

# CASE STUDY 3

## APPLYING THE ADVISORY STANDARD – TRANSFER FROM WHEELCHAIR TO TOILET

The following is an example of the risk management process undertaken for the task of transferring a student from a wheelchair to toilet. The case study includes examples of the documentation that can be kept and further detail to illustrate the thought processes undertaken. The level of detail recorded in this document is an example and would not be required for all manual handling activities.

The level of documentation will vary according to the complexity of the manual handling activity. The records you keep should be adequate to assist you review the process when required. (Please refer to *HS-12 Manual Handling of Students* <http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/doem/healthsa/healthsa.html> ).

You can review 'Sample Risk Assessment No 2: Transfer of Student wheelchair to toilet' in the *Manual Handling of Students Resource Package* while reading through this case study.

### CASE STUDY INFORMATION

#### THE STUDENT

- 10 years old and weighs approximately 40 kg.
- Currently using a wheelchair for mobility.
- Can transfer from sitting to standing if given verbal prompts and physical assistance.
- When standing is able to hold rails for support but requires constant supervision and assistance to maintain balance and grasp on the rails.
- Easily distracted and requires regular verbal prompting to maintain attention to the task
- Has some behavioural problems associated with bathroom activities; is often reluctant to participate.
- The student is new to the school.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKERS

- History of back and shoulder problems (2 back injuries last year).
- Have voiced concerns to management about the physical demands of toileting students
- Perform a number of other handling tasks throughout the day.
- Guidance on the requirement for two person transfers is not outlined in policy or procedures

#### LOCATION

- The school has some facilities for students with physical disabilities however toilet design is poor and cramped.
- The area immediately outside the cubicles is used as an access way and for storage.
- Toilet chair is not readily available

## THE PROCESS

### IDENTIFICATION PHASE

**STEP 1: Breakdown the activity into smaller components so all the steps can be considered.**  
The table below is also shown on the first page of the sample risk assessment document.

*Table 1- Breaking down the activity of 'Assisting with Toileting' into small components*

<b>Components</b>	
1. Position wheelchair close to toilet	a. Manoeuvre wheelchair b. Lock brakes and move footplates out of the way
2. Assist student to stand	a. Assist student to lean forward in preparation for standing b. Transfer student to standing position
3. Support student while undressing (student uses grab rail to assist)	a. Manoeuvre student close to rails b. Remove clothes while providing postural support to student
4. Lower student to toilet	a. Manoeuvre student close to toilet b. Lower student
5. Ensure student remains safe and secure while toileting	a. Provide postural support to prevent student from falling.
6. Attend to student's hygiene	a. Provide postural support to prevent student from falling while attending to student's personal needs.
7. Assist student to stand	a. Assist student to lean forward in preparation for standing b. Transfer student to standing position
8. Support student while re-dressing (student uses grab rail to assist)	a. Manoeuvre student close to rails b. Dress student while providing postural support
9. Lower student into wheelchair	a. Manoeuvre student close to wheelchair b. Lower student into wheelchair

### STEP 2: Identify the direct risk factors and then identify the contributing and modifying risk factors

Refer to Page 2 of the sample document - the **direct** risk factors are listed in column 2 and the **contributing** and **modifying** risk factors for each of the components are shown in Column 3. You can use a checklist to help identify risk factors.

*Risk Factors Checklist* and *Risk Factors Factsheet* are available in the Manual Handling of Students Resource Package.

The **direct risk factors** for each component are identified first. If no direct risk factors are present, there is significantly less risk associated with the activity and there may be no need to proceed with assessing the activity.

The **contributing and modifying** risk factors associated with each component are identified next. Identifying these factors assists to determine suitable control measures.

## ASSESSMENT PHASE

### STEP 3: Determine the level of risk associated with each component and the overall task.

The Risk Priority Chart from the Advisory Standard (Appendix 8) was used to assist with this stage. This Risk Priority Chart is included on page 1 of the sample risk assessment. The experience and advice of a small group of people is also useful in the assessment phase. The desired outcome of this risk assessment is a prioritised list of people handling components that require control.

