Health and Safety reforms 2015: Information for the Education sector

This series of quick guides provides general information for the Education sector about the different elements of an effective health and safety system under the proposed new law that secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces. The guides draw on information published by WorkSafe New Zealand, the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, and the Institute of Directors in New Zealand Inc. (https://www.iod.org.nz/Governance-Resources/Publications/Health-and-safety)

Like all other sectors, the Education sector must understand and promote as a priority the health and safety of people in the workplace – workers, students/children, parents, visitors and volunteers. Education organisations, leaders and managers must have in place a robust health and safety management system.

To be fully informed about your health and safety obligations, visit WorkSafe New Zealand’s website: http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/about/reform/

Topic 1: Leadership (Part 1)

Those exercising governing authority (e.g. boards) make decisions to achieve the organisation’s purpose and goals, and provide the necessary leadership. They also ensure the organisation operates with high standards of ethical behaviour, abiding by all laws and obligations.

"Leadership is about what I say, what I do, and what I measure"  — Business Leaders’ Health and Safety Forum

Leadership is a critical element of a workplace’s health and safety culture. Leadership sets the direction for health and safety management by creating and demanding expectations, and by holding management strictly and continuously to account for meeting these expectations.

Who is responsible for health and safety at work?

Under the proposed new laws, everyone will have responsibilities for workplace health and safety.

However, your organisation’s leadership has the primary responsibility for the major decisions that influence health and safety, such as the strategic direction, resource allocation, and ensuring it has the appropriate people, systems and equipment.

What is leadership in the context of an effective health and safety system?

In the context of the health and safety reforms, leadership means the roles of PCBU and Officer. (See Leadership – Part 2 for information on the responsibilities of Officers.)

How does your organisation’s health and safety culture measure up?

Take the Safety Culture Snapshot survey:
The PCBU will hold the primary duty of care for, and controls risks to, the health and safety of workers and others at the workplace.

In the context of early childhood and compulsory education, the PCBU may be the Board of Trustees, ECE service provider, national association, Ministry of Education or district health board (as landlords), sponsor, proprietor or self-employed educator/nanny.

The PCBU will ensure the health and safety of:

- their workers (e.g. teachers, principals, administrators, property managers, regular volunteers etc.) while at work (e.g. at school/ECE service and/or on excursions and/or outside the classroom)
- others who are influenced or directed by the PCBU
- others (e.g. students/children, parents, members of the public, and visitors to the premises), by ensuring that it is not put at risk from work that is carried out at the workplace (e.g. school/ECE service).

The specific obligations and duties of the PCBU will be to, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- provide and maintain a work environment, plant and systems that are without risks to health and safety
- ensure the safe use, handling and storage of plant, structures and substances
- provide adequate facilities at work for the welfare of workers, including ensuring access to those facilities
- provide information, training, instruction or supervision necessary to protect workers and others from risks to their health and safety
- monitor the health and safety of workers and the conditions at the workplace for the purpose of preventing illness or injury.

Want to know more about PCBU and duty of care?
http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/about/reform/1-pcbu
http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/about/reform/2-duty-of-care