

9. Occupational Health and Safety

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Acknowledgments

The Occupational Health and Safety section has been written using a number of manuals as source material. We gratefully acknowledge this input. The resources used include:

Albury Wodonga Women's Refuge Inc 2002, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

Amberlys Single Women's Refuge 1999, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

Kempsey Women and Children's Service, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001

Upper Hunter Community Services Policy Group 1999, *Policy and Procedure Register*, Muswellbrook Shire Council

Western Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Service 2001, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

Youth Accommodation Association (NSW) Incorporated, *Policy and Procedure Manual*, Edition 1, 1999

9.1 Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Primary responsibility

Management, all staff and clients

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge is committed to providing a safe, healthy and hygienic environment for all staff (including workers who are full-time, part-time, casual, permanent, outreach and volunteers), clients and visitors of the service.
- To do this, *(insert name)* Refuge will comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* and any additional requirements agreed on by the management committee and staff.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will:
 - Provide a safe workplace and safe ways of working
 - Provide furnishings and equipment that are in a safe condition
 - Ensure that all facilities are safe and hygienic including toilets, eating areas, sleeping areas etc.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will maintain a current Worker's Compensation insurance policy that covers all staff.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will pay for any measures that are necessary to meet the specific requirements of the OHS Act or Regulation.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge recognises that a safe working environment is the responsibility of everyone involved with the service, including management, staff, clients and visitors.

Procedure

(Insert name) Refuge will:

- Take all reasonable steps to maintain a safe working environment and work practices.
- Implement a process for identifying, assessing and controlling any risks and hazards in the workplace.
- Implement a process for consulting with workers about OHS matters so they can contribute to decisions affecting their health, safety and welfare. Workers will also be kept informed of any decisions that may affect their health and safety.
- Provide adequate induction on occupational health and safety matters for all new staff.
- Provide information, training and supervision to all staff and management on occupational health and safety issues and measures to reduce or prevent risks.
- Review the occupational health and safety of the Refuge every year.

The manager or collective will:

- take reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves and others
- apply the Health and Safety policy and procedures
- carry out the OH&S components of their job description.

Employees will:

- take reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves and others
- co-operate with employers in their efforts to comply with occupational health and safety requirements. For example, maintain day-to-day upkeep of premises, inform clients of basic hygiene measures, participate in relevant training
- apply the Health and Safety policy and procedures
- carry out the OH&S requirements of their job description.

Service users will:

- be given clear explanation of their rights and responsibilities for a safe environment
- be asked to comply with these as a condition of their stay at (*insert name*) Refuge.

Visitors to the refuge will:

- be given any information about their rights and responsibilities for a safe environment during their visit and ask to comply with these as a condition of their right to visit.

9.2 Identifying, assessing and controlling risks

Primary responsibility

Management and all staff and clients

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will regularly assess *(refuges to insert time frame, for example every three months, every year etc)* the environment to ensure it is safe and healthy and to identify risks.
- Where new risks or hazards are identified, *(Insert name)* Refuge will do what is required to remove or control the risk or hazard.

Procedure

- Conduct regular internal and external safety audits to ensure the environment is safe and to identify any risks or hazards.*
- Identify all activities that may involve safety issues and apply a risk management approach to each activity.
- Where new hazards or risks are identified, assess the risk.
- Develop strategies to remove the risk or hazard, minimise the risk or hazard or warn people about it.

* Resources to help you do safety audits and risk assessments are available from WorkCover. For more information about OH&S or to access their resources, you can phone WorkCover NSW Information Centre on 13 10 50 or email WorkCover NSW on contact@workcover.nsw.gov.au or visit your nearest WorkCover office. You can also visit the WorkCover website at:

http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/html/about_ohs.asp

9.3 Maintaining a safe environment

Primary responsibility

Management and all staff and clients

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will support work practices from management and staff that promote general safety and reduce risks.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge acknowledges that staff work in the area of violence and that vigilance and attention to security must be a necessary requirement of working at the refuge.

Procedure

To ensure general safety in the refuge, the management and staff will adhere to the following work practices:

- Carry out work tasks safely so as to protect their back and practice good posture while standing, sitting, driving, cleaning, carrying and moving objects. If anyone is not aware of how to do this, they should ask for instruction or training.
- Ensure that all entrances, exits and hallways are clear and free from any obstructions.
- Ensure that all security locks on doors and windows are in good working order and do not use deadlocks on doors while anyone is inside.
- Store chemical cleaners and pesticides safely, ensuring they are out of reach of children.
- Do not use any electrical appliances that have faulty connections, worn or frayed cords.

