Conducting administrative tasks in early childhood education and care.

What is the problem?

Conducting computer / administrative tasks in areas that that are not fit for purpose (e.g. areas that are poorly designed, cluttered or not appropriate).

What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of musculoskeletal injuries (eg sprains, strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries) to the back, neck or shoulders when using awkward postures, or exerting high or unexpected force in poorly designed office or ad hoc administration areas.

Common sources of risk include:

- Poorly designed or cluttered office areas.
- No designated office space to complete administrative tasks.
- Insufficient/inadequate space and resources to complete administrative tasks.
- Poorly lit work areas for completing administrative tasks.
- Prolonged and intense keyboard and mouse use and high demands on vision.
- Prolonged use of mobile devices, such as ipads and tablets to complete administrative tasks.
- Placement or storage of objects above shoulder or below knee height.
- Manually lifting or moving heavy objects.
- Inappropriate seating.
- Supporting the telephone on the shoulder when using a computer, or multitasking.
- Sustained mental effort and peak demands.
- Insufficient time to complete work.

Workers may also be at risk of injuries from slips and trips or from being struck by objects due to:

- Cluttered or poorly maintained office areas.
- Poorly maintained floor surfaces.
- Unsecured or unstable filing cabinets and shelving.
- Ad hoc administration tasks being performed around young children and toys.

What are solutions to the problems?

Design a workplace with a designated office space, adequate in space and size to accommodate the number of workers completing administration tasks, such as session planning, and progress reports.

Systems

Develop systems of work that:

- Designate a suitable workspace, if an office space is not available, where workers have access to a suitable chair, table or other equipment required to carry of their work without risk.
- Match the numbers of workers to the task and environment such as allocating suitable time periods during the day for workers to rotate and use suitable office areas for session planning and reports.
- Alternate repetitive tasks with tasks requiring different postures and movements for those in permanent administrative roles.
- Regularly review supplies and equipment and discard objects that don't need to be retained or have not been used within a designated timeframe (eg 12 months).
- Provide workers with information, instruction, training and supervision in relation to work procedures and use of appropriate work areas and equipment.
- Identify and report safety issues so they can be fixed as soon as possible.
- Schedule and record regular inspections and maintenance of all areas of the workplace and equipment.
- Allocate sufficient time to complete work tasks.

Equipment

Computers, desks and chairs

- Provide a height-adjustable desk so workers can sit comfortably at the desk with their feet flat on the floor. If the desk is not height adjustable, provide a footstool.
- Provide chairs that can be easily adjusted and have a five-star base.
- Provide information to workers on chair adjustments/ ergonomics. For example:
    - adjust the height of the chair so the forearms are parallel to the desk when elbows are at 90 degrees or more
    - adjust the backrest of the chair so it supports the lower back

- remove armrests if they restrict the ability to move closer to the desk or cause the shoulders to be raised when typing.
- Position the top of the computer screen at eye level, at arms length and away from sources of glare such as windows or lights.
- If laptops are used for long periods, reduce awkward postures by using a laptop stand, separate computer monitor and/or a separate keyboard and mouse.
- Provide adequate space for workstations.
- Keep the space under the desk free from objects or clutter.
- Limit the use of mobile devices such as iPads or tablets, to a minimum to avoid working in awkward postures.
- Secure cables under computer desks to minimise tripping hazards.
- Position computer keyboard and mouse to avoid overstretching.
- Use document holders to avoid working from documents that are flat on the desk.
- Place frequently used items within easy reach.
- Use a telephone headset to avoid awkward postures.
- Take regular breaks away from the desk to stand, relax eyes, and stretch or perform other tasks.

Filing cabinets and shelving

- Secure filing cabinets to the wall or use filing cabinets with anti-tilt features.
- Fix shelving to the floor and walls of the office or working area.
- Use shelving with a safe working load limit (designated by the manufacturer) and do not exceed this weight limit.
- Maintain shelving and replace any shelving that is cracked, loose or damaged.
- Place items frequently used in easy-to-access shelves, between shoulder and knee height.
- Store heavier objects between knee and shoulder height rather than at floor level or overhead.
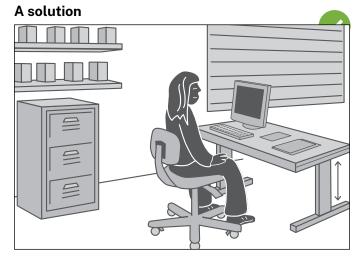- Store objects in smaller containers to avoid having to lift and balance heavy loads.

Environment

- Maintain floor areas to remove uneven or damaged surfaces that may cause people to trip.
- Immediately clean up spills, regardless of how small the spill is or whether it occurs.
- Install additional power points to avoid stretching electrical cords across floors.
- Eliminate or restrict children from playing near office areas or where workers are carrying out administration tasks.

The problem

The office is cluttered and has inadequate space under the desk for the worker's legs.

A solution

The desk, chair and computer equipment are adjustable for the worker. Storage systems are used to reduce clutter. A window blind reduces glare.

Further Information

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Related SafeWork NSW Health and Safety Solutions

- [Hazardous manual tasks, code of practice](#)
- [Manual Tasks](#)
- [Hazardous manual tasks - Overview](#)
- [Healthcare and social assistance](#)