

POLICY NUMBER: **MHC/CHI001**

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NAME: **Children in the Workplace**

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APPROVED BY: Practice Principal

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## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

### AIM

To ensure the working environment is safe for children and young people present in all MAT Health Clinic managed sites and locations.

### BACKGROUND

MAT Health Clinic initiated the development of a policy on children at the workplace to set out clear safety rules that apply for organisations that recognise children as part of the regular work activity.

### DEFINITIONS

**Child:** for the purposes of this policy includes all persons aged under 18.

#### **Emergency or Unique Situations include:**

- Childcare emergencies - when normal childcare arrangements break down on the day. For longer periods, employees would be expected to take personal leave designed for such emergency situations, or other forms of appropriate leave if personal leave has been exhausted.
- Appointments - where children are waiting for the employee to take them to or home from an appointment.
- 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.

**Telecommuting:** is a formal work arrangement in which an employee works from home or an alternative site during time periods agreed by and with the employer.

### PRINCIPLES

- MAT Health Clinic has a duty of care to ensure that patients and visitors to MAT Health Clinic sites are not exposed to hazards in the workplace.
- MAT Health Clinic provides a safe working environment for employees, patients and visitors including children by being vigilant and undertaking regular Workplace Hazard Inspections to identify hazards assess risks and control identified risks.
- MAT Health Clinic acknowledge that children are continually present and part of the main work activity as patients or visitors.

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- To focus on the safety of children present in the workplace a risk assessment checklist specific to children has been developed to support existing safety checklists.
- Whilst parents/guardians and carers are responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their own child in their care whilst on MAT Health Clinic premises the checklist provides an additional preventative safety measure.
- MAT Health Clinic also recognises that from time-to-time children may be visiting or accompanying their parents/guardians and carers in the workplace (that is children of employees).
- While recognising an employee's family responsibilities, it is not ordinarily appropriate for children to be cared for in the workplace.
  - If an emergency or unique situation arises where an employee needs to attend the workplace with their child they need to refer to the **Employees caring for a child** in the workplace section of this document.

## COMPLETING THE RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST: CHILDREN IN THE WORKPLACE

- Managers are required to undertake a Risk Assessment Checklist: Children in the Workplace (the checklist) at least once every 12 months.
  - For work locations that have undergone a major change or for a new site, the checklist should be completed along with other workplace hazard checklists.
- When completing the Checklist, managers should ensure all situations are considered for various ages and heights.
- Where hazards are identified the **Hierarchy of Control** needs to be applied.

## EMPLOYEES CARING FOR A CHILD 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 paid or unpaid leave or flexible work options.
- The manager assessing the employees' request to care for a child in the workplace is only to grant approval in emergency or unique situations for a defined period of time or whilst alternative care arrangements are made.
- Both the employee who needs to bring their child into the workplace and the manager, who grants approval, must consider the health and safety risks to the child, other employees, patients, visitors, and contractors by following the Approval Criteria outlined below.
- Decisions are to be made on a case-by-case basis and approval is not to be given on a regular basis.
- Under **NO** circumstance are children to be in the presence of a patient / client or left unsupervised by the employee in the workplace at any time.
- Areas considered to be unsuitable include (but are not limited to) treatment rooms, therapy areas, kitchens, workshops and delivery areas or any clinical workspace where patients or clients are present.
- Telecommuting may be considered an option if it is applicable to the position and it doesn't hinder health service operations.
- Please refer to the Flexible Work (MAT Health Clinic) Policy.
- In the case of social visits by children to see a parent or guardian, normal use of employee leave provisions or conditions of employment will apply.

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## Approval Criteria

Approval for a child to be cared for in the workplace can only be given by a manager following the satisfaction of the following criteria:

1. The employee has considered utilising the leave provisions in their industrial agreement prior to formalising a request to their manager;
2. The presence of the child in the work area does not pose a risk to the child, employees, patients, contractors or visitors. Risks include emotional, physical and corporate risks such as confidentiality;
3. The manager is satisfied that other reasonable childcare arrangements have been exhausted;
4. The child does not exhibit symptoms of contagious disease or illness, such as fever, persistent cough or congested nose. Children with known infectious diseases must not be brought into the workplace at any time;
5. The employee is able to perform their duties effectively and safely while supervising the child;
6. The child does not create disruption or a safety risk to others in the workspace and the child's access and movement must be controlled; and
7. The employee continues to pursue alternative childcare options during the day.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Employee

- Be vigilant in the workplace for safety hazards that may affect children as visitors or patients and report them immediately.
- If an emergency or unique situation arises seek approval from their manager prior to bringing their child into the workplace.
- If approval is granted ensure the conditions under **Approval Criteria** are met.

### Manager

- Ensure the completion of the Risk Assessment Checklist: Children in the Workplace every 12 months.
- Document and coordinate the resolution of any outstanding WHS issues that arise from the inspection.
- Report hazards of an extreme risk to their manager immediately.
- Retain a copy of the completed checklist and forward to the WHS Department.
- Ensure WHS representative is given adequate opportunity and time to assist with the Checklist.
- Review requests from employees to care for their child in the workplace in emergency or unique situations only in line with the **Approval Criteria** and if approval granted determines the set period of time that the approval applies.
- Document the arrangement to bring the child into the workplace for a stated time period and advise their line manager.

### WHS Representative

- Participate in inspections as requested by the manager.



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## COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Completed Checklists will be monitored by the Work Health and Safety Committee.

## RECORD KEEPING

- Records produced as a result of this policy will be maintained in accordance with the MAT Health Clinic Record keeping Policy.
- Electronic or hardcopy records shall be made available upon request for audit purposes.

## RESPONSIBILITY

<b>Policy administrator</b>	Practice Manager
<b>Approving Person</b>	Practice Principal

## CHANGE HISTORY

<b>Version</b>	<b>Review date</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Description of Modifications</b>
1	01-Jan-2021	M. Evans	Original Document