For each component:

1. Estimate the likelihood of an incident occurring. (bear in mind existing control measures).
2. Estimate the consequences of an incident occurring (bear in mind existing control measures).
3. Use the Risk Priority chart to rate the likelihood and consequence estimates.

An estimate of the likelihood and consequences of each component is shown in Columns 4,5 & 6 of the sample assessment.

Using these ratings, the **components that have the 'lowest score' are the highest priority for action**. The "scores" from the risk priority chart can be used to rank the components in order of priority.

The highest priority components in this task are:

- 'Transfer student to standing position',
- 'Remove/Dress clothes while supporting student', and
- 'Lower Student'.

It is important to consider these components first for control measures as these parts of the task pose the greatest risk of injury for the staff

## CONTROL PHASE

### STEP 4: Select suitable controls.

When choosing and implementing controls, consult with the staff involved in the activity. They usually offer practical ideas and will also be more likely to accept changes if they have been involved in the planning stages.

In deciding on appropriate controls, preference should be given to **design controls** over administrative controls. Long term and interim measures will also need to be considered.

The information in chapter 7 of the People Handling Advisory Standard provides suggestions on possible control measures linked to the risk factors.

*While completing the risk assessment part of the process it might be useful to record all your ideas for controls without placing any restrictions on your suggestions (for example cost, time commitment etc). These controls can then be discussed with a group of relevant people to determine how viable they are in your school. These ideas can also be very useful to modify or develop into different control measures that are realistic for your site and students.*

Final ideas for control measures are listed in the last column of the sample assessment.

The Summary Control Plan (last page) can be used to:

- summarise the outcomes of the assessment - prioritise controls that need to be implemented now
- note expected time frames to implement controls
- nominate specific tasks for people to undertake
- provide succinct information to your principal to assist with negotiating for funds, purchase of equipment etc

### STEP 5: Implement chosen controls

The following implementation process is one method to ensure control measures are successfully implemented. Plans often need to be altered – so it is economical to trial options prior to committing large amounts of funds or staff time.

#### a) Trial of control options

A small group of staff considered:

- current design of toilet cubicles,
- current designs of toilet chairs, and
- the possibility of using immediate area outside the cubicles as additional toileting space.

It was confirmed that the toilet cubicle did not have enough room for equipment **and** two people to assist the student.

Toilet chairs were assessed in terms of;

- suitability for the task,
- safety considerations,
- ease of operation by the workers, and
- space requirements.

Two types of toilet chairs were trialled for two weeks each. Based on the feedback of the trial and evaluation process, XYZ toilet chair (an over the toilet chair on wheels) was chosen and two were placed on the requisition list for purchase within the school term (based on budget).

A review of the area immediately outside the toilet cubicles was reviewed to use for the transfers between wheelchair and a toilet chair. Furniture and equipment was rearranged, privacy curtains hung and this 'mock up' arrangement was trialled for two weeks. Staff were consulted before setting up the trial and trained in the use of toilet chairs.

#### **b) Revise controls**

The trial showed that by closing off all the area immediately outside the toilet cubicles, access between rooms was now lost and inconvenient for staff. Storage space was also lost which created other problems by storing equipment in the classrooms.

The working group determined that the best design measure would be to increase the size of cubicles so equipment *and* two workers could be accommodated comfortably. As this was a long term strategy an interim measure was implemented. One cubicle with an outside area designated for transfers between wheelchair and toilet chair remained.

#### **c) Develop work procedures and provide training**

A plan was prepared which outlined the most appropriate procedure for assisting a student with toileting. The decision on whether a second person was required for a transfer was based on an assessment - not on an ad hoc basis. Workers were advised about the chosen control measures. Procedures were documented. Staff received training in the new procedures and with new equipment. Supervisors were advised of their responsibility to ensure all workers followed the documented work procedure for assisting with students' toileting.

#### **d) Maintenance**

A maintenance schedule was developed for all manual handling equipment. Relevant staff were instructed in undertaking basic maintenance. An information sheet was developed for parents in relation to required maintenance of wheelchairs.

## **REVIEW**

A review of the task to ensure the effectiveness of the measures was scheduled for 3 weeks after the new procedures were implemented. Workers were asked to provide feedback at any time in relation to the implemented control measures and any new risks.