



RISK MANAGEMENT

Programmed experiences providing a range of sport and active recreation activities for people with disabilities are great for personal development and the development of skills, they may also involve an element of risk.

If participants are hurt where the risk of injury is unreasonably high, or reasonable precautions have not been taken, a leader may be found negligent in their duty of care to a participant. The law of negligence requires leaders to act reasonably.

How does a leader decide what is reasonable? Common sense and experience in working with people with disabilities is the best guide in deciding what is reasonable.

In segregated experiences, leaders usually determine the program and organise activities, taking into account the abilities of participants. At integrated programs the activity program is usually organised and the leader assists participants with a disability to participate as fully as possible. In both situations, before assisting your participant to take part, first consider the level of risk for the participant involved. The following guide will help you to determine the level of risk. Any activity that is more than of a low-risk, should be discussed with the Program Manager/Coordinator, who will weigh up the risks against the advantages, and the precautions to be taken.

It is important to prepare an activity plan outlining proposed activities, the people involved and any special precautions you consider necessary. This plan should be discussed with the Program Manager/Coordinator who will advise as to the appropriateness of participating in certain activities.

The activity plan should include:



Day to day timetable of activities;



The participant's limitations, including maturity, previous experience and skill level;



Emergency procedures that are to be followed in the event of an emergency;



Special precautions that will be taken;



List of equipment to be used; and



Medical information.

No one is expected to foresee the unforeseeable, only to take reasonable precautions considering both the activity and the particular participants involved. What is safe for one participant may not be safe for another and their physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition should be taken into account.

The Department of Health & Human Services (Vic) provide the following guide to assessing the risk level of activities. These are to be used as a guide but not to restrict individual's participation if they have the skill and ability to participate.

Preparation required for low risk activities:

- Check medical information forms;
- Check and have on hand emergency medical information forms;
- Check participant's medical records with them and their parents/ caregivers;
- Check that the first aid, safety and activity equipment is in satisfactory condition;
- Brief, instruct and prepare participant for the activity; and
- List and have available the necessary emergency contacts (Police, State Emergency Service, Park Manager/Ranger).

Preparation required for moderate to high risk activities:

- Check medical information forms;
- Check and have on hand emergency medical information forms;
- Check participant's medical records with them and their parents/ caregivers;
- Check that the first aid, safety and activity equipment is in satisfactory condition;
- Ensure staff delivering program hold appropriate qualifications and/or experience for each activity;
- Brief, instruct and prepare participants for the activity;
- List and have available the necessary emergency contacts (Police, State Emergency Services); and
- Obtain parents/care givers consent on a form, or at least make sure that parents/ caregivers are fully informed of the range of activities that the participant will be involved in during the program.
- Careful consideration should be given to including these activities as part of a sport or active recreation program.

It is almost impossible for any leader to be aware of all the characteristics and implications present in working with individuals with disabilities. The abilities of people with a similar disability may vary greatly from one person to another. It is not possible and also not appropriate to have a set of clear guidelines that outline the precautions, procedures and liabilities that relate to participants with a particular impairment. These will need to be determined for each individual and will be dependent on the participant's previous experiences, abilities and limitations due to impairment and their life experiences.

However there are broad general principles that apply in determining what precautions and procedures should be observed and the legal liabilities that may apply.

LOW RISK ACTIVITIES:

- Ball games
- General games
- Swimming (in a pool)
- Volleyball
- Cooking
- Athletics
- Aerobics
- Team Sports
- Bowling
- Cricket
- Basketball
- Fishing (except rock fishing)
- Football
- Golf
- Tennis

LOW RISK ACTIVITIES:

- Bushwalking
- Canoeing
- Carnival rides/Luna Park
- Horse riding
- Camp fires
- Ice skating/Roller skating
- Rope course
- Snow activities
- Swimming (in natural water)
- Trampolining
- Rock climbing/abseiling
- Archery
- Dingy sailing
- Scuba diving
- Water skiing
- Board Sailing
- Bushwalking (if overnight)
- Cycling tours (if overnight)
- Snorkelling

UNACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES:

- Shooting
- Kick boxing
- Boxing
- Martial arts



General principles that apply for preparation for a group to participate in special activities:

1. KNOW THE GROUP



Find out as much as possible about the group participating in the program as you can. Coordinators and parents or caregivers are a great source of information in understanding how the specific disability affects the individuals. Know the participant's previous experience in the activity or similar activity. Talk to the participant to determine their motivations for participation in the activity.

