



Conducting home visits procedure

Version: 1.0 | Version effective: 12/07/2021

Audience

Department-wide

Purpose

This procedure outlines a process to ensure that health and safety risks are identified and controlled when conducting home visits. The process includes the requirements for how to plan, conduct and review a home visit.

Overview

A home visit includes the attendance of a department employee at the home of a student, their parent, an employee or another member of the school/local community. These visits may be necessary for educational, welfare, engagement or regulatory obligations. For non-regulatory purposes all alternatives are to be exhausted prior to a home visit being conducted. Examples of home visits include when employees:

- assess homes for student placement through [Education Queensland International \(EQI\)](#) (DoE employees only) International Student Programs (ISP)
- assess home day care providers to ensure qualifications are met and the home complies with [legislative requirements](#)
- support the educational outcomes of students through increased engagement and school attendance
- improve community engagement in school and/or workplace community (e.g. observing wellbeing, conduit between school/workplace and person at home).

A risk management approach is integral to this procedure and is used to identify and minimise health and safety risks associated with conducting home visits. The associated [Home visit risk management plan template](#) may be used to support identification and management of risks when conducting home visits.

Some business units may have local risk management templates or assessments. These units may choose to use these templates; however, must ensure that they include reasonable measures to address each of the process steps addressed in this procedure, in particular; hazard identification, risk assessment, determination of controls, a communication strategy and approval and review processes. A home visit is not to be undertaken if it has been identified or assessed that there is a high or extreme risk to employee safety.

It is recommended that any staff conducting home visits are to have appropriate experience and training and are classified as AO3 equivalent or above.

Responsibilities

Employees (conducting a home visit)

- ensure all alternatives have been exhausted prior to arranging a non-regulatory home visit
- ensure approvals are obtained prior to conducting a home visit
- consult with parent/guardian/carer and other relevant parties to communicate visit purpose prior to visit
- prepare an approved Home visit risk management plan, and follow the plan when conducting a home visit
- cease a home visit at any time, or do not conduct a home visit, if there are health and safety concerns
- ensure you have a current blue card or exemption card, unless otherwise covered by professional registration
- participate in training as identified by the principal, manager or supervisor
- wear school or departmental identification when conducting the home visit
- review all home visits (including incidents and lessons learned) with principal, manager or supervisor and ensure all records are appropriately maintained

Employee contact person

- ensure availability when the home visit is being conducted
- ensure communication requirements in the management plan are followed and implemented (including actions if scheduled contact is not made)

Principals, managers and supervisors (or delegate)

- endorse or reject home visit based on the prepared management plan (including a communication strategy)
- ensure consultation and coordination of risk management with any involved agency, e.g. Queensland Police Service (QPS)
- ensure a management plan is prepared and the included risk assessment includes any relevant information about associated risks or hazards that may occur to the employees conducting the home visit and that appropriate risk controls are identified and implemented
- ensure employees undertaking home visits relating to children/students have a current Blue card or Exemption card, unless otherwise covered by their professional registration
- ensure all employees required to conduct home visits have completed appropriate training (for the situation as determined through the risk assessment process)
- provide support in the event of harm or threat of harm to an employee (i.e. professional supervision, access to Employee Assistance Program) and report and manage according to the Health, safety and wellbeing incident management procedure.

Process

1. Conditional approval for a home visit

Principals, managers or supervisors (or delegate e.g. deputy principal):

- In consultation with employees ascertain whether an outcome can be achieved by means other than a home visit, if so this alternative strategy is to be used.
- If home visits are to be undertaken for a student/family/location determine whether:
 - a home visit is required due to regulatory requirements OR
 - a home visit is a component of a broader school engagement strategy
- Determine if employee is suitable to undertake home visit using the following recommended criteria:
 - employee is AO3 equivalent or above
 - conducting home visits is part of the employee's role description
 - employee has appropriate training and experience.

Note: if recommended criteria cannot be met the home visit must have comprehensive pre-screening and must be of low risk (e.g. assessment of a home by EQI for the international student placement program). Justification must be clearly recorded in the home visit risk management plan.