- Do not let extension cords obstruct walkways and do not place under mats or carpets.
- Do not place heaters in busy areas or near curtains of lounges etc.
- Do not move heaters when alight.
- Keep electric blankets straight and flat and don't use where there is a risk of incontinence.
- Make sure floors are dry after mopping and clean up spills as soon as possible.
- Maintain safe, unbroken, non-slip floor surfaces that are free from things sticking out.
- Clear external areas of houses and rubbish and note broken or uneven paving, overhanging trees and shrubs.
- Place photocopiers in a separate room where possible and/or in a position with good ventilation. Protect your eyes from the light emitted by the photocopier, take care when filling the machine with toner.
- Report any near misses, problems or hazards to the manager/collective and talk about how it came about and how to prevent similar things happening.

To help maintain a safe environment and reduce the threat of violence, the Refuge will:

- Install and maintain security screens on all windows and doors.
- Ensure that the registration details of all service vehicles are suppressed annually through RTA.

Staff will:

- Keep the security door locked when working alone in the office.
- Call the Police immediately if a person known, or suspected, to be a perpetrator is approaching the refuge and notify them of a security risk.
- If the person leaves willingly, notify Police.

- Keep the security door locked if a person known, or suspected, to be a perpetrator approaches the refuge, and make enquiries through the locked door.
- Carry a mobile phone at all times when working with clients outside of the refuge.
- Always keep the identity of clients at the refuge confidential. Never acknowledge that a particular client is at the service unless you have checked with the client first. Then take the name, organisation and contact details of the person calling and call them back to make sure they are who they say they are. (Note, it is an offence to withhold information from the Police. Once you are sure you are talking to the Police, you will need to tell them what they want to know.)

To help ensure safety for staff when they are not at work:

- Staff are encouraged to suppress the registration details of their private vehicles.
- Staff are advised to have a private phone number.

9.4 Smoking

Primary responsibility

All staff and clients

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge is a smoke-free workplace.

Procedure

- All premises and vehicles controlled by *(Insert name)* Refuge are designated as smoke-free areas.
- All staff are to be informed of this prior to employment.
- All clients are to be informed that *(Insert name)* Refuge is a smoke-free environment at intake and asked not to smoke anywhere on the premises or in the refuge vehicles.

Option

Policy

- The inside of the premises and all vehicles controlled by *(Insert name)* Refuge are smoke-free areas.
- Smoking is permitted on *(insert place)* only.

Procedure

- All the insides of premises and vehicles controlled by *(Insert name)* Refuge are designated as smoke-free areas.
- Ashtrays are provided for use in *(insert place)*.
- All staff are to be informed of smoking policy prior to employment.

- All clients are to be informed of smoking policy on intake and asked to only smoke in designated areas and to use the ashtrays provided.
- Clients are responsible for cleaning the ashtrays they use.

9.5 In the event of accident and injury

Primary responsibility

Accident victim and manager or other staff member

Policy

- All accidents involving injury that occur on refuge premises or in refuge vehicles or in the process of conducting refuge work, will be acted upon immediately.
- Detail of all accidents and injuries must be reported.

Procedure

Where an accident or injury occurs on site:

- All emergency procedures are to be implemented. This may include calling an ambulance, Police and/or other appropriate emergency services.
- The staff first aid officer (a staff member with a current First Aid Certificate) can administer first aid if required.
- The person who has sustained the injury or had an accident on refuge property (or if that person is not able to, another staff member) must notify the manager or a member of the management committee immediately, or as soon as possible.
- The manager is to brief the management committee on the matter.
- The manager will record details of the injury in the Register of Injuries book and in the refuge day book and complete an Accident and Injury form.
- Regardless of the nature of the injury, the manager will advise the employee to seek medical treatment immediately, and will inform the employee of all steps and documentation required to lodge a claim for Workers' Compensation.

- Where the employee requires hospitalisation or medical treatment, the manager or delegated staff member should notify the employee's next of kin.
- The person sustaining the injury may need to complete a Workers' Compensation form if appropriate. This may need to be completed and submitted to the insurance company within a certain number of days. Check details with your Workers' Compensation policy.

9.6 Critical incident

Primary responsibility

Manager/collective and/or staff present at the time

Policy

- All critical incidents are to be reported to the manager/collective and the management committee/broader collective and the appropriate authorities if required.
- Critical incidents can include:
 - fire
 - major break-ins
 - major accidents involving workers or clients
 - a death in the service involving workers or clients
 - suicide or attempted suicide by a worker or client
 - verbal/physical abuse or threats with a weapon
 - accusations of illegal drugs in the service
 - suspected sexual or physical abuse by workers
 - sexual assault of worker or client on or off the premises
 - vandalism of premises
 - critical illness of worker or client
 - criminal activity of worker or client
 - natural disaster
 - serious threat to staff, clients or facilities
 - allegations of assault against staff
 - injury resulting from excursions or camps.
- A worker directly involved in a critical incident will be relieved of their duties immediately, without loss of pay, for a period agreed with the worker.

- Debriefing will be offered to all affected persons, who may choose to undertake it or not. If an affected person chooses to undertake debriefing, the initial session must take place within 48 hours.
- If the incident is an accident or results in a Workers' Compensation claim, follow the relevant procedures.

