

## SAFETY HEALTH ENVIRONMENT WORKCOVER SUSTAINABILITY (SHEWS) HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS

### 1 PURPOSE

CQUniversity has an obligation to provide a work environment without risks to health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable. This obligation includes eliminating or minimising, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risks associated with the exposure to healthcare associated infections (HAIs).

The intention of this procedure is to meet or exceed obligations under current legislation.

### 2 SCOPE

This procedure applies to all CQUniversity staff, students, contractors and their staff, and all visitors whilst at CQUniversity worksites including individuals participating in work activities that are conducted off-site.

### 3 EFFECTIVE DATE 1 June 2016

### 4 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)  
[Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011](#)

### 5 PARENT POLICY

[Work Health and Safety Policy](#)

### 6 PROCEDURE

This document should be read in conjunction with the current Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare.

HAIs can be transmitted via biological agents (also known as pathogens) and can cause serious or life threatening disease or illness to their host. For example, blood and other body fluids, needlestick/sharps, etc.

As differing types and levels of risk exist between facilities, local safe work procedures will need to be developed for each setting. These procedures provide guidelines for developing local safe work procedures to prevent and control worksites where there is a risk of exposure to biological agents, outline the minimum recommended measures for the immediate assessment and management of exposure and the recommendations for initiation of post-exposure prophylaxis.

Universal Precautions as defined by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are a set of precautions designed to prevent transmission of HIV, HBC and other blood borne pathogens when providing first aid or health care. Blood and certain defined body fluids of all patients are considered potentially infectious. Further details regarding these can be obtained from the [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

### Identifying Those at Risk of Exposure to Biological Agents

Each organisational unit (for example, school, directorate, etc.) is responsible for identifying those at risk of exposure to HAIs. Those at risk are likely to include staff, students, contractors and visitors in:

- laboratories with clinical settings where biological agents are handled and/or exposure-prone invasive procedures are performed (including needlestick/sharps use); and

- other environments where this contact with, or potential exposure to biological agents (for example, plumbers, cleaning staff, first aid officers, etc)

Where there is doubt about the potential for exposure, please contact the OHS Unit for assistance and risk assessments.

## **Risk Identification and Management**

Biological agents should ALWAYS be handled as if they are infectious, even if they have been tested and results are negative for HIV, Hepatitis (HBV) and C (HCV), or any other potential pathogen.

An appropriate risk identification and management process may include:

- identifying the tasks where there is exposure to biological agents
- assessing the risks of the exposure
- developing, implementing and reviewing local safe work instructions and procedures which result in minimising the risk of exposure to biological agents.

## **Local Safe Work Instructions and Procedures**

Working environments where exposure to biological agents are, or are likely to be, present may differ with each situation. It is necessary for Work Area Supervisors to maintain awareness and apply vigilance in this regard. The local safe work instructions and procedures will consider, for example:

- ensuring personal hygiene is appropriate (hand hygiene using plain or antiseptic soaps, alcohol-based hand rubs, etc.)
- induction/orientation for new staff, students, contractors and/or visitors to the work area – to promote familiarity and compliance
- handling, storage and disposal of specimens and samples
- proper use and disposal of needles, syringes and sharps
- cleaning up and disposal of infectious waste
- cleaning of other contaminated materials
- informing female participants about exposure to risks to self and unborn children during pregnancy

It is imperative that Local Safe Work Instructions and Procedures provide details for an immediate referral to a medical practitioner.

Treatment to prevent HIV infection should be started within a few hours of such an injury, so where possible, provide details for an immediate referral to a medical practitioner disease specialist. .

## **Immediate Care when Exposed**

A prompt response is critical especially after exposure via a cut or needlestick/sharps injury. The following information needs to be incorporated into Local Safe Work Instructions and Procedures as appropriate.

- If the exposure does not involve a cut or puncture, wash with soap and water
- If the exposure involves a cut or puncture, gently encourage bleeding, then wash with soap and water
- If the exposure involves the eyes, rinse with water or normal saline gently but thoroughly while they are open for at least 30 seconds
- If the exposure involves the mouth, try and have the person spit these out and then rinse the mouth with water several times
- If the exposure involves clothing, remove the clothing and shower if necessary
- Seek medical advice – and it is imperative that details are provided for an immediate referral to a medical practitioner.
- If the injury presents a high risk of exposure to HIV infection, provide the name and contact details of a preferred medical practitioner disease specialist.

If exposure occurs whilst a student is undertaking approved work studies within an external health care setting, the student will follow the health care protocol adopted in that setting.

## Report the Incident

- Report the incident to the Work Area Supervisor immediately

The Work Area Supervisor will notify the OHS Unit immediately by phone, and then complete and submit a CQUniversity Incident/Hazard Report Form.

## 7 RESPONSIBILITIES

### Compliance, Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 CQUniversity management have a duty to exercise due diligence to ensure that CQUniversity complies with relevant legislation (e.g. Work Health and Safety Act, Work Health and Safety Regulations, Codes of Practice, Guides).

CQUniversity staff, students, contractors and their staff, and all visitors at CQUniversity worksites (including any work activities that are conducted off-site) have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and must not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons. They must comply with any reasonable instruction and co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health and safety at the workplace.

The OHS Unit of CQUniversity assists management and others to facilitate compliance, monitoring and review.

Please also refer to the [Work Health and Safety Roles and Responsibilities Procedure](#).

### Reporting

- 7.2 Non-compliances with this procedure are to be reported to via the OHS Incident Report Form and will be investigated as an OHS Incident.

### Records Management

- 7.3 All records relevant to this document are to be maintained in a recognised University recordkeeping system.

## 8 DEFINITIONS

Refer to the University [glossary](#) for the definition of terms used in this policy and procedure.

Other definitions in relation to Work Health and Safety can be located in the respective legislative documentation (e.g. Work Health and Safety Act, Work Health and Safety Regulations, Codes of Practice, Guides)

## 9 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

### Related Policy Document Suite

[OHS Incident Report Form](#)

### Related Legislation and Supporting Documents

NHMRC (2010) Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare. Commonwealth of Australia.

NOHSC 2010 (2003) National Code of Practice for the Control of Work-related Exposure to Hepatitis and HIV (Blood-borne) Viruses. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

<b>Approval and Review</b>	<b>Details</b>
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor and President (or delegate)
Advisory Committee to Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellors Advisory Committee
Administrator	Occupational Health and Safety Manager
Next Review Date	16/03/2019

<b>Approval and Amendment History</b>	<b>Details</b>
Original Approval Authority and Date	Planning and Development Committee 14/03/2003.
Amendment Authority and Date	Vice-Chancellor and President 26/07/2011; Vice-Chancellor and President 16/03/2016.