

Updating school uniform requirements to support SunSmart hat use.

This guide aims to help schools that currently allow students to wear baseball caps to remove them from the school environment and implement 100% SunSmart hat wearing. To achieve this, changes may need to be made to both school 'policy' and 'practice'.

Policy

- Amending the school's uniform requirements to remove baseball caps from the uniform
- Ensuring the uniform shop sells and communicates the rules regarding SunSmart hats to the school community.

Practice

- Creating and consistently applying rules regarding SunSmart hat wearing with students.

Why SunSmart hats?

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia. Two in three people who grow up in Australia will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation causes at least 95% of all skin cancers. This means that when you protect your skin, you reduce your risk.

SunSmart hats, such as broad-brimmed, bucket and legionnaire style hats, protect the face, head, back of neck and ears, and can reduce the amount of UV reaching the eyes by 50%. Baseball caps are not SunSmart as they leave parts of the face, neck and ears unprotected from the sun's harmful UV.

All three education sectors encourage schools to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students. SunSmart hats, as part of a school uniform policy, promote the health and wellbeing of students and reinforce a sense of belonging and pride, helping to eliminate any risk of peer pressure that could exist if non-SunSmart hats are allowed.

Policy

Amending the school's uniform requirements to remove baseball caps from the uniform

If your school's uniform includes a baseball cap or allows the wearing of generic baseball caps, an essential step in working towards 100% SunSmart hat wearing is to remove baseball caps from the uniform policy and ensure that only SunSmart hats are available for students to wear.

When updating the school uniform, Cancer Council NSW recommends that schools formally consult with students, teachers and other staff, parents/carers and the school community, including the Parents and Citizens' Association. How the consultation is conducted will depend on many factors including the style of your school's leadership and how involved the community are or would like to be.

Educating the community about UV protection and skin cancer prevention should help increase their motivation for the uniform changes you would like to make. Use the resources available via the **SunSmart Hat-Wearing Toolkit** to educate the community, as part of your consultation process.

Some schools may be able to implement changes more quickly if there is buy-in and agreement from the community. Announce the decision early in the school year preceding the change to the school uniform requirements to provide students, parents and the uniform shop sufficient time to prepare.

Ensuring the uniform shop sells and communicates the rules regarding SunSmart hats

The uniform shop should play an important role in reinforcing the school's uniform requirements and supporting 100% SunSmart hat wearing. Ideally, the uniform shop will:

- Only sell SunSmart hats
- Be able to share information about the school rules regarding SunSmart hat wearing
- Explain why only SunSmart hats are part of the uniform
- Explain the rules around wearing a baseball cap if one is available for wearing during sport.

If the school uniform doesn't currently include a SunSmart hat you will need to select one. You may consult with the school community, such as senior students or the Parents and Citizens' Committee running a survey, to help choose a new hat.

Most uniform suppliers carry a range of SunSmart hats so there is plenty of choice. Broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style hats are all SunSmart, and some other considerations include: fabric choice including UV protection factor (UPF), colour, price, comfort and the ability to adjust hat size (e.g. an adjustable crown cord). For further guidance, read our **Sun safe hats information sheet**.

Practice

Creating and consistently applying rules regarding SunSmart hat wearing

Embedding SunSmart hat wearing into the school culture so that it becomes 'just what everyone does' can take time and effort. A clear and consistent approach will give your school the best chance of success.

- 1. Establish simple rules.** For example, ensuring everyone (i.e. students and teachers) always wears a SunSmart hat when they are outside; if a student is outside and doesn't have a SunSmart hat on their head, they need to play in the shade.
- 2. Clearly communicate the rules to students and the whole school community.** Think about how you will communicate good SunSmart practices and behaviours, and keep this top of mind, such as using reminders and including information in school communications.
- 3. Ensure consistent application of the rules by all teachers.** Consider how you will encourage and keep good SunSmart practices by teachers on the agenda at your school, for example by regularly reminding teachers at staff meetings or including it in the school Work, Health and Safety policy.

Being SunSmart while playing sport

Cancer Council NSW realise that it isn't always practical to wear a SunSmart hat, particularly when playing sport at a competitive level. Your school may decide to only allow students to wear a baseball cap or no hat during sport and in that situation, the rules should be clearly communicated to students and the school community, including the uniform shop. Other sun protection recommendations (e.g. sunscreen) should be practiced when the UV is 3 or above to maximise protection from harmful UV.

For more information and resources to help students achieve 100% SunSmart hat wearing, check out our **SunSmart Hat-Wearing Champion Guide** and **SunSmart Hat-Wearing Toolkit**.

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