

17.4 Manual Handling Policy

Procedures number:	17.4	Version:	1.1
Drafted by:	BV, ML	Endorsed by Board on:	15/6/2020
Responsible person:	EO	Scheduled review date:	June 2021

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 in the course of 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

Interchange IE is committed to ensuring that all employees are properly educated and adequately resourced so as 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 so as to minimise the risk of illness, incident, accident or injury related to manual handling at work.
- Provide Interchange IE 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.
- 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.
- Take all reasonable steps to determine and document the appropriate manual handling method for all relevant participants with specific manual handling needs.
- Ensure Interchange IE 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.

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- Promptly investigate, remedy and document any Interchange IE employee incident or grievance regarding any manual handling issue.


See appendix for specific manual handling procedures

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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>



A Health and Safety Solution

WorkSafe
VICTORIA

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.

HSS0125/01/01.10 (Health and Safety Solution continued overleaf).



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A Health and Safety Solution

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 lino 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*

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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>

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Participant Support Plan

Incident Register

Return to Work Policy

Risk Management Policy and Procedure