Procedure

At the time of the incident

- Assess the situation.
- Ensure the safety of all concerned.
- Contact appropriate emergency services if required.
- Contact appropriate support people if required, for example, manager or co-worker.
- Collect phone numbers for all staff and clients affected.

Immediately after the incident

- Notify the manager/collective who will notify the management committee.
- Document the incident or make notes to help recall the incident later.
- Before leaving the site, check for safety and security of people and premises.
- Offer professional debriefing for all staff and clients that are affected. If staff or clients refuse debriefing, note this in their file. If debriefing is accepted, the initial session must take place within 48 hours of the incident.
- Relieve any workers directly involved of their duties, without loss of pay, until after a debriefing session. If this is not possible (ie if all staff were involved in the incident), discuss workload and develop a temporary workplan to minimise duties.

Within 48 hours after the incident

- Complete a full report of the critical incident and submit to the manager/collective who will then submit it to the management committee.

- Complete initial debriefing sessions and determine if further debriefing sessions are required. Workers are to return to work after the first session if both parties agree.
- Lodge statements with Police if required.
- Notify the funding body if appropriate.
- If any client involved is under 18 years of age, notify the parent/guardian.

Debriefing

- Complete initial debriefing within 48 hours of the incident.
- Offer employees who choose debriefing a choice of a counsellor from the area (preferably) or outside the area if required.
- Any counsellor employed by the refuge for critical incident debriefing should be prepared to provide written documentation to the refuge's insurer should the incident result in a Workers' Compensation claim.

9.7 In the event of violence or threats to the safety of others

Primary responsibility

All staff on the premises at the time

Policy

- (*Insert name*) Refuge will not tolerate abuse, threats or violence or any other behaviours that do not respect the dignity of other persons.
- Safety of staff and clients is the priority. Staff can use discretion and avoid harm by evasion if required.
- All staff are to receive training in dealing with potentially violent situations.
- If the violence or threat of violence is perpetrated by a client, this may result in immediate cessation of all services provided to that client and the eviction of that client from the service. (See house rules and client rights.)
- If the violence or threat of violence is perpetrated by a staff member or member of the management committee, this may result in immediate dismissal from employment or duties. (See Gross Misconduct.)

Procedure

If the violence or threat occurs on the refuge premises:

- Staff can call the Police as soon as they feel it is necessary. If the situation is immediately dangerous, staff should call the Police immediately.
- If appropriate, staff are to use communication/negotiation skills to diffuse any threatening situation.
- If the situation escalates, staff are to take action to protect themselves and the clients. Staff should try to remove all other persons from the scene but at no time should they try any action that will jeopardise their own safety.

- If the person threatening them has a weapon, staff are to encourage the person to put the weapon down and move away from it.
- Even if the incident is resolved by staff, call the police and report the incident. Get an incident number from police and let them know if you want any action taken.
- Complete a full report of the incident and submit it to the manager. All staff involved in the incident should have the opportunity to add any detail to this report that they deem necessary.
- Enter the incident into the Incident Register.

If the violence or threat occurs in the field:

- If appropriate, staff are to use communication/negotiation skills to diffuse the threatening situation.
- If the person threatening them has a weapon, staff are to encourage the person to put the weapon down and move away from it.
- If the situation escalates and the aggressor will not stop, workers are to protect themselves and avoid harm by evasion.
- Worker should leave the situation immediately, even if this means leaving the client behind. The worker should not stay with an aggressor who cannot be controlled.
- Worker should call the Police after they have left the situation.
- Once back at the refuge, the worker should complete a critical incident report and submit it to the manager/collective. All workers involved in the incident should have the opportunity to add any detail to this report that they deem necessary.
- Enter the incident into the Incident Register.

If there are any injuries resulting from the incident:

- Enter the incident into the Accident and Injuries Register.
- Complete an Accident and Injury form.
- Report the injuries to Workcover within 7 days.

If the violence or threat of violence was perpetrated by a client:

- Commence eviction procedures of that client from the service or cease providing outreach service.

If the violence or threat of violence is perpetrated by a staff member or member of the management committee:

- Commence dismissal procedure from employment or duties.

9.8 In the event of death or serious injury

Primary responsibility

Manager/collective and workers on at the time

Policy

- In the event of death or serious injury, the staff member on hand is to call the ambulance and Police immediately, provided there is no further risk to their safety or the safety of others present.
- Safety of staff and clients is the priority. If there is a risk to the staff member/s or others present at the scene of the death or injury, the staff member may first remove themselves and others from risk and call the authorities as soon as they are safe.
- All deaths and serious injuries are to be reported to the manager/collective and the management committee/broader collective immediately.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will provide debriefing to all staff and clients who request it.