- Provide conditional approval to support the continued planning of the home visit.
- Support employees to develop, document and implement a home visit risk management plan that:
 - identifies hazards and risks
 - documents strategies (controls) to manage these risks
 - mandates a home visit will not to be conducted if there are risks to employee safety that cannot be adequately managed (i.e. high or extreme)
 - includes a communication strategy.

Note: a home visit risk management plan can be completed by using the [Home visit risk management plan template](#) or a business area template that contains the requirements outlined in this procedure.

Employees:

- Participate in activities to determine requirements for a home visit and other information needed for conditional approval of a home visit.

2. Identify hazards

Employees:

- Review any previous home visits to the family/location to identify any issues or incidents that may negatively impact on the health and safety of themselves and/or other employees.
- Complete a Home visit risk management plan to record identified hazards which can include the following;
 - [Home visit risk management plan template](#)
- OR

- Business area template that contains the requirements outlined in this procedure.
- Gather background information via relevant records and documents and gauge whether there is potential for harm to employees during a home visit.
- Contact parent/guardian/carer to:
 - discuss the purpose for a home visit
 - gain verbal consent to conduct the visit and record consent in the Home visit risk management plan
 - record any identified hazards (i.e. Part 2 of the [Home visit risk management plan template](#)) to allow risk assessment and management during the visit.
- Record the date, time and outcome of all conversations with a parent/guardian/carer and include in the Home visit risk management plan. Some business units may have additional record keeping requirements to meet and should follow additional local processes.
- When a home visit is to be conducted with another agency (e.g. QPS), ensure continued consultation and coordination of risk management with this agency.

Principals, managers or supervisors (or delegate e.g. deputy principal):

- Provide information of any known risks associated with the home visit to employees conducting the home visit. This information may be from previous home visits or other relevant records.
- Confirm verbal consent has been given by the parent/guardian/carer for a home visit to be conducted.

3. Assess the risks

Employees:

- Use Appendix 1: Risk matrix of the [Home visit risk management plan template](#)) to assess the likelihood and consequences of the hazards associated with the home visit causing an incident or injury. For further information on assessing risks refer to the department's [Enterprise risk management procedure](#).
- Confidentially and without judgement, consult with other employees who have had previous contact with the family (i.e. admissions officer or teacher) to ascertain if the assessment is accurate/reasonable.
- Record the risk assessment in the Home visit risk management plan.

4. Determine controls

Employees:

- Determine controls to reduce risks to as low as reasonably practicable using the [hierarchy of controls](#) in order to determine the most effective control options.
- Do not conduct a home visit if it has been determined that there is a high or extreme risk to employee safety after controls.
- Liaise with other agencies as applicable to determine appropriate support requirements.
- Record all controls in the Home visit risk management plan and ensure the following risk controls for all home visits are included:

- communication strategy to maintain contact with the employee(s) throughout the home visit, refer to Part 3: Communication plan in the [Home visit risk management plan template](#)
- two employees to complete all initial home visits (employee numbers for subsequent visits to be determined by assessed risk)
- complete visits during business hours or during daylight hours if possible

Note: any variations to these options are to be included in a risk assessment and provisions made accordingly. For example, if an employee is attending a home visit alone the visit must involve comprehensive pre-screening and must be of low risk or involve a suitable employee of another agency (e.g. QPS). Justification must be clearly recorded in the home visit risk management plan.

- Other possible controls include (but are not limited to): conducting visit over front fence, or a neutral community space, or at front door; involving other agencies (e.g. QPS).

Principals, managers or supervisors (or delegate e.g. deputy principal):

- Participate as required in determining appropriate risk controls.

5. Approval

Principals, managers or supervisors (or delegate e.g. deputy principal):

- Review Home visit risk management plan.
- Approve or reject the home visit based on the proposed Home visit risk management plan.
- Ensure the school or business unit keeps a record of the Home visit risk management plan (approved or rejected) with child/student information or at business unit level.

6. Prepare for home visit

Employee:

- Follow any preparatory steps contained within the Home visit risk management plan (i.e. check parent or carer availability, ensure controls are in place).
- Ensure the communication strategy is in place, current and the employee contact person at the base location is available to be contacted and aware of the Home visit risk management plan that includes:
 - the destination of the home visit (specific address and name of the family)
 - employee contact details
 - estimated time of return
 - escalation responses in the event of loss of contact
 - communication details (e.g. call in/text in times).
- Follow other required procedures and protocols e.g. travel plans, vehicle safety.
- Maintain current contact and emergency information in their mobile phone.
- Contact the employee contact person upon arrival at the home visit, but prior to entry (e.g. when in the car outside the home).

