

Policy Name	Children in the Workplace
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SUMMARY

As an employer committed to equal opportunity, the West Daly Regional Council supports its employees to balance the various demands they face with family, social and community responsibilities. The Council understands that childcare arrangements can break down and there may occasionally be the need for staff to bring their children into the workplace.

However, it is a firm Council policy that children should only be brought temporarily to an office work area when all other possible initiatives have been considered. Under no circumstances should children be brought into any other council work area other than an office. In these circumstances, employees are to follow the steps outlined in the procedure.

The Chief Executive Officer has authority as the *Local Government Act* to "appoint, manage and where necessary, terminate the appointment of Council staff".

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Council's Responsibilities

Under the *NT Work Health and Safety Act* all employers have a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of all employees in the workplace. This extends to making sure there is no unnecessary risk of exposure to infectious diseases or other hazards. There is also a responsibility to ensure the safety of others who come into the workplace including children of employees.

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2. Employee's Responsibilities

All employees need to be aware that what constitutes a safe work environment with appropriate safeguards for employees may not be equally safe for children. For this reason, any employee that brings a child to the workplace are directly responsible for their supervision at all times. Paper shredders, metal scissors, staplers, photo copiers, guillotines are all commonplace in an office situation where employees are trained in their use, but that can constitute a threat to a child's safety. There are also many restricted areas including storerooms, kitchens, construction sites, and other areas where toxic or hazardous substances are kept. In such an environment, there is not only a risk to the child, but a potential risk to other people as a result of the actions of a child. Further, there is a potential risk of damage to Council property and consequently allowing children to use equipment such as photocopiers or computers should be avoided.

Council does have liability insurance covering its properties and employees but all employees who bring children onto Council premises do so entirely at their own, and their children's risk. Before seeking to bring a child in the workplace, employees should be encouraged to explore other options, such as care by a neighbour etc. Most importantly they should first seek permission from their Manager before bringing a child to work.

Council provides leave to cover a variety of situations. For instance, if a child becomes ill, Sick and Carer's leave is available. An employee must not threaten the health of other employees by exposure to a sick child. Where childcare arrangements break down at the last minute flexible working hours may be negotiated.

3. Manager's Responsibility

A Manager should treat requests for children to be in the workplace sensitively and make a decision on a case by case basis having regard to the reason for the request and current work conditions. The Manager must be satisfied that the child will be supervised by the care giver at all times and that having a child in the workplace is on a temporary basis only.

Where a risk is later identified, where the child becomes disruptive or it is not being adequately supervised, the Manager has the right to ask that the carer responsible to remove the child from the workplace. The Manager should ensure that a child being present in the workplace is not an ongoing arrangement, and in each case, there is justifiable cause not to organise alternative arrangements for the child.

4. Seeking Approval

Bringing young children, especially babies or toddlers into the workplace should be an action of last resort. Efforts should be made to seek appropriate alternatives such as care by a neighbour while the parent is required to work. Employees are required to request permission from their Manager on each occasion that they bring a child into the workplace. The Manager can decide whether it is appropriate that the child be allowed to be on the premises. Employees must understand that when permission is granted, having a child in the workplace is only temporary due to difficult circumstances and should not be for more than one day at a time. Should the Manager consider the workplace is too dangerous for the child, then the employee involved will have to absent themselves from the workplace utilising leave credits as may be applicable.

5. Supervision of Children

At all times children under the age of 16 years remain the sole responsibility of their parent/carer while in any Council workplace. Employees are fully responsible for the behaviour and actions of their children whilst on the premises. Such supervision must be able to prevent accidents.

Parents/carers must:

- Continually assess the risks to which their children are/could be subjected and attempt to minimise these.
- Take into account that children will be unfamiliar with the working environment.
- Accompany their children at all times.

The Manager has the right to ask for the removal from the premises of children who are disruptive in any way to the work of other staff, visitors or contractors.

6. Workplace areas that are prohibited to children.

All children under the age of 16 years are prohibited at all times in the following areas unsupervised:

- Kitchens
- Staff (rest) rooms
- Storage cupboards
- Any areas where chemicals, dyes, cleaning fluids and any other potentially hazardous substances are in use or stored
- Any areas where tools or machinery are located or used – even when these are not in use.

7. Application of this policy.

This policy applies across all Council premises, including car parks and other outdoor areas. Children must not be left alone in parked vehicles.

8. Facilities and Equipment

Children are not permitted to use any Council equipment including computer equipment.

9. Exceptions to Policy

This policy does not apply to the children of staff attending organised events where they are the responsibility of their school or other institution.

TERMINOLOGY AND REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Local Government Industry Award

Local Government Act

Work Health Safety Legislation

Fair Work Act

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Human Resource Advisor

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