Procedure

In the event of a serious injury

- Call emergency services immediately.
- The staff member with the first aid certificate will take charge until appropriate authorities and emergency services arrive.
- If the manager is not already there, notify them. The manager should also notify a member of the management committee.
- The manager is to complete an Accident and Injury form and make a full report of the incident and report to WorkCover within 7 days of her knowing of the accident.

- Offer debriefing to all affected staff and clients if appropriate.
- Organise debriefing for those who accept it.

In the event of a death

- Don't touch or disturb anything. Clear the area and ensure that only relevant authorities have access.
- Call emergency services immediately.
- If the manager is not already there, notify her. The manager should also notify a member of the management committee.
- The manager is to complete an Accident and Injury form and make a full report of the incident and report to WorkCover within 7 days of her knowing of the accident.
- Offer debriefing to all affected staff and clients if appropriate.
- Organise debriefing for those who accept it.

9.9 In the event of suicide threat or threat of self harm

Primary responsibility

All staff on the premises at the time

Policy

- Suicide threats are always to be taken seriously and acted on immediately.
- All staff are to receive training in dealing with suicide threats.

Procedure

If a client threatens suicide or self harm;

- Notify the manager if possible.
- Assess the situation with at least two staff members (preferably where one of these staff members is the client's caseworker) and in consultation with the nearest mental health team.
- If, after assessment, it is negotiated that the client can stay in the service, the client and two staff members should sign a contract stating the client will take responsibility for self-managing.
- Clearly document the support and management plan, including that the mental health team have been notified, a contract of self-management has been signed, any other services that have been notified, what support is in place for the client, what are staff doing to monitor the situation.
- Assess the situation daily.
- Complete a full report of the critical incident and submit it to the manager.

If the client attempts suicide and requires hospitalisation:

- They would no longer be considered eligible for the service because they are not able to self-manage. In this event, staff should activate the eviction procedure associated with women unable to self-manage.

9.10 Workers' Compensation and work-related illness and injury

Primary responsibility

Management and all staff

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will carry a current NSW Workers' Compensation policy that covers all staff.
- In the event of work related injury or illness, *(Insert name)* Refuge will act promptly and in accordance with relevant legislation, primarily the *Workers' Compensation Act 1987*, the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers' Compensation Act 1998*, and the *Workers' Compensation Legislation Amendment Act 1998*. Refer also to *Section 7, Rehabilitation Following Work-Related Illness or Injury*.

Procedure

Workers' Compensation requirements

(Insert name) Refuge will:

- Display a summary of the *Workers' Compensation Act 1987* in a place where it can easily be read by all staff.
- Maintain an Accident and Injuries book to record notice of all injuries.

Where a claim for Workers' Compensation has been made, *(Insert name)* Refuge will:

- forward all completed documentation to the insurer within prescribed time frames;

- deal honestly and openly with both the insurer and the employee during the process of claiming for workers' compensation;
- participate in, and cooperate with, the establishment of an injury management plan with the insurer and the employee;
- provide, where reasonably practical, suitable employment for the injured worker;
- maintain confidentiality in all matters relating to injury, workers' compensation claims and rehabilitation.

An employee who has suffered a work-related illness or injury will:

- notify the manager as soon as possible after injury occurs;
- seek medical treatment and attain an appropriate medical certificate;
- complete all required documentation and forward this to the manager as soon as possible;
- deal honestly and openly with both the insurer and *(Insert name)* Refuge during the process of claiming for Workers' Compensation;
- participate in, and cooperate with, the establishment of an injury management plan with the insurer and *(Insert name)* Refuge;
- ensure that current medical certificates are provided to *(Insert name)* Refuge prior to the end date of previous certificates. Failure to do so may result in an inability to pay the employee;
- work with *(Insert name)* Refuge to ensure early return to work and/or suitable duties during rehabilitation.

Making a claim for Workers' Compensation

- As soon as possible following the injury, the employee should lodge with *(Insert name)* Refuge all required information on the prescribed forms. This will include:
 - a WorkCover medical certificate;
 - a claim form from the insurance company.

- Where the manager or management committee considers that the injury to the employee may be significant (ie, may result in the employee being incapacitated for more than seven days), the insurer must be notified within forty-eight hours of *(Insert name)* Refuge becoming aware of the injury.
- On receipt of the required documentation from the employee, manager or delegated member of the management committee must, within seven days:
 - complete a Accident and Injury form
 - forward the form with the employees documents to the insurer.

Failure to lodge appropriate forms within seven days of receipt of documentation from the employee is in contravention of the Act and will result in a penalty being imposed on *(Insert name)* Refuge.

9.11 Rehabilitation following work-related injury

Primary responsibility

Management and all staff

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will support and contribute to the provision of workplace rehabilitation for all employees whose ability to carry out their duties is affected by work-related illness or injury. The primary aim of rehabilitation will be to ensure that return to work occurs as soon as medically advisable.
- When rehabilitation of a worker is required, a rehabilitation coordinator will be appointed by the management committee. The coordinator may be a member of the management committee or a staff member.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will facilitate the rehabilitation coordinator's access to rehabilitation coordination training.

