

SNAKE AWARENESS AND FIRST AID POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clearly provide:

- A definition of the risk of snakes at Newport Lakes and other local parklands
- Guidelines for dealing with the presence of snakes and preventing snake bites
- The appropriate medical response to snake bites
- A framework for the appropriate education and training of children, staff and parents/guardians on minimising the risk of snake bite.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Home Road Kindergarten is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children, staff and volunteers participating in all programs with Home Road Kindergarten (3 and 4 year old Kindergarten, including Bush Kinder)
- Being respectful of wildlife in and around Newport Lakes or other local parklands, including an awareness of the presence of snakes in the area during the warmer months
- Facilitating appropriate communication and education to staff, parents/guardians and children to minimise the risk of injury from a snake bite during Kindergarten sessions (including Bush Kinder).

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to children, parents/guardians, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Home Road Kindergarten during all programs (3 and 4 year old Kindergarten and Bush Kinder program).

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Home Road Kindergarten's programs include sessions where the children visit or are conducted in community parklands in which it is known that snakes inhabit.

Unprovoked, snakes rarely attack humans and are generally shy, timid animals that will avoid conflict if given the opportunity. It is recommended that particular care be taken in warm weather, near long grass or hollow logs, near water or near rocks in sunny positions.

Snakes are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic), and should not be harmed or killed. Bites can occur if people try to kill snakes.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law 2010 (Vic)*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Codes,*
- *First Aid in the Workplace (2008)*
- *Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic)*

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Australian Venom Research Unit (AVRU): is an internationally recognised, disciplinary research unit focused on the problem of venomous injury in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. Located within Melbourne University, the Australian Venom Research Unit aims to provide world-class expertise on the problem of Australia's venomous creatures, their toxins and the care of the envenomed patient.

Nominated Aid Officer: In accordance with the *Administration of First Aid Policy*, the Approved Provider should appoint a staff member present at Bush Kinder and other local parklands to be the nominated first aid officer. This is a legislative requirement where there are 10 or more employees but is also considered best practice where there are fewer than 10 employees.

Pressure Immobilisation Bandage (also known as Compression Bandage): Bandage used for the purpose of applying pressure to the site of a wound such as a snake bite and to the affected limb. Refer to definition below of Pressure Immobilisation Technique.

Pressure Immobilisation Technique: The technique of pressure-immobilisation bandaging as a first aid measure is to prevent the spread of toxins through the body. This is done by applying enough pressure to compress the lymph vessels, and by preventing movement of the affected limb. Correct application of the technique can buy valuable time to get the patient to medical assistance.

Victorian Poisons Information Centre (VPIC): Located at the Austin Hospital, the role of the VPIC is to provide the people of Victoria with a timely, safe information service in poisonings and suspected poisonings. For members of the public this includes telephone assessment, advice on first aid, with or without referral to a doctor or hospital. Information is given to health professionals about formulations of products and management of poisoned patients.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED CENTRE POLICIES

Sources

- Bites and Stings web resource, Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health (www.austin.org.au)
- Australian Venom Research Institute (University of Melbourne) www.avru.org

Centre Policies

- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Clothing Policy*
- *Bush Kinder - Emergency Evacuation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Supplying a First Aid Kit for Bush Kinder, excursions and regular local outings to administer first aid in response to snake bites or for any other purpose, including Pressure Immobilisation Bandages for medical treatment of snake bites
- Ensuring staff are appropriately educated on procedures to prevent snake bites and to deliver First Aid in response to a snake bite in accordance with their first aid training, and using correct Pressure Immobilisation Technique
- Ensuring all staff have completed First Aid training
- Appointing the Kindergarten Teacher as the Nominated First Aid Officer for each Bush Kinder session, excursion or regular local outing as per the *Administration of First Aid Policy*

- Ensuring all procedures are followed as set out in the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* including notice of notifiable incidents, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, maintaining first aid kit etc.
- Encouraging parents, through this policy, to teach children snake bite prevention behaviours outside of kindergarten (for example, on family walks in the bush).