7. During the home visit

Employees:

- Conduct initial home visits in pairs unless otherwise identified in the Home visit risk management plan.
- Wear school or departmental identification.
- Determine if a parent, carer or other appropriate adult is present for the home visit to continue and gain consent to enter.
- Follow risk controls as per the Home visit risk management plan.
- Continually assess effectiveness of controls and modify process and actions if necessary.
- Cease the home visit if the employee senses any risk to their safety.
- Remain in an area/position which enables easy exit from the house and/or property, or conduct the visit on the property outside of the house.
- Notify employee contact person upon completion of the visit.

Employee contact person

- Know the communication schedule, be available and action responses if contact is not made.

8. After the home visit

Employees:

- Advise the contact person immediately after leaving the property and at a safe distance (i.e. in the car parked on the street).
- Review and discuss with principal, manager or supervisor the conduct of the completed home visit:
 - did the home visit achieve its purpose?
 - how accurate was the risk assessment process?
 - were all hazards identified and associated risks reduced?
 - did the control measures work effectively?
 - is an alteration to the planned approach required?
- Work with the principal, manager or supervisor to document the review of the home visit and any required changes to the Home visit risk management plan. Retain this information with the Home visit risk management plan so that it can be accessed for subsequent home visits.
- When a higher level of risk is identified during the review, the employee is to seek consideration and approval by the principal, manager, supervisor or delegate for the revised level of risk to apply for subsequent visits.

Principals, managers or supervisors (or delegate e.g. deputy principal):

- Provide appropriate support in the form of professional supervision, debriefing or counselling to employee(s) in the event of any threat or adverse outcome related to a home visit.

- Record, or instruct the delegated employee to record, all home visit work-related incidents in [MyHR WHS](#) (DoE employees only).

9. Subsequent home visits

- Reconfirm the need for any subsequent home visits and review and update/complete any Home visit risk management plans following the above process.
- If it is established during an initial home visit that there is no risk or it is a low risk activity, an employee can undertake future visits on their own as supported by the risk assessment process.

Definitions

| Term | Definition |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Blue Card | <p>A Blue Card is a plasticised card, issued to a person who is the holder of a current positive notice by Blue Card Service in the Department of Justice and Attorney and is valid for three years from the date of issue. A Blue Card displays the following information about the Blue Card holder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the name of the person the registration number of the person the expiry date of the person's positive notice the signature of the person. |
| Child | A person under the age of 18 years. |
| Employee contact person | <p>The Department employee who is available for the employee(s) conducting home visit to contact as part of the established communication plan. The contact person must be informed of the elements of the communication plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expected contact times contact methods (text/phone) strategy to implement should contact not be made at expected times emergency protocols. |
| Control measure | Actions implemented to eliminate or minimise a risk as far as is reasonably practicable. Control measures should be regularly reviewed to ensure their effectiveness. |
| Exemption Card | An Exemption Card is a plasticised card, issued to a registered teacher, Police Officer or Registered Health Practitioner allowing them to undertake child-related services that are not part of their normal employment, such as private tutoring of a child, work in a child care centre, volunteering at a children's sporting club, |

| Term | Definition |
|------------------------------|---|
| | participating in a homestay or reading program or supervising after hours school care. |
| Extreme risk activity | An activity that is inherently dangerous. There is a high chance of a serious incident occurring that would result in a highly debilitating injury. |
| Hazard | An object or situation that has the potential to harm a person, the environment or cause damage to property. Hazards in relation to home visits include, but are not limited to, harm, injury, disease, illness, loss or damage. |
| Hierarchy of control | <p>The hierarchy of control is a risk management process in which the ways of controlling risks are ranked from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest.</p> <p>The hierarchy of control is as follows (from highest level of protection to the lowest):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate the risk • substitute the hazard • isolate the hazard • re-design controls • apply administrative controls • use personal protective equipment (PPE). |
| High risk activity | An activity where there is a likely chance of a significant incident resulting in injury or illness requiring medical treatment. |
| Home visit | <p>A home visit includes the attendance of a department employee at the home of a student, their parent, an employee or another member of the school/local community</p> <p>Home visits by Department employees may be due to regulatory and non-regulatory requirements. Limited examples include:</p> <p>Regulatory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required under the <i>Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000</i> for international student placement (ISP) • required under the <i>Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act 2011</i> <p>Non-regulatory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Tours and Global programs where a duty of care is present • Visits to discuss student issues |

