

OHS Consultation and Communication Procedure

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1. Purpose:

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the consultative and communication arrangements across all Department of Education and Training (the Department) workplaces.

2. Scope:

This procedure applies to all Department workplaces, including schools and central and regional offices.

3. Procedure

All Department workplaces must have effective systems in place to ensure that all employees (including Health and Safety Representatives) are consulted and communicated with when OHS decisions are made.

3.1. Consultation and

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The Workplace establish (HSR) and making any relation to these

- decisions made on measures taken to eliminate or control workplace risks
- review of workplace risk assessments
- decisions made about the adequacy of workplace facilities
- changes to procedures for monitoring workplace risks
- proposed changes to the work premises, systems of work, plant or substances used at the workplace
- decisions about changes in job role
- decisions about consultation procedures and any legislative requirements.

Where the information required to be disclosed is confidential (e.g. medical reports, personal records etc.) the Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee should seek legal

Department schools and workplaces to establish Designated Work Group(s) (whole workplace by default)

Communication Arrangements

Arrangement

Department schools to review consultation and communication arrangements, every three years or as required

legal requirement Act 2004. Effective consultation with important to engaging maintaining and and healthy

Elect and train a Health and Safety Representative

Consultation under the and timely employees employees improving workplaces.

Manager and/or Management OHS consultative arrangements with Health and

Nominee must Safety Representatives

Implement an agreed OHS Issue Resolution Process

decision OHS in include:

Determine consultaion and communications forums (e.g. staff meeting and OHS Notice Board).

or change in the workplace,

• identification and assessment of

workplace hazards or risks

assistance before deciding to disclose the information.

The Department will consult and communicate with internal and external stakeholders on matters affecting state-wide health and safety as determined by Part 4 of the OHS Act 2004 and in accordance with the main objectives of the Department's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

3.1.2 Communication Requirements

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** must communicate the following information to employees:

- existing OHS practices and systems
- changes to current OHS practices and systems
- outcomes of workplace inspections.

This would include communicating specific elements of the OHSMS including:

- the workplace risk profile ([OHS Risk Register](#))
- the Department's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- completed Risk Assessments and Safe Work Procedures (SWP)
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for chemicals
- emergency processes e.g. evacuation plan, incident controller details, etc.

3.2. Implementing Communication and Consultation Processes

3.2.1. Establishment of Designated Work Groups

A designated work group (DWG) is a group of employees in the workplace who share similar workplace health and safety concerns and conditions.

In Victorian Government schools a DWG is defined as the whole workplace as a default. However, based on the specifics of the workplace (e.g. in a multi-campus secondary school), the DWG structure may altered to suit that environment (e.g. one DWG for each campus).

If requested to do so by an employee, the **Workplace Manager** must initiate a consultation process to determine if alterations are required to the default DWG structure. This process must commence within fourteen days of the request.

The number of DWGs is to be determined by negotiation and must consider:

- the number of employees at the workplace
- the nature of work performed
- the number and grouping of employees who perform the same or similar role
- the areas at the workplace where each type of work is performed
- the nature of hazards and level of risk at the workplace.

3.2.2. Health and Safety Representatives

A Health and Safety Representative (HSR) is an employee who has been elected by the members of their Designated Work Group (DWG) to represent them, providing a way for their views and concerns about health and safety to be heard by their employer.

If a workplace has an elected HSR, the **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** must consult with the HSR by:

- providing the HSR with all the OHS information about the matter that the employer is or intending to provide employees

- providing the information to the HSR in a reasonable timeframe, where practicable before distributing to all employees
- meeting with the HSR if an invitation to meet is accepted or if a meeting is requested by the HSR
- inviting the HSR to meet to consult about the OHS matter
- giving the HSR a reasonable opportunity to express their views about the matter
- taking into account the HSR views about the matter.

Please refer to the [Health and Safety Representative Guide](#) for further details about HSRs including:

- electing a HSR
- HSR powers and responsibilities
- HSR training requirements
- Provisional Improvement Notices.

3.2.3. Determining Appropriate Communication Forums

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee**, in consultation with employees, must determine which communication strategies are most appropriate for their workplace.

As a minimum, the workplace must establish:

- An employee forum, or forums, (e.g. staff meeting) where OHS is discussed as a standing agenda item. This forum/s is to occur at least once a month.
- An OHS Notice Board that contains the mandatory items (as per the [OHS Notice Board Guide](#)).

Additional communication strategies could include:

OHS Committee	An OHS committee is formal structure where employers and employees that discusses and makes decisions on OHS matters. Refer to the OHS Committee Guide .
OHS Working Group	An OHS Working Group is a less formal meeting of employee and management representatives that discusses and makes decisions on OHS matters. The meeting can occur either on a scheduled basis or as required.
Email update	An email to all employees that contains OHS information. This system can be sent on scheduled basis or as required.
Newsletter	A printed or electronic newsletter available to all employees that contains OHS information. This system can be sent on scheduled basis or as required.
Intranet	A dedicated OHS section of an intranet. This section could contain OHS updates, documents and calendars and links to the Department's OHSMS.

3.3. OHS Issue Resolution

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** are to implement an agreed OHS issue resolution process. The [OHS Issue Resolution Flowchart](#) must be used if an agreed

process does not exist. The agreed process or *OHS Issue Resolution Flowchart* is to be communicated to all employees and displayed prominently in the workplace.

4. Defined terms

All terms defined by the Department are hyperlinked to the [Department's Defined Health and Safety Terms](#) website. Defined roles will appear **in bold**.

5. Related Legislation:

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017

6. Checklist

Tasks/Actions	Completed ✓
Are there established DWG(s)?	
Is there an elected and trained a Health and Safety Representative?	
Has OHS been added as a standing agenda in staff meetings?	
Has the workplaces decided an OHS Committee is required? If yes, is an OHS Committee Charter been agreed to and signed?	
Is there an agreed to OHS Issue Resolution Process?	
Have you established an OHS Notice Board with all mandatory items displayed?	

7. Related documentation:

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Health, Safety and Representative Guide

OHS Committee Guide

OHS Activities Calendar

OHS Issue Resolution Flowchart

OHS Notice Board Guide

OHS Risk Register

8. Further assistance

Further information, advice or assistance is available by contacting the OHS Advisory Service on ph. 1300 074 715 or email safety@edumail.vic.gov.au.