Procedure

Return to work

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will establish a return-to-work program in consultation with the employee and other relevant parties, including the treating doctor, the Union and rehabilitation personnel. The program will be consistent with the injury management plan.
- In working to ensure that the injured employee has the opportunity to recover and return to work, the management committee will:
 - ensure that the worker is referred for early access to rehabilitation services, including rehabilitation providers where required;

- consult with other staff and the Union on all aspects of the rehabilitation process, including the provision of suitable duties, and to ensure that the rehabilitation program operates smoothly and effectively;
- inform workers of their rights in relation to a Workers' Compensation claim, including their right to choose their own doctor and rehabilitation provider;
- provide suitable duties where practicable;
- coordinate rehabilitation;
- advise the employee that refusal to cooperate in rehabilitation may result in their weekly benefits being affected.

Rehabilitation procedures

- The rehabilitation coordinator will:
 - assist the employee to complete necessary Workers' Compensation forms and provide direct support to the employee;
 - liaise with all relevant parties involved in the rehabilitation;
 - provide details of the rehabilitation process to the employee;
 - ensure that the employee is offered the help of an accredited rehabilitation provider where necessary;
 - arrange for the employee's return-to-work on the advice of the treating doctor or rehabilitation provider;
 - arrange a return to work plan for a seriously injured employee before they have been absent from the workplace for twelve weeks. This plan must be developed by an accredited rehabilitation provider in consultation with the treating doctor.

Suitable employment

- When an injured worker is deemed by the treating doctor to be well enough to return to work, the management committee will, so far as is reasonably practical, provide suitable employment. Suitable employment should:
 - be approved by the treating doctor;

- involve consultation with the injured worker, treating doctor, rehabilitation coordinator, rehabilitation provider, and other staff;
- be detailed in a written plan and include the duties to be undertaken, hours of work and the process for upgrading suitable duties in line with the injured worker's progress, based on advice from the treating doctor;
- be, where appropriate, the same as or equivalent to pre-injury employment;
- endeavour to strike a balance between the needs of the injured worker and the needs and workloads of other staff.

Disputes and dismissal

- (*Insert name*) Refuge will not dismiss any employee on Workers' Compensation within six (6) months of injury, solely or principally because of that injury.
- Disputes will be handled by discussion between the rehabilitation coordinator, the employee, the manager, the management committee, the Union and other relevant parties, with regard to the *Grievances and Disputes* policy.

9.12 Fire and other emergency evacuation

Primary responsibility

Manager/collective and all staff on premises at the time

Policy

This policy refers to emergencies arising from fire, explosions, gas leaks, toxic chemical spills.

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will nominate meeting places inside the refuge and outside the refuge for all staff and clients to use in case of emergency. All exits will be clearly marked and known by all staff.
- All staff must be familiar with the location of portable fire extinguishers, fire safety blankets, garden hoses and smoke detectors.
- Emergency phone numbers will be displayed beside all phones.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will develop and maintain an up-to-date evacuation procedure.
- All staff will be trained in this procedure and residents will be informed of the procedure as part of their introduction to the refuge.
- The procedure will be displayed in prominent positions throughout the premises, including in all residents' rooms and common areas.

Procedure

Raising the alarm

- Sound the alarm by *(insert procedure of sounding the alarm, for example press the panic button or break fire alarm glass)*.
- Immediately call the nearest fire department or 000. All fires should be attended by the fire department, no matter how small. Even if you have been

able to put out the fire with an extinguisher, there may be further risks and the fire department will check this.

- If safe, use an extinguisher, garden hose or fire blanket to extinguish the fire. Otherwise, commence evacuation procedure immediately.

Evacuation

In the event of fire, explosions, gas leaks, toxic chemical spills or bomb scares, all personnel may be directed to evacuate the building.

- When the alarm is sounded, walk to the designated meeting place (*insert meeting place*), ready to leave the building. Do not run.
- Special assistance may be required by workers or clients who are disabled, in a wheelchair, are hearing impaired or deaf, have a heart condition or asthma, have a visual impairment, have diabetes or epilepsy, are pregnant or have an injury such as a broken or sprained limb. Workers are to provide this assistance as required.
- All staff and clients are to leave immediately. No one is to stop for any reason, including gathering personal belongings.
- At this point, manager/collective or worker is to do a head count. If someone is not accounted for, call out to them. If the person cannot come to the designated inside meeting area, the worker is to direct them to another exit and meet them at the agreed meeting place outside.
- Leave the premises in an orderly way. Do not run and do not stop. If you are descending stairs, do not stop, push or pass anyone else. Link arms and descend together.
- Gather at the designated meeting place outside the premises. Once gathered here, the manager/worker is to do another head count. If everyone is not accounted for, call out to those missing to find out where they are. If possible, direct them to the nearest exit.