2. KNOW THE ACTIVITY



Be well briefed on the skills of the activity and be competent in the use of these skills. Understand the components of the activity so that you can teach them to someone else. Refer to the Adventure Activity Standards for further information relating to the delivery of outdoor recreation activities – www.outdoorsvictoria.org.au

3. KNOW THE EQUIPMENT



Understand the equipment required for an activity and how the equipment works. This includes the equipment required for protection and safety. Protection and safety equipment may include helmets, personal flotation devices, or knee and arm guards.

4. CLOTHING



Know about the appropriate clothing required for an activity, for example:

- Warm and water proof clothing for activities in the snow;
- Wet suits or life jackets for a range of aquatic activities; and
- Protective clothing for a range of contact activities.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The physical and emotional health and safety of all participants should be the key consideration with everything that we do during sport and active recreation programs. It is important that we understand the health and safety needs of a participant and that we ensure that facilities and activities at the program do not jeopardise these. The best way to avoid this is to be prepared and know the participants.

The main sources of danger that may threaten the health and safety of participants can be minimised by careful planning, preparation and by establishing simple rules. Using common sense usually enables us to work rationally through a difficult situation.

While each organisation will have their own set of specific health and safety guidelines, some general principles include:

- **Anticipation:** Implementing simple procedures and rules can reduce certain risks. For example, only one person at a time is to use the trampoline and they are to be supervised by a leader at all times.
- **Preparation:** Carefully set up or check equipment and resources before participants use them and remove any hazards. For example, check the depth and current of water and scale the bottom of a river for debris and snags before participants swim there.
- **Clear, simple rules:** Some rules are required for safety and provide the boundaries in which leaders and participants operate. The fewer and simpler they are, the easier they are to adhere to.
- **Demonstration:** Leaders should demonstrate at all times the behaviour expected of participants. For example, if participants are advised not to run in the indoor facilities, then the leaders must make sure that they do not run.
- **Supervision:** Participants should never be left on their own and should be supervised at all times. Some activities will require greater supervision and it is important to ensure that this supervision is available before attempting such an activity.

SUN SMART POLICY

Some useful sun smart tips

- Watch the clock - try to limit time in direct sun between 10am and 4pm.
- Make a statement with shades, hat and a long sleeve t-shirt.
- Block the sun year round - it is possible to burn all year, even in the snow so don't forget to block the sun, to have fun all year round.
- Always gain permission from parent/caregivers before applying sunscreen to a participant. Be aware of allergies to creams, sprays etc.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30+ - apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going out in the sun and after swimming, sweating or towelling off.
- Remember your ears, nose, neck, tops of your feet and hands - they may seem small but they can really burn.
- Waterproof your skin while swimming - use waterproof sunscreen.

To check the daily UV levels go to
www.sunsmart.com.au or www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv

WATER ACTIVITIES

Any activities that take place in or near water require thorough supervision. The ratio of leaders to participants will vary according to the situation, activity, participant skill and safety concerns.

Information about individual participant's requirements with regard to water activities will be included on the participant information form. Be aware of these and ensure that they are adhered to. Life jackets must be worn on all watercraft.

For further information on staff: student ratios and more about education programs around water safety see the following links:

<http://www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au/www/html/1693-open-water-learning-experience.asp?intSiteID=1>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

BEACH ACTIVITIES

Wherever possible, go to a beach area where life-saving club members are on duty and let them know of the groups' presence. Only swim in designated areas, supervised by the life saving club.

Leaders should discuss their supervisory role and decide who will be keeping an eye on each participant. Participants will tend to want to go in all directions, which could make supervision difficult. Consider the participant's medication requirements and the impact that water activities may have.

For further information on beach safety and patrolled beaches see the following links:

<http://sls.com.au>

<http://www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au/www/html/7-home-page.asp>

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Know the procedures for the following incidents should they occur. Prior to the program establish meeting and assembly areas in case of emergencies.

In all emergencies it is important to:

- ensure that all participants are supervised and accounted for;
- ensure that everyone; manager/coordinator, director and leaders are aware of the situation;
- Contact the organisation manager/coordinator;
- Contact appropriate local emergency services; and
- Ensure that the incident is recorded in the Incident Report Form/Book and that all actions are documented.

