed of • Change the practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request food delivery to be taken directly to the kitchen to eliminate manual handling of bulky deliveries to the kitchen by educators
Level 2	Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate unwell children from others • Barricade off a wet floor until dry to avoid slipping hazards, display a 'wet floor' sign
	Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appropriate stairs in nappy change area to reduce manual handling and back injuries for educators • Provide adult-sized chairs for educators
Level 3 (Least effective control measure)	Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotate educators between different tasks to avoid repetitive strain • Arrange workflows to avoid peak physical and mental demands towards the end of a shift

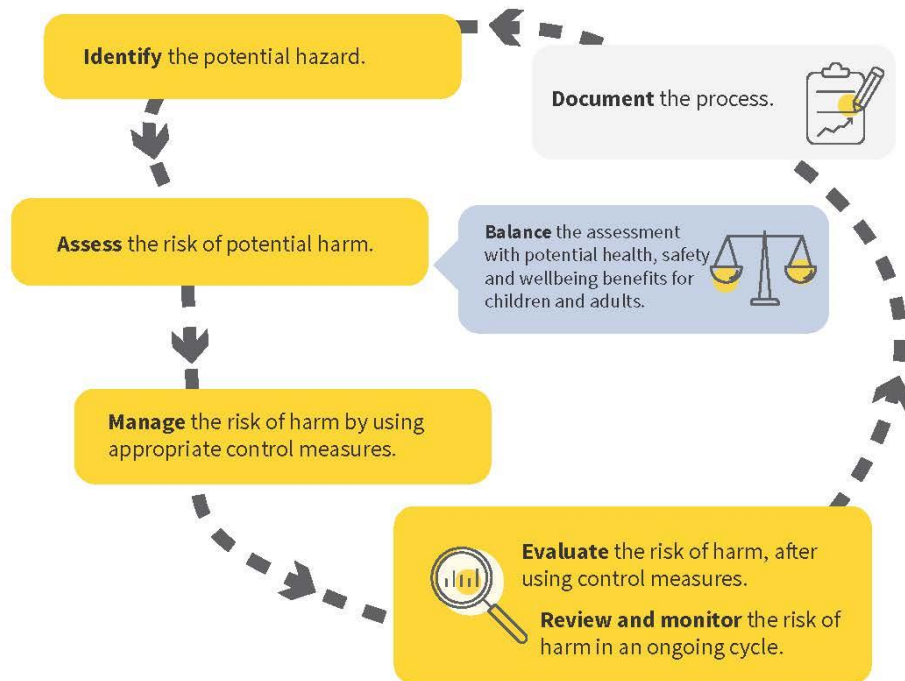
Personal protective equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use gloves while changing a nappy or when cleaning bodily fluids • Wear closed-in shoes to avoid injury • Wear hats and sunscreen outside
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5. Communicate, consult, monitor and review (discuss and document if required) ○ In each step of the risk analyses process, ensure you communicate and consult with all involved persons. ○ A risk analysis must be completed and forwarded to the coordination unit prior to any occasion where you are leaving your care environment.
- Reflect on the effectiveness of your risk control measures throughout your excursion or emergency. If changes are not required, the form remains valid for one year, until a review is required.
 - Review is essential to ensure that the controls put in place are effective and that new hazards that may have been introduced are addressed.

Risk Assessment and Management Cycle

What is a hazard? Anything that could cause harm.	What is a risk? Any situation where the outcome is uncertain, positive or negative.
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In the **risk management cycle**, you identify a hazard then determine the risk of potential harm.



How do you determine the risk of potential harm? By asking these questions:

- How likely is it to happen?
- How often might it happen?
- How serious is the outcome?
- What could the positive outcomes be?

