



Home Safety Check - Guidelines

Home Safety Check Defined

The Home Safety Check is a tool designed to assist managers and supervisors in checking every client's home for hazards and potential risks. These are risks that staff and others working in client's homes may be exposed to when providing care.

The Purpose of a Home Safety Check

Completing a Home Safety Check (HSC) is an important part of planning for safe service delivery. Completion of the HSC begins a relationship with the client and carer about creating a safe and healthy workplace for their care workers and a safer home for themselves.

Completion of a home safety check will also ensure compliance with Section 8 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act of NSW (2000) which states employers are to ensure the welfare of and a safe and healthy workplace, for all. Employers have a legislative responsibility to identify hazards, assess the risks associated with the hazards and implement effective risk control measures which eliminate or minimise all foreseeable risks. They are also required to review the controls to ensure they are effective

Responsibilities

Under the NSW OHS Act (2000) it is the responsibility of the employer, managers and supervisors to ensure a safe workplace and safe systems of work for their staff.

Managers and supervisors can fulfil their obligations under the Act by ensuring completion of a HSC and addressing the risks identified in consultation with the client and the staff who will be rostered to provide the service.

When to complete the check

The Home Safety Check (HSC) should be completed prior to the commencement of the first service. All workers are reassured when their employer has conducted a home safety check before they visit the home

After the initial assessment, the HSC must be completed at least once a year or when there is a:

- Change in the client's needs or function
- Change in safe work procedures
- Change to service delivery – including the introduction of new equipment
- Change in care workers providing the service
- Injury or near miss to either the client or the care worker.

How to complete the check

Gather all relevant referral and assessment information prior to conducting the home safety check. This will flag any specific OHS risks to the first person to visit the home and/or to the care workers.

Every HACCC worker who will be the “first person” to conduct an initial home visit needs to be skilled in remaining alert, diligent and professional and above all, safety conscious throughout the initial visit. These staff are to remain situationally aware at all times and to be “risk thinkers” to ensure they have not been placed at risk of harm. The First Home Visit Checklist will assist staff to be well prepared. After completing the First Home Visit Checklist numerous risks may be identified and must be controlled prior to the first person visiting the home. It may be appropriate for two staff to attend the client's home to complete the HSC.

On completion of the home safety check service providers are required to assess, control and review the risks identified in consultation with the client. The HSC is only the first step. Service delivery tasks should not commence until all the potential risks are assessed and they are adequately and effectively controlled.

Training

Managers and supervisors or staff will require training in how to complete the HSC. Managers and supervisors should have well developed communication and interpersonal skills and have received training in OHS risk management.

It is strongly recommended that frontline staff have experience in working in clients' homes if this responsibility is delegated to them. Managers and supervisors need to ensure they assess each of their staff's skills and experience to determine if they can effectively conduct and complete the Home Safety Check in accordance with these guidelines and in line with best practice.

Consultation

The OHS Act of NSW (2000) Sections 13 – 15 outlines the duty of employers to consult with their staff to identify and control risks and when this consultation is to occur.

For an effective Home Safety Check (and subsequent risk assessments) to be undertaken, it is crucial that managers and supervisors involve the client whilst the HSC and risk assessment is being conducted. Best practice is to advise the client their service will only commence once the HSC is completed and all identified risks are addressed. This will assist to create an environment where OHS issues are discussed openly and collaboratively.

By collaborating together; the manager/supervisor, the client and the staff, risks will be more effectively controlled and everyone involved will have a clearer understanding of how the service can be provided safely.

Record Keeping/Documentation

The Home Safety Check should be filed in the client's file – where the information can be quickly accessed for easy reference.

A database should be maintained to ensure that Home Safety Checks for all clients remain up to date and valid.

Documentation such as a risk assessment or risk control plan linked to the home safety check should be filed with the checklist.

Relevant risk management information should be transferred to the client's care/service plan and safe work procedures.

When to review

Changes can occur in each client's home environment and to the services they receive. Managers and supervisors will need to assess each client's HSC and risk assessment to determine the most appropriate initial review date.

Managers and supervisors also need to review HSC's as part of their continuous quality improvement strategy. Managers and supervisors quality assure by:

- Arranging for two people to complete the same checklist in the same home – review consistency of completion; and
- Observing staff completing the checklists at specified time frames.