

# Out of school hours care services sample skin protection policy information



## Recommendations

Cancer Council SA recommends that Out of school hours care (OSHC) implement a modified skin protection policy. Even though OSHC services for before and after school programs generally operate outside the peak danger period for ultraviolet radiation (UVR), it is still possible that children could receive skin damage if outside for extended periods during this time.

Cancer Council SA recommends people protect their skin at times when the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) level is 3 and above—this is in line with the recommendations of The World Health Organisation. With this in mind, the guidelines for South Australia are that a skin protection policy be in place from the beginning of September until the end of April and when the UVR is 3 and above outside of these times.

Ultraviolet radiation is generally low in the morning when Before School Hours Care Services operate and therefore skin protection is usually not needed. Depending on the location there will, however, be some occasions during summer when the UVR level will be above 3 from as early as 8.00 am so it is recommended that the daily UV Alert is checked.

The OSHC Quality Assurance system requires all OSHC Services to have a written skin protection policy that staff follow and actively implement. As reinforcing SunSmart behaviours in young people is important, services may decide to adapt the sample policy below for their After School Hours Care Service.

## OSHC services sample skin protection policy

### Rationale

Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world, with skin cancers accounting for around 80% of all new cancers diagnosed each year in Australia.

There are four factors, often occurring simultaneously, which contribute to these statistics:

- 1 The population is predominantly fair-skinned.
- 2 Ultraviolet light from the sun is strong enough to damage skin and cause skin cancer in this susceptible population.
- 3 For many years social values have supported the belief that a suntan is healthy and attractive.
- 4 Lifestyle, work, school and recreational habits expose

people to the sun for long periods.

Skin damage, including skin cancer, is the result of cumulative exposure to the sun. Much of the damage occurs during childhood and adolescence. Research suggests that severe sunburn is a contributor to skin cancer and other forms of skin damage such as wrinkles, sunspots, blemishes and premature ageing. Most skin damage and skin cancer is, therefore, preventable.

Schools and associated care services are ideally placed to help reduce the incidence of skin cancer and the number of related deaths by encouraging children and other members of the school and/or care service community to use effective skin protection.

### Implementation:

This skin protection policy has been developed to ensure that all children and staff attending the OSHC service are protected from skin damage caused by over exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

The policy will be implemented from the beginning of September until the end of April and when the UVR level is three and above, outside of these months. Particular care is to be taken over the middle of the day when UVR levels are at their strongest.

As part of general SunSmart strategies, our service will:

### Behaviour

- Require all children and staff to wear broad-brimmed, legionnaire or appropriate bucket hats whenever they are outside (baseball caps or sun visors will not be allowed).
- Actively encourage children to wear sun protective clothing i.e. shirts with a collar and elbow length sleeves (no singlet or mid-riff tops will be acceptable).
- Direct children to use available areas of shade for outdoor activities.
- Provide SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen for staff and children to use and/or encourage children to bring their own sunscreen from home.
- Actively encourage the daily application of sunscreen 15—20 minutes before going outside and encourage children to re-apply if outside for an extended period of time (around every two hours) or if involved in water play. Time to be allowed for this.
- Staff and carers to act as positive role models by routinely practising SunSmart behaviours by wearing

appropriate hats and clothing.

- For day and vacation care extra care is taken during the peak UV times and outside activities are scheduled earlier in the morning and later in the afternoon where possible. A combination of five skin protection measures (Slip! Slop! Slap! Seek! Slide!) should be encouraged when planning outdoor events (excursions, sporting and swimming activities.)

### **Communication**

- Ensure information in relation to the SunSmart policy is included in parent handbooks and other important documentation sent to parents.
- Display the SunSmart policy at the service for parents, and discuss it with the children.
- Regularly reinforce SunSmart behaviour in a positive way through correspondence with parents via the notice board and displays and through children and staff activities.

### **Environment**

- Organise outdoor activities in shaded areas wherever possible.

### **Education**

- Consider including games, activities and play experiences that incorporate the SunSmart message (see suggested activity list included).

### **Evaluation**

- The Director of the OSHC service is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and ensuring that it is followed.

Further information can be obtained from **Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20** or *www.cancersa.org.au*

updated September 2009