

How to use this manual

About the manual

Welcome to the NSW Women's Refuge Movement Policy and Procedure Manual, a set of good practice policies and procedures for refuges in NSW.

Refuges across NSW are diverse, providing a range of services in a range of ways. To accommodate this diversity, we have compiled a set of generic policies and procedures that refuges can adapt to suit their service.

You can make these policies the basis of your policy and procedure manual or just use the policies that you need and add them to your existing manual. You can use as many (or as few) of the policies and forms as your service needs to make a complete policy and procedures manual.

The manual is divided into nine sections plus contents, including:

1. Background
2. Organisational overview
3. Management
4. Day-to-day service operation
5. Working with clients
6. Client records and confidentiality
7. Complaints and disputes
8. Staff matters
9. Occupational Health and Safety

Sections 4,5,7,8 and 9 also have an accompanying resources folder, containing forms that are referred to in the detail of the respective policies.

How to make the manual yours

The manual is a work in progress, requiring your input to be complete.

Once you have chosen the policies you need, you will need to adapt them to your service. The manual has been provided to you as a word file on disk so you can

make your changes directly onto each policy document. You can also keep the manual as a computer file so it is easy to update.

It is recommended that you review each policy and procedure to ensure that it reflects the way your service operates. You may need to add detail, or amend the policy in some way or delete some parts of it, so that it reflects the current practice of your service.

For example, Policy 2.3 in the Organisational overview section provides a list of aims for a refuge. To adopt this policy, you will need to read through this list and make sure these aims reflect the aims of your service. You may need to delete some aims or add more or change some of the ones that are there. Once you are satisfied that the policy is accurate for your service, you can adopt it.

Another example is policy 2.8 of the Organisational overview section — Eligibility criteria. You will need to review the criteria to ensure that it reflects the eligibility criteria of your service. Again, you may need to add some more detail, delete some detail or amend what is there. Once you are satisfied that the eligibility criteria is accurate for your service, then you can adopt the policy.

In most policies, there are prompts, written in *italics*, asking refuges to insert their correct details. For example, in policy 2.5 of the Organisational overview section — Operational overview — there are many spaces asking refuges to insert the name of the service. These appear as: (*Insert name*) Refuge operates At other points in the policy, refuges are asked to insert other information. For example, in the refuge hours section of policy 2.5, refuges are asked to indicate how the refuge is staffed, ie is it staffed 24 hours a day or between 8am and 6pm etc.

At a minimum, you will need to go through each policy and procedure and respond to these prompts to complete the policy.

Resources

As mentioned, a number of the policies and procedures suggest using forms. Copies of the forms referred to are included in the resources folder for that section.

Occupational Health and Safety

A new OH&S Act was introduced in 2000. As far as I can ascertain, the major changes are:

- That each organisation must develop a way of consulting with their staff about OH&S matters; and
- That each organisation must review all tasks carried out by the organisation and assess the OH&S safety risks associated with each task. Where a risk is identified, the organisation must develop a policy to eliminate the risk, reduce the risk or warn people of the risk if it cannot be eliminated.

Refuges will have to go through this process. All organisations are now meant to have a mechanism for consulting with staff in place. The deadline for conducting a risk assessment of tasks is September 2003.

The OH&S policies and procedures included in this manual would address some of the risks but it is likely that more will need to be developed.

Acknowledgments

The policies and procedures in this manual have been informed by consultation and compiled using a number of policy and procedure manuals from similar services as source material. For a full list of resources used, see the Acknowledgments page in the contents section. Each section of the manual also contains a list of the resources used as source material for that section.