For injuries such as severe cuts and wounds, broken bones, head and back injuries, refer to the first aid coordinator on the program who will instruct you on appropriate procedures to be implemented.

FIRE AWARENESS

All leaders should be aware of fire risk, particularly during the summer period and understand the procedures to be adopted in the case of a fire, at the facility, campsite or in the surrounding bush area. A fire may be avoided by following simple precautions:

- Ensure that matches and lighters are kept well away from participants who may pocket them and experiment with them at a later stage.
- Listen to media announcements to be aware of expected weather conditions and proclamation of days of 'Total Fire Ban'. Make sure that no fires are lit on these days.
- Gas and liquid fuel appliances commonly used on programs can be a hazard. Ensure that they are maintained and correctly used.
- Ensure that fire extinguishers and hoses are maintained and not tampered with.
- When lighting a fire for cooking or camp sing-along, make sure that the fire is always attended and put out after use.
- If camping or participating in an activity in a bush area, contact the local fire authority. Alert them to the intended program and provide them with information about the size of the group and duration of the program.

Leaders should discuss and be familiar with:

- Fire fighting equipment on site, the position of fire hoses, types of extinguishers and their uses and knapsacks.
- Procedures in case of fire: fire alarms; checking buildings; accounting for each participant.
- Responsibilities of director, leaders, camp supervisors.
- Shelter and evacuation procedures.
- Emergency procedures at the venue/campsite they are attending.

For further information on fire safety see the following links:

www.cfa.vic.gov.au

www.mfb.vic.gov.au/index.html

FLOODS

Listen to media announcements to be aware of expected weather conditions and proclamation of days of heavy rainfall.

Follow the following procedures if caught in a flood:

- Remain in the building (if it is safe and secure) and keep clear of building access points.
- Be aware of the danger of ceiling collapse if roof spaces become flooded.
- If camping or participating in an activity in a bush area, contact the local SES authority and your manager/coordinator. Alert them to the intended program and provide them with information about the size of the group and duration of the program.
- Follow the instructions of relevant emergency services personnel at the venue.
- Evacuate the building only if instructed to do so by emergency services personnel and assist with the evacuation of those with a disability.
- If evacuation is ordered, move to the nominated evacuation assembly area, and do not leave the evacuation assembly area until advised to do so.

MISSING PARTICIPANT

The provision of an appropriate ratio of leaders for participants would make it difficult for a participant to be left behind at a program. Unfortunately there have been a number of cases where this has occurred and it has not been realised until the participants are returned to their caregiver/parent. This situation creates a great amount of stress for everyone concerned, particularly the participant.

It is important for the leaders to check and double check that their group is on the bus both when travelling to a camp or activity site or from a site. The Coordinator also has the responsibility to check that all participants are accounted for during the activity i.e. after a lunch break. There is no excuse for participants being left unattended.

Where a participant is left behind and is harmed in any way, physically or emotionally, during this time of being unattended, the organisation is liable and a claim for damages can be made against the organisation.

Although it sounds difficult to do, experience shows that it is easy to leave a participant behind. Leaders need to be extremely diligent in this area of their responsibility.

Some participants have the propensity to wander away from groups and leaders. This can be in an isolated bush setting, in a busy shopping mall or even in the middle of the night. Coordinators and parents/caregivers will usually alert the leader if their person is inclined to wander off.

If a participant is not accounted for and assumed to have wandered off, communicate with other leaders and the coordinator immediately and develop a strategy for searching for the participant. Ensure that all participants are adequately supervised before leaders are allocated to assist in the search. Often the participant is not far away and is readily located.

In cases where a participant is not located within five minutes of a search it is important to implement an emergency action and secure assistance from appropriate services to assist and notify relevant authorities. It is important to be particularly diligent in areas with hazards such as water or heavy traffic.

In allowing for the need for independence of the participant, a leader may arrange for the participant to participate in activities at which the leader may not be present. It is important not to assume that the participant is going to be safe. Arrangements need to be made with other leaders to ensure that the participant is supervised at all times. A leader must be aware of this participant's whereabouts and activities at all time. Do not assume that another leader will automatically be providing supervision, it is important to request for this supervision to occur.