The Nominated Supervisor and all other staff are responsible for:

- Liaising with the HBCC Ranger about any reported snake sightings at Newport Lakes and other local parklands
- Ensuring that the Kindergarten Teacher is aware that they are the Nominated First Aid Officer, as per the *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- Ensuring that all staff, parents/guardians and volunteers are aware that the Kindergarten Teacher is the Nominated First Aid Officer for each Bush Kinder session, excursion or regular local outings, as per the *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- Being trained in First Aid for snake bites (Appendix 2)
- Undertaking site inspections prior to the commencement of each Bush Kinder session, excursion or regular local outings
- Ensuring that participants in the Bush Kinder sessions, excursions or regular local outings avoid areas of long grass during the months of October to April
- Continually practicing and educating children on snake bite prevention behaviours (refer to Appendix 1) whilst at Bush Kinder, excursions or regular local outings, without fostering an unnatural fear or paranoia of snakes. This includes arranging for the HBCC Rangers to conduct snake education sessions with children and staff.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Teaching children safe snake bite prevention behaviours on an ongoing basis outside of Kindergarten (for example, on family walks in the bush)
- Reading and being familiar with this policy
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the Committee of Management will:

- Where deemed appropriate, encourage feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the program.
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any substantial changes to this policy, which would impact on the supervision or care of children.

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix 1: Snake Bite Prevention Behaviours
- Appendix 2: First Aid for Snake Bite

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Home Road Kindergarten on 11 March 2020.

REVIEW DATE: MARCH 2021

APPENDIX 1: SNAKE BITE PREVENTION BEHAVIOURS

(Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health)

- Leave snakes alone
- Wear adequate clothing and covered, sturdy shoes (not sandals/thongs) in 'snake country'
- Never put hands in hollow logs or thick grass without prior inspection
- When stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side
- Ensure children are reminded on a regular basis that if they encounter a snake, to stand still, back away quietly, and then report the sighting immediately to an adult
- In the event of a snake encounter at Bush Kinder, excursion or regular local outing, calmly move children away from the snake and then evacuate to the shelter in Newport Lakes Reserve as per the Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy, or if at local parklands, return to Home Road Kindergarten

APPENDIX 2: FIRST AID FOR SNAKE BITE

(Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health, and Australian Venom Research Institute, Melbourne University, Australian Resuscitation Council Guideline 9.4.8 Envenomation – Pressure Immobilisation Technique)

- Stay calm and call for help. Have an adult phone an ambulance. If unable to phone, send someone for help.
- Follow “Basic Life Support Flow Chart” DRSABCD as learnt in First Aid Training.
- Reassure the patient and encourage them to remain calm and still. Do not move the patient.
- Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake.
- DO NOT WASH / cut or suck venom from the bite. Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Traces of venom that are left on the skin can be used to identify the snake, and therefore the type of anti-venom that should be used if required.
- Apply the Pressure Immobilisation Technique (PIT):
 - if on a limb, apply a broad bandage (10 – 15cm) over the bite site as soon as possible. Use an elasticised bandage rather than a crepe bandage if available. Use clothing if neither available. The bandage should be firm and tight, you should not be able to easily slide a finger between the bandage and skin.
 - apply a further pressure bandage, starting at the fingers or toes of the bitten limb and extending upward covering as much as the limb as possible. This should be applied over existing clothing if possible.
 - if only one bandage is available, apply from the fingers or toes extending up the limb as far as possible, including the bite site.
 - splint the limb, including joints above and below the bite site to restrict limb movement. The splint can be incorporated under the layers of the bandage. Use a sling for the arm.
 - if the bite is not on a limb, apply firm direct pressure. Do not restrict breathing or chest movement and do not apply firm pressure to the head or neck.
- Keep patient still and under constant observation and be prepared to commence resuscitation.
- Staff are to follow procedures as set out in the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*, including contacting parent/guardian, calling ambulance etc.