

Risk Management Tips for Outside School Hours Care



The Child Safe Standards provide a framework so organisations can be safer for children.

Child harm or abuse can occur in any child-related organisation. To effectively embed the Standards to help prevent or reduce child harm and abuse, you must identify the unique risks in your organisation, to help understand which areas may need to be improved.

Risks can be related to the service type, location, service and educator profile, and the children that access each service. Harm and abuse of children in organisations is

not always intentional and can be the result of a lack of training and support when implementing child safe policies and procedures.

Read on to learn more about what you can do to identify and manage common risks in Outside School Hours Care (OSHC). In addition to identifying and managing these common risks, it is important to assess and manage any further risks that are unique to your service.

Common risks that may increase the likelihood of child harm and abuse

- **Conflicts of interest** – can occur in any service type and need to be addressed in policies, procedures and codes of conduct. For example, OSHC staff can be asked by families to babysit outside of the service and the risks needs to be managed.
- **Large physical spaces** – services are often delivered in school settings where children are spread out across multiple rooms and outdoor areas. There may be other adults in the school as well, such as tutors, cleaners or teachers in meetings, who may come in contact with the children. There may also be children from the neighbourhood using the school grounds who could also come into contact with children using the OSHC services. Your centre would need to consider the risks the environment may pose to the children in your care.
- **Staff training** – some staff are less qualified and experienced. This can increase the risk of harm and abuse if they are not adequately supported and supervised. Staffing in OSHC can be temporary with people being employed for short periods for services such as vacation care. This can make it challenging to train and support educators in child safe practices.

Tips for coordinators

Ensure all **recruitment and reference checks** are completed before educators commence work. Don't rely solely on family or friend recommendations. Verify all WWCC clearances.

Be flexible in how you induct and train educators. When limited by time and resources, deliver training in bite-sized chunks. This may mean delivering support over a longer period and ensuring extra supervision until training is completed.

OSHC often employ young people on a casual basis. Having young, enthusiastic and creative staff is advantageous and fun for children. While allowing these staff to develop trusting relationships with children always **stress the professional boundaries to staff** – they are educators not the children's friend.

Prioritise teaching **educators the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours** when interacting with children.

Teach educators about **how to provide adequate supervision** across large spaces and understand how to provide additional support to more vulnerable children.

Ensure you and your educators know how to **respond to disclosures of harm and abuse** from children.

Understand all of your reporting obligations and ensure your educators know their obligations and alternative reporting avenues (such as reporting anonymously).

If educators have any **secondary employment such as babysitting children outside of OSHC, manage this in your policies, procedures and codes of conduct**. Ensure parents understand they are entering into a private agreement with the educator, separate to the OSHC service.

Tips for educators

Understand and be confident in all your reporting obligations.

Be able to recognise acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when adults are interacting with children, and **report inappropriate staff behaviour** with children if you see it.

Consider if the children you work with **know who to go to for support** if they feel unsafe or have been harmed.

Ensure you are **supervising across all the spaces** at OSHC and be aware of other adults or children using the space such as older kids using basketball courts, music teachers, tutors and so on.

Monitor children's online activities.

Do not take photos of children on your personal devices. Ensure permissions have been obtained when taking photos with the service's devices. Respect a child's wishes not to be photographed.

Remember, **you are an educator not the children's friend**. It is not appropriate to contact children or to interact with them outside OSHC, either in physical spaces or online.

Tell your manager if you have contact with a child or family outside OSHC. This includes any babysitting arrangements you have with OSHC families.

Tips for approved provider boards and Parent Management Committees

Publicly state your organisation's commitment to child safety.

Declare and actively manage conflicts of interest on boards and within the service.

Prioritise child safety and have child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas.

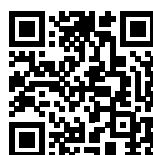
Take steps to **understand and accommodate children who are more vulnerable to organisational abuse** and provide appropriate child safe supports.

Have a **Child Safe Risk Management Plan** that is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) has resources to support you on a range of topics, including risk management, the Child Safe Standards, empowering children and more: ocg.nsw.gov.au/training-and-resources



The eSafety Commissioner also has resources that support educators, children and young people: esafety.gov.au/educators



Other resources to support you can be found on the Network of Community Activities peak body website: networkofcommunityactivities.org.au