| Term | Definition |
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| Home visit risk management plan | <p>The Home visit risk management plan demonstrates and documents the risk management approach undertaken for home visits.</p> <p>A Home visit risk management plan may be conducted for multiple home visits e.g. demonstrating how home visits for regulatory purposes will be conducted by a whole work group</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A home visit risk management plan may be undertaken for an individual home visit to a student home.</p> <p>A template is provided which can be modified by the work group.</p> |
| Low risk activity | An activity that has little chance of an incident occurring which would result in harm, injury, disease, illness or damage. |
| Medium risk activity | An activity that has some chance of an incident occurring which would result in an injury requiring first aid. |
| Reasonably practicable | <p>The things that could be done at a particular time to ensure that HSW risk is reduced to an acceptable level.</p> <p>Deciding what is 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm requires consideration and assessment of all relevant matters, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the likelihood of the hazard or risk concerned occurring • the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or risk • knowledge about the hazard or risk, and ways of eliminating or minimising the risk • the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, and • the anticipated financial or other costs to reduce the risk and whether this is proportionate to the benefit to be attained. |
| Risk | <p>The possibility that harm (death, injury or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard.</p> <p>For example, the hazard is an uneven pathway. The risk is the likelihood that a person will slip/trip/fall because the uneven pathway forms a trip hazard.</p> |
| Risk assessment | <p>Risk assessment is a term used to describe the overall process or method to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm (hazard identification) • analyse and evaluate the risk associated with that hazard (risk analysis, and risk evaluation) |

| Term | Definition |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine appropriate ways to eliminate the hazard, or control the risk when the hazard cannot be eliminated (risk control). |
| Risk management | <p>A systematic approach used to ensure workplace health, safety and wellbeing. It is a structured decision making process using four steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of hazards assessment of risks implementation of controls monitoring and review of controls. <p>The objective is to eliminate or minimise the risk of harm which people may be exposed to at a workplace or from work activities.</p> <p><i>This can be documented using the Home visit risk management plans. Approval is always required prior to the activity being undertaken.</i></p> |
| Student | <p>A student is any person, regardless of age, who attends a state educational institution, established under ss. 13, 14 or 15 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)</p> |
| Training | <p>Training may be required to support employees to safely undertake a home visit. Training should be determined by considering the risks identified and the skills/experience of the employee. Appropriate training may include internally or externally provided training.</p> |

Legislation

- [Education and Care Services Act 2013 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Law \(Queensland\) Act 2011](#)
- [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#) s.19, s.27 and s.28
- [Child Protection Act 1999 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 \(Cwlth\)](#)
- [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 \(Cwlth\)](#)
- [How to manage work health and safety risks – Code of practice 2011](#)

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Policies and procedures in this group

- Nil

Supporting information for this procedure

- [Home visit risk management plan template](#)

Other resources

- [Code of conduct for the Queensland public service](#)
- [Enterprise risk management policy](#)
- [Enterprise risk management procedure](#)
- [Enterprise Risk Management Framework](#)
- [Managing first aid in the workplace procedure](#)
- [Health, safety and wellbeing incident management procedure](#)
- [Student discipline procedure](#)
- [Working with children authority procedure](#)
- [Occupational violence prevention procedure](#)
- [DEi recruit and on-board homestay procedure](#)
- [DEi student homestay placement procedure](#)
- [DEi homestay provider management procedure](#)
- [Student protection guidelines](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Employee Assistance Program](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Health and safety risk management](#)
- [Managing health and safety risks](#)
- [Terms and conditions for Homestay providers](#)

Contact

Organisational Safety and Wellbeing Unit
Contact: 07 3513 6562

For information about Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing, contact the [Regional Health and Safety Consultant](#) from your closest regional office.

Review date

12/07/2024

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.

Nil

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