

S 1.13

MANAGEMENT OF ABUSE, NEGLