Children's Services Policy No 2.10
Date issued: April 2015
Replaces issue/policy: Safe Storage and use of chemicals policy and Chemical Reduction and Alternatives to the Use of Chemicals
Date effective: November 2015
Date Revised: May 2019, September 2020; and January 2023

Aim:

- The correct and safe usage of chemicals in our services, to protect staff, children, families and visitors from the dangers and risks associated with chemical products. (All staff will adhere to this policy in relation to the purchase, storage, handling, use and disposal of chemicals in the workplace).
- To encourage the use of natural and non-toxic products including cleaning agents wherever possible within our Children's Services.

Background Information:
In New South Wales, every year thousands of children need medical care for poisoning from products commonly found in and around the child care settings/home. Most accidental poisonings occur to children under the age of five, with children aged one to three at greatest risk.

Children are more susceptible and vulnerable to chemical exposure. Children's bodies are still developing and the play, practices and behaviour of children leave them open to greater exposure to chemicals in and around the service/home - in particular, chemicals such as lead, pesticides and solvents have been found to have profound effects on young children's growth, health, behaviour and intelligence.

Implementation of appropriate storage can help to eliminate or minimise the risk of exposure to children. Furthermore, using alternatives to toxic products can help to remove or minimise these health risks to children.

Relevant Legislation:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Public Health Amendment (Review) Act 2017
- NSW Public Health Regulation 2012
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (NSW)
- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- NSW Public Health Act 2010

Resources:

- NSW EPA – Chemicals Management
- Kidsafe NSW Inc., Poisoning Prevention
- Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious Disease in Early Childhood Education and Care Services, (5th Edition), National Health and Medical Research Council (2013)
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - National Quality Standard
    - **Quality Area 2**:
        - Standard 2.1. - Element 2.1.2; and
        - Standard 2.2. - Element 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

Note: In this policy "staff" and "educators" refers to staff employed by Willoughby City Council.

Practices:

Staff will:

- Develop and maintain a Chemical Register of all products.
- Undertake a risk assessment on the usage of each chemical in the service and to use the least toxic option without compromising hygiene.
- Dispose of chemicals appropriately that are no longer required or past the expiry date.
- Ensure all containers holding chemicals are adequately labelled and include the following information:
    - Chemical name of the product.
    - First aid requirements/location of (M)SDS.
    - Correct proportions to be used if chemicals are to be diluted.
- Collect a (M)SDS for each chemical product and retain them in a readily accessible location near where the chemical is stored (M)SDS outlines the controls for prevention of exposure that are required and what first aid, medical or safety action should be taken if a person is exposed.
- Provide first aid resources which meet the requirements for the chemicals being used.
- During the staff induction process or when new chemicals are purchased, the Nominated Supervisor will supply adequate information, training, supervision and documented procedures in the use/storage/disposal of the chemicals in the service including where the (M)SDS are located. The Nominated Supervisor will inform staff of their responsibility under the WHS Legislation and current regulations.
- Ensure that there is adequate ventilation in areas where chemicals are used.
- Ensure chemically based products are substituted with the least toxic option without compromising hygiene, unless no alternative product available.
- Use the minimum dose required for cleaning when using a chemical product. A reduced dose is used if there is less soiling.
- Provide information and support to staff and families regarding chemical alternatives and safe storage of chemicals that will protect children's health
- Use detergent and warm water (hot water if not in vicinity of children) as the primary agent for effective general cleaning purposes, followed by rinsing and drying.
- Remove food or other particles as quickly as possible, clean surfaces with warm water and detergent and dry them with a clean, dry cloth as standard practice to reduce the need for harsher chemicals.

In addition, to promote hygienic and safe cleaning practices staff may opt for:

- Micro-fibre cloths as these cloths provide effective cleaning methods that require minimal or no use of other cleaning products.
- The use of stronger cleaning tools such as steel wool or scrubbing brushes so that softer cleaning agents may be used.
- The use of water-based products or natural products.

Purchase:

- Staff will purchase products that are the least hazardous/toxic chemical, product or equipment for the job.
- Where available, staff will choose chemicals or medicines with child resistant lids or caps.
- Staff should read the labels of products before purchasing any chemical product to ensure that it is appropriate for its intended use, how it needs to stored and any first aid equipment required.

Storage:

- Staff will store household chemicals securely out of the reach of children, in a locked cupboard or in an area/room that is inaccessible to children.

- When storing any chemical or dangerous substances, staff should observe their responsibility under the WHS Legislation.
- Simple warning signs are to be displayed where chemicals are kept.
- Containers are to be well sealed and childproof closures are to be used wherever possible.
- All dangerous cleaning materials (including detergents), poisons and other dangerous substances and medications are stored in their original labelled container. Where required, substances can be decanted into smaller correctly labelled containers; and staff will contact the suppliers of the substance and ask them to provide them with a smaller container for decanting purposes.
- Chemicals **must not** be decanted into drink or food containers.
- If any substance requires refrigeration, they are to be stored in a labelled child resistant container, preferably in a separate compartment or in a part of the refrigerator inaccessible to children.
- Adequate ventilation is to be maintained where chemicals are stored and during use.