- If people are trapped, workers are not to go back in unless it is completely safe for you to do so. Wait for the fire department or police, then let them know people are trapped and exactly where they are.

9.13 Bomb threat

Primary responsibility

Manager/collective and staff member taking the call

Policy

- (*Insert name*) Refuge will maintain an up-to-date procedure for handling bomb threats.
- All staff will be familiar with the procedure.

Procedure

- If you receive a bomb threat, record the threat in writing.
- Get as much information as you can and record as much as you can.
- Contact the Police and give them all the information. If the Police instruct you to, commence evacuation procedures.
- If you find a bomb, do not touch it. Clear the area and keep others clear of the area.

9.14 First Aid

Primary responsibility

First Aid Officer and coordinator/collective

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will maintain equipment and procedures that enable first aid to be provided when it is required in the workplace.
- For the purposes of this policy, the workplace includes anywhere where an activity of the refuge takes place, for example on the premises, in the refuge vehicles, on refuge excursions etc.
- First aid kits, which meet the requirements of the Occupation Health and Safety Act, will be available in all workplaces used by the refuge. This includes on the refuge premises and in refuge vehicles.
- At least one worker will hold a current First Aid Certificate. If no worker holds a certificate, the manager/collective will nominate someone to be trained. *(Refuges need to consider what they would do if there is a first aid need and the Certificate holder is not rostered on for work. Do two people need to be trained?)*
- The name of the First Aid Certificate holder/s will be displayed near the first aid kit.
- The phone numbers of emergency services will clearly displayed at the location of each first aid kit and near the telephones.

Procedure

- The worker holding the First Aid Certificate will:
 - be responsible for maintaining the first aid kit
 - apply first aid as required
 - consider their own safety first when applying first aid.

For a list of what the first aid kit should contain, you can phone WorkCover NSW Information Centre on 13 10 50 or email WorkCover NSW on contact@workcover.nsw.gov.au or visit your nearest WorkCover office. You can also visit the WorkCover website at:

http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/html/about_ohs.asp

9.15 Infection control guidelines and procedures

Primary responsibility

Management, all staff and clients

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will undertake procedures to ensure infections are controlled and high levels of hygiene are maintained. Since the infectious status of service users and staff will often be unknown, the best way to prevent transmission of blood-borne infections is to consider all people as potentially infectious. This means all people are treated equally.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will provide all equipment necessary to control infections. This includes disposable latex rubber gloves, running water, soap, alcohol hand rub, paper towels, disinfectant/bleach, mops and buckets, sealable plastic bags, resuscitation mouth pieces and up-to-date first-aid kits. Running water will be conveniently located.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will provide training to all staff about how infections are spread and how to control the spread of infections.
- Management and staff all have a responsibility to protect themselves and each other.
- Management and staff have a duty of care to protect the health and wellbeing of service users. Information about control of infections will be given to clients when they enter the service.
- Management and staff will at all times apply the infection control principles of not allowing blood or body fluids directly into the bloodstream and isolating the possibly infectious body fluid, not the person.

Procedure

Hand care and washing

Hand care and washing are considered the most important measures in infection control.

- All workers must wear latex rubber gloves at all times when handling blood and body substances.
- If a worker has hand or other body lesions or eczema, dermatitis, cuts or sores that cannot be covered, a medical practitioner should assess them before the staff member continues with work.
- If hands or other skin surfaces become contaminated with blood or body substances, they must be washed properly immediately or as soon as practicable.
- Hands must be properly washed before and after direct contact with body fluids, toileting or when providing toileting care, cleaning areas contaminated with blood or other body fluids, before and after preparing food, and after removal and disposal of gloves.

Proper hand washing means:

- use soap and running water
- rub hands vigorously
- wash all surfaces – backs-of-hands, wrists, between fingers, under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands well with a single-use paper towel if possible
- use an alcohol hand-rub in emergency situations or if hand-washing facilities are limited or not easily accessible
- do not use hand-washing facilities to dispose of blood, body substances or chemicals
- use moisturising cream on hands regularly to prevent skin from drying and cracking.

Personal hygiene

- No-one (staff or clients) is to share toothbrushes, razors or other personal items.
- Generally, towels and linen should not be shared and should not be used to clean or wipe down areas.

General cleaning

- Keep work areas clean and safe. Routine cleaning with hot or warm water and detergent is sufficient to keep unsoiled areas clean.
- As a preventative measure, hard surfaces should be regularly mopped or wiped down with disinfectant, and soft surfaces should be regularly cleaned. Wear gloves when using detergent and chlorine solutions to stop hands drying and cracking.

Cutlery cleaning

- No one is to share cutlery or crockery unless they have been thoroughly washed in between uses.
- All utensils should be thoroughly washed between uses with hot or warm water and detergent.

Food preparation

- Everyone involved in preparing and serving food should maintain high standards of personal hygiene, avoid injury to hands and ensure any open wounds are securely covered with a waterproof bandage.
- Workers who have been overseas and/or are suffering gastric upsets should consult a doctor and have their duties re-delegated until they are declared healthy.

