Types of risk in education and care



Physical, environmental and activity based

Related to the built environment, facilities, equipment, materials, chemicals, routines, and experiences provided to children.

Focused on accidental injury, unsafe conditions, foreseeable hazards. Typically associated with accidental injury or unsafe conditions.

Examples include:

- Unsafe or damaged equipment, furniture, buildings or surfaces.
- Unsafe sleep environments.
- Excursion, transport, vehicles and machinery hazards.
- Chemical, biological or medical hazards.
- Weather or environmental hazards.
- Manual handling risks.
- Emergency situations.



Relational and people-related

Related to the behaviour or actions of children or adults, including abuse, neglect, bullying, grooming, or other interpersonal harms.

These risks are shaped by people, and by environmental and organisational conditions that may increase opportunity for harm, such as isolated spaces, poor visibility, or inadequate supervision.

Examples include:

- Abuse by an adult.
- Harmful behaviours displayed by staff, families or visitors.
- Harmful sexual behaviour displayed by a child.
- Bullying, peer conflict or physical aggression displayed by a child.
- Inadequate staffing, supervision or unsafe culture.

How risks can be managed

Removing the risk all together

Putting in place strategies to reduce the risk until it can be resolved, or to reduce risk

Implementing a safety plan to reduce the likely occurrence of individual risk and prevent future harm

Some environments or practices may increase both types of risks (e.g., hidden spaces, poor visibility, unsafe room design, and low staffing ratios).

Assess not only whether an environment is safe, but also whether it is child safe.

Adelaide University | Australian Centre for Child Protection

A national Child Safety Reform initiative