Use and handling:

- When using any chemical or dangerous substances, staff should observe their responsibility under the WHS Legislation.
- Staff will follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- Staff will not mix chemicals and will only use chemicals for their intended use.
- Staff will wear protective clothing if recommended, e.g. gloves. (All protective clothing such as gloves and masks should be provided by service).
- Staff will ensure adequate ventilation when using products.
- Potentially toxic chemicals will not be used while children are present.
- When cleaning, products are to be stored or diluted in labelled spray bottles:
    - Staff will use the stream nozzle instead of the mist nozzle to minimise the amount of spray mist in the air.
    - The nozzle will be pointed away from persons to prevent injury.
    - Small areas are sprayed at a time.
    - Staff will not use the spray bottle near the children or other adults to prevent injury and inhalation.

Disposal:

- Disposal of unwanted chemicals, medication, substances or equipment, is to be done safely and in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, WHS Regulation, local council regulation or Department of Health advice as relevant.
- Disposal of empty bottles/containers will be done in an environmentally appropriate manner wherever possible e.g. recycling.

All staff are also required to:

- Observe safe practices in the storage of pesticides, herbicides, solvents, petroleum or kerosene on the premises - they must be contained in a separate secure outdoor shed; separate from the children's play areas and environment. They should not be stored at ground level and not stored with organic materials, fertilisers or swimming pool chemicals.

(M)SDS- (Material) Safety Data Sheets
WHS- Work Health and Safety

APPENDIX 1

"Safer Cleaning ~ Recipes for Success" Bridget Gardner, HPC Solutions, - previously www.freshgreenclean.com.au

How to use it	How to store and care for it
Warm soapy water: Add a 'spot' of mild detergent or liquid soap to a: a) **mop** bucket for floors. b) **squirt** bottle for toilets. c) **spray** bottle for surfaces or d) **clean bucket / bowl** that is changed often. **NOTE: Never** rinse a dirty cloth in a clean bucket of soapy water. It is better to have a stack of clean cloths available and change regularly.	• Spray bottles must be clearly labelled with the name, contact details of manufacturer, dilution rates, and any health warnings. Print on paper, and cover with contact. • Spray bottles must be washed and dried regularly, especially if using liquid soap, as it will congeal in the nozzle. • Cloths, mops and buckets must be washed in clean hot soapy water after every use, rinsed then dried completely before re-using.
Micro-fibre cloths and mops: a) **Dampen** the cloth or mop with water from a spray bottle or wet under the tap and wring well. b) **Fold** the cloth into four. Clean with one side, then when it is dirty, turn it over and continue, to ensure you are not spreading germs from one surface to another. c) **Wipe** lightly to give the fibres 'space' to pick up and hold dirt. Scrubbing hard pushes the dirt into the surface and wears out the cloth (and your arm).	• When finished, wash in hot water, and hang in sunshine to dry. UV is a disinfectant! • Hand-washing is fine as long as water is hot and clean, and rinsing is thorough. • Rinsing a dirty cloth or mop head under the tap will not remove enough bacteria to sanitise it • Never use fabric softeners or bleach, or they will damage the fibres. • Wash and dry within 12 hrs of use (or sooner) • Store clean dry cloths in a closed container, such as a plastic lidded box.
Bicarbonate of soda: a) **Make** a paste by sprinkling a little bit onto a slightly damp cloth, and rubbing gently. b) When the bicarbonate 'fills' with dirt, (it turns brown) turn the cloth over and sprinkle a bit more. c) **Spot cleaning** grime, scuff marks and mould around taps and tiling grout: add a sprinkle to a cloth, scourers or toothbrush. d) **For large areas** of cleaning, (such as inside ovens) mix to a paste with water in a bowl.	• Bicarbonate will harden if damp. Store in dry place. • Stainless steel parmesan cheese shaker, but make sure holes on top are large. • Purchase in bulk from a bulk health store.
Creamy cleanser: a) Mix a tsp of **bicarbonate** with enough **liquid castille soap** to make a creamy cleanser paste. b) Removes almost everything: crayon, stove-top build up, grease, most stains, bath scum and shower scale c) Use with micro-fibre, scourers or toothbrush	• Creamy cleanser will harden in the air, so make only a small amount when required. • This is a great, safe and fun exercise for children, to clean their crayon marks away!
Vinegar: a) Vinegar is mildly acidic, so it evaporates quickly. When diluted in hot water it is ideal for cleaning windows or wooden floors.	• Vinegar is NOT a surface disinfectant. It is a *preservative*, which means it deters the growth of bacteria when an object is *immersed* in it.