Clothing and linen

- Transport and store clean linen separately from used linen.

- Do not rinse or sort used linen in client/service user areas.
- Be aware of the potential hazards of sharps and other objects that may be hidden in linen and make sure such objects are never thrown out into linen bags.
- Always wear gloves whenever handling any clothing or linen soiled with blood (including menstrual blood) or body fluid.
- Put any clothing or linen soiled with blood or body fluid into bags at the point where the soiling occurs. If these materials are sent to a laundry, it should be stored and transported in leak proof bags (place a standard cloth bag inside a plastic bag). Securely close bags and do not overfill. Identify the material as potentially infectious and do not handle the material directly before it is laundered.
- Staff responsible for sorting laundry should wear gloves and protective clothing.
- Remove any solid matter using paper towels and/or running water.
- Laundry should then be washed as usual.

Blood and body substance spills

- Always take infection control precautions whenever there is the possibility of exposure to blood or other body fluids.
- Take care when handling blood and body fluids, as well as items or surfaces soiled with blood or body fluids, to protect exposed mucous membranes (mouth, eyes, etc) and any areas of broken skin. Any part of the body splashed with blood or body fluid should be washed immediately.
- Disposable latex rubber gloves must be worn whenever contact with blood or other body fluid is likely to occur. When gloves are not available, use other methods such as paper towels to prevent direct contact with blood or body substances. After use, gloves and other disposable material should be placed in a sealable plastic bag and hands washed.

Cleaning spills

- Clean body fluid spills (eg faeces, urine) with detergent. Blood spills can be cleaned with either detergent or chlorine solution and cold water depending on the risks involved. Generally, small amounts of blood can be cleaned with detergent except where the location of the spill presents a high risk of transmission (ie in sensitive areas such as the bathroom sink, kitchen bench). Larger blood spills or spills in sensitive areas should be cleaned with detergent and chlorine solution.
- Wear gloves and protective clothing such as aprons; masks and eye wear may also be appropriate (see NSW Health Department's *Infection Control Policy* for more information on protective clothing).
- Confine and contain spill.
- Apply absorbent paper to soak up substance and discard used paper in plastic bag.
- Always use cold water when cleaning blood or blood stained articles as hot water will make the blood stick to the surface.
- Clean the spill area with detergent and warm to hot water (use cold water when cleaning up blood).
- Then wipe the area with disposable towels soaked in a solution of one per cent available chlorine.
- Dry the area so that it is not slippery.
- Place gloves and all disposable towels in plastic bag.
- Seal bag and dispose of it appropriately.
- Wash hands thoroughly.
- If a spill occurs on carpeted/soft areas, take care not to damage the area with chlorine. Detergent may be more appropriate. Arrange for carpet to be shampooed with an industrial carpet cleaner as soon as possible.
- Any soiled equipment should be cleaned with cold water and detergent and then disinfected in the usual manner.

First aid and accidents

- First aid should be given when needed. If blood or body fluids are involved, the precautions discussed above should be used.
- First aid should only be administered by the staff member trained in first aid.
- Although HIV has been found in saliva, there is no conclusive evidence that saliva is involved in HIV transmission. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation therefore presents little risk of infection provided there is no blood involved. Use mouthpieces (pocket masks which cover the patient's nose and mouth and are fitted with a non-return valve or patient face shields fitted with over-mouth filter) or resuscitation bags (soft-bag resuscitators such as CIG's Airviva) or other ventilation devices (oxygen resuscitators such as Oxyviva or Modulaide) (*refuge to insert appropriate detail*).
- Only use resuscitation equipment once and then discard, or thoroughly clean and disinfect.

Needles, syringes and other sharp equipment

- Whenever possible, keep the handling of anything sharp to a minimum.
- To prevent needle-stick injury, *never* recap, bend, break or manipulate needles nor remove needles from disposable syringes.
- Always take care in situations where a syringe may be concealed, for example when changing bed linen, handling piles of clothing or rubbish or cleaning in concealed places.
- If a needle-stick injury occurs, wash the wound as soon as possible with water and soap and encourage the wound to bleed. Then dry the wound and cover with a waterproof bandage. Report the injury to the manager and document it. It is recommended that the individual seek a doctor about the risk of infection and should be referred to an appropriate service.
- Always take care when handling needles and syringes found on refuge property. Carefully pick up the syringe by the barrel and place it in a screw-top, puncture-proof container. Dispose of the syringe by (either refuge has a

process or it could contact local government or the nearest needle exchange program to arrange disposal.)

Notes about the information in this policy and procedure

These infection control guidelines and procedures have been edited from the Muswellbrook manual. The Muswellbrook manual states that they are drawn from the 1992 NSW Department of Community Services *Working and Living with HIV/AIDS* Policy and from sections of the NSW Health Department's *Infection Control Policy*. The manual also states that they reflect the infection control guidelines recommended by the World Health Organisation, Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health, Housing and Community Services and the New South Wales Health Department. (For further details on infection control, see NSW Health Department's *Infection Control Policy*).

