



SunSmart Schools and Services Program (ACT) Developing a Sun Protection Policy

What is a sun protection policy?

A sun protection policy documents the rationale and strategies your service or school will use to ensure that children, students and staff are protected from over-exposure to the sun's ultra-violet radiation (UVR). Anyone should be able to read the policy and understand your service's commitment to sun protection. Your policy should be made available to all staff, teachers, parents and interested parties and should be easy to access.

Why have a sun protection policy?

Over-exposure to solar UVR in the first 15 years of life is a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer. Including melanoma. Early childhood services and schools can therefore play an important role in the prevention of skin cancer. There are four main reasons for this:

- Children attend childcare services and schools up to five days per week, often during the high UV radiation period each day (between 10-3pm)
- Children attending these services and schools are frequently involved in outdoor activities.
- Services and schools have the opportunities and responsibility to educate children and families about the importance of sun protection and to help establish life-long behaviours.
- A SunSmart policy can help services and schools to fulfil their licensing and accreditation requirements.

This resource has been designed to help your service or school develop its own SunSmart policy. A formal, written comprehensive SunSmart policy is a statement about your organisation's commitment to SunSmart principles. It demonstrates your concern for the health of those under your care and supervision, by giving priority to efforts to prevent skin cancer later in life.

The steps to developing a SunSmart policy

People are much more likely to be enthusiastic and supportive about a policy if they are involved in developing it. Staff, teachers, parents, children (where appropriate) and other interested parties should be consulted and given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the policy. Before you begin, it may be necessary to raise awareness among these groups about the harmful effects of solar UV radiation exposure, particularly during childhood. Involving children in discussion about the need for the policy and what it should contain can help them to better understand why sun protection is so important and facilitate their cooperation when the policy is implemented.

The following six steps provide a guide to develop an effective sun protection policy and may help you to get started. They are intended as a guide only and should be adapted to suit your service or school.

Step 1: Form a working group

- Seek representation from staff, parents, carers and other interested members of the community to join a working group.
- Identify a person who will be responsible for coordinating the policy.

Step 2: Become familiar with sun protection information.

- Provide all members of the working group with background information on skin cancer and sun protection strategies.

Step 3: Review current sun protection strategies.

- Review your existing sun protection policy (if you have one) in light of the sample policy and information provided to you.
- Use the checklist that is also provided which clearly outlines the minimal standard that is to be included in your new policy.

Step 4: Write the policy

- Develop and circulate a draft of the policy for comment.
- Develop an implementation plan to support the policy, and include timeframes.
- Be clear about who is responsible for implementing each task.
- Collect feedback on the draft policy and implementation plan.
- Finalise the policy and implementation plan.

Step 5: Let everyone know about the policy.

- Officially launch the policy so everyone at the service/school is aware of it.
- Inform parents and staff of the policy and implementation plan; for example, invite parents to a meeting, hold an information session, send home a copy of The policy or place on the noticeboard or online.

Step 6: Review the policy.

- Monitor the implementation of the policy as it progresses.
- Gather feedback from the childcare/school community.
- Make observation to identify the number of children and staff demonstrating SunSmart behaviours (and not).
- Review the effectiveness of the policy.

Early childhood services and schools are subject to guidelines and responsibilities that relate to the health and safety of children, staff and visitors to the service/school. Some of these relate to sun protection and should be considered when planning the content of a sun protection policy.

Duty of care: All child services have a legal responsible known as a 'duty of care' to the children in their care as well as staff and visitors to their service. This duty of care extends to ensuring that services develop appropriate sun protection policies and practices to adequately protect children, staff and visitors from damage caused by the sun.

Occupational Health and Safety: Early childhood settings and schools are workplaces and under the Work Safe Act 2008 employers and employees have responsibilities in reducing the risk of all types of injuries and risks to health while at work. Over exposure to the sun is one of these risks.

The Act requires employers to provide and maintain a safe working environment and safe systems of work to ensure employees are safe from injury and risk to health. A few simple measures, such as changing the time of outdoor activities, providing protective gear, training and education, can be taken by employers to help protect employees. Employees are required to comply with instructions given by their employer aimed at ensuring health and safety in the workplace setting.

Preschools: When developing or assessing their sun protection policy government preschools in the ACT should consult the ACT Department of Education and Training Sun Protection Policy 2004, a copy of which is available through the department's website.

Occasional care centres and long day care centres: In the ACT these centres are required to meet the ACT Centre Based Children's Services' Conditions for Approval in Principle and Licences, which include stipulations relating to sun protection. These are outlined in the *ACT Centre Based Children's Services' Conditions for Approval in Principle and Licences*.

In addition, long day care centres, through the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) are required to meet Quality Assurance Standards, some of which relate to sun protection policies and practices. For more information contact QIAS.

For further information call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20

Cancer Council ACT · 5 Richmond Avenue, Fairbairn ACT 2609 ·

PO BOX 143, Fyshwick ACT 2609

Tel: 02 6257 9999 · Fax: 02 6257 5055 · www.actcancer.org