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## Caring for Children in the Workplace Policy

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### 1. Background

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) advocates the use of a range of policies and initiatives, including applicable provisions of industrial Awards and Agreements to assist employees balance their family and work responsibilities.

There are exceptional emergency situations where children may need to be in the workplace. This policy outlines the conditions where this may be accommodated.

This policy is different and additional to the requirements under the [WA Health Employee Breastfeeding Policy](#).

### 2. Policy Statement

All WACHS employees have a duty of care, under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*, to ensure that staff and visitors to WACHS sites are not exposed to hazards in the workplace. This duty of care includes the children of employees who are present in the workplace at any time.

Employees who need to bring their children into the workplace in an emergency situation must seek manager approval and must consider the health and safety risks to the child, other employees and visitors, as well as the impact on the ability of the employee to undertake their duties. Such decisions are to be made on a case by case basis.

Approval to care for children in the workplace is only to be given in exceptional circumstances as defined in this policy, and is not to be given on a regular basis. Approval by management is only to be given for a period of time while alternative care arrangements are made by the employee or appropriate leave can be taken by the employee to care for their child outside of work.

Children who are ill, particularly children with known infectious diseases **must not** be brought into the workplace at any time, and children are not to be in the presence of a patient or client or left unattended by the employee at the workplace.

Under **no circumstance** are children to be in the presence of a patient or client at the workplace as such situations are unable to be fully controlled and would be considered an unacceptable risk to all concerned.

Children are not to be left unattended by the employee (parent or guardian) under any circumstances, for their own safety and that of other employees, visitors and clients of WACHS. The employee is to accompany the child at all times in the workplace

In the event that an employee is unable to make necessary childcare arrangements for their child, the employee must consider utilising the leave provisions and/or flexible work practice options contained in their industrial [Awards and Agreements](#).

These provisions include:

- personal leave
- paid leave (e.g. annual leave)
- flexi-time, accrued days off
- leave without pay.

Working from home may be considered an option if applicable to the position, and can be accommodated by the organisation.

Approval for a child to be cared for in the workplace can only be given by the Manager following a risk assessment using the following seven criteria:

1. The [Children at the Workplace Worksafe Bulletin](#) must be used as a checklist for identifying risks for children in the workplace. Risks must be assessed in accordance with the [WA Health Integrated Corporate and Clinical Risk Analysis Tables and Evaluation Criteria 2009](#).
2. The presence of the child in the work area does not pose a moderate risk to the child, other employees, clients, visitors or contractors. Areas considered to be unsuitable include (but are not limited to) wards, therapy areas, kitchens, workshops and delivery areas or any clinical workspace where patients or clients present.
3. The child is not ill, but is required to be cared for by the employee.
4. The manager is satisfied that all other available childcare arrangements have been exhausted.
5. The employee is able to perform their duties effectively and safely while supervising the child.
6. The employee continues to pursue alternative child care options.
7. The child does not create a disruption or safety risk to others in the workplace.

### 3. Definitions

<b>Exceptional and Emergency Situations</b>	<p>Examples of situations that may constitute an exceptional and emergency situation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child care emergencies - when normal child care arrangements break down on the day. For longer periods, employees would be expected to take personal (carer's) leave designated for such emergency situations, or other forms of appropriate leave if carer's leave has been exhausted.</li><li>• Appointments - where children are waiting for the employee to take them to, or home from an appointment.</li><li>• Work emergencies - where an employee is required to work overtime or longer hours than normal and is unable to make alternative arrangements for the care of their children.</li></ul> <p>NOTE: In the case of social visits by children to see a parent or guardian, normal use of leave provisions is to apply.</p>
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<b>Leave Provisions</b>	Leave provisions include personal leave, paid leave (e.g. annual leave), flexi-time, accrued days off and time off in lieu. leave without pay.
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## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### Manager

- The manager can provide approval in writing for exceptional and emergency situations only, and for the specified period of time.
- The manager is satisfied that all other reasonable childcare arrangements have been exhausted.
- The manager is satisfied that the presence of a child in the work area does not pose a risk to the child, other employees, contractors or visitors.
- The manager documents in writing the employee's request to bring children into the workplace for exceptional and emergency situations for a specified period of time, if appropriate.

### Employee

- The employee must ensure that the child who may be at work is not ill, particularly with known infectious diseases.
- The employee must be able to perform their duties while supervising the child at work.
- The employee continues to pursue alternative child care options during the day if possible.
- The employee is to provide in writing the request for bringing children into the workplace, where possible.

## 5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Employment Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (HSA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

## 6. Evaluation

Evaluation of this policy is to be carried out by the Director Human Resource Strategy.

Monitoring of compliance with this document is the role of the manager.

## 7. Standards

### [EQulPNational Standards:](#)

Standard 13 "Workforce Planning and Management" - 13.12 "Implementing strategies to create a workforce culture that fosters and encourages staff".

## 8. Legislation

*Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*

## 9. References

[Department of Health Awards and Agreements](#)

[Children in the Workplace WorkSafe Bulletin](#)

[North Metropolitan Health Service – Caring for Children in the Workplace Policy](#)

[Child Adolescent Health Service – Caring for Children in the Workplace Policy](#)

## 10. Related WA Health Policies

[WA Health Code of Conduct](#)

[WA Health Misconduct Policy](#)

[WA Health Employee Breastfeeding Policy](#)

[WA Health Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy](#)

[WA Health Employee Breastfeeding Policy.](#)

## 11. WA Health Policy Framework

[Employment Policy Framework](#)

**This document can be made available in alternative formats  
on request for a person with a disability**

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