9.16 Harassment policy

Primary responsibility

Management and all staff

Policy

- Everyone working in (*insert name*) Refuge must be able to work in an environment free from harassment.
- Harassment is understood in (*insert name*) Refuge as any behaviour, which is not asked for and not wanted and that happens because of a person's sex, race, age, marital status, disability, transgender (transsexuality) or homosexuality.
- Harassment offends, upsets, humiliates, scares or hurts another person. It makes the workplace uncomfortable, unpleasant and sometimes dangerous.
- Harassment is not always intended – acts or behaviour, which are meant to be funny or don't mean much to one person may hurt or offend another. A workplace without harassment is a workplace where people respect and tolerate the rights and differences of others.
- Harassment in the workplace can take many forms. It can be overt (obvious) or subtle, direct or indirect (for example, where a hostile feeling/environment is created without any direct attacks being made on a person).
- Harassment can happen when power is used wrongly. For example, if a supervisor uses their power to harass someone they are in charge of or a group of people in a workplace harass someone who is different from them.
- Harassment is discriminatory and will not be tolerated. Most types of harassment are also against State and Federal anti-discrimination law and may also be an offence under the Crimes Act.

- (*Insert name*) Refuge will make sure that all staff know that harassment will not be tolerated in the workplace, that complaints will be taken seriously and handled using the complaints handling procedures.
- Management of (*Insert name*) Refuge will at all times maintain the privacy of anyone involved in a complaint. The names will not be discussed with others except those immediately involved in the complaint.
- No person making a complaint, or witnessing a complaint, is to be victimised in any way for making the complaint.

Examples of harassment include

- sexual or suggestive remarks
- making fun of someone
- imitating someone's accent
- propositions (sexual invitations)
- spreading rumors
- obscene telephone calls/unsolicited letters, faxes or E-mail messages
- repeated unwelcome invitations
- offensive jokes
- repeated questions about personal life
- threats or insults
- the use of language that is not suitable in the workplace
- name calling
- calling someone who is transgender (transsexual) "it" or refusing to refer to them because their preferred gender or name
- putting sexually suggestive, offensive or degrading/insulting material on walls, computer screen savers, E-mail and so on
- suggestive looks or leers
- unwelcome practical jokes
- displaying or circulating racist, sexist and so on cartoons or literature
- mimicking someone with a disability

- following home from work (stalking)
- ignoring someone or being particularly cold or distant with them
- not sharing information
- offensive hand or body gestures
- unnecessarily leaning over someone
- sending offensive material through computer, fax or E-mail
- wolf whistling
- continually ignoring or dismissing someone's contribution in a meeting/discussion
- unnecessary physical contact (pinching, patting, brushing up against a person, touching, kissing, hugging against a person's will)
- indecent or sexual assault or attempted assault
- pushing, shoving or jostling
- putting your hand or an object (like a payslip or a wage packet) into someone's pocket (especially breast, hip or back pocket).

Procedure

(Insert name) Refuge will

- Not tolerate harassment under any circumstances.
- Enable any employee to complain about harassment to the manager/collective or management committee, the union or the Anti-Discrimination Board.
- Treat all harassment complaints seriously, sympathetically, quickly and privately, using the Refuge complaints handling procedures.
- Investigate all harassment complaints fairly and impartially.
- Take immediate action to make sure that harassment stops.
- Settle complaints in the workplace wherever possible.

If you are being harassed, you could

- Ask the person(s) to stop, if this is possible and appropriate. Let them know that you do not like what they are doing and that it is not OK with you or with management and may be against the law.
- Tell your manager. If the person harassing you did not stop when you asked or you are not comfortable talking to the person/s harassing them, tell your manager and ask them to take action to prevent further harassment.
- Make a formal complaint using your refuge's complaint procedures.
- If you do not feel comfortable telling your manager or it is your manager who is harassing you, you could talk to another worker or contact your Union and ask them to help you make a complaint.
- Keep a note of any harassment that happens, including details of dates, times, witnesses if any, what happened and what you said, did or felt.
- If your refuge takes no action to resolve the harassment, you could make a formal complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Board or the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Ask the Union to help you with this step.

If you know that someone at your work is being harassed, you could

- Respect the rights of others and never encourage harassment nor join in any harassing activity.
- Offer your support to the person being harassed. You could let them know that you are willing to act as a witness if they want to lodge a complaint or you could back them up and support them to talk to the person/s harassing them.
- Offer support by asking the person being harassed how you can help. It is not your responsibility to say anything to the person who they say is harassing them or to spread rumors about someone. If you participate in spreading rumors you may be subject to a defamation action.

Resources for Occupational Health and Safety

9.17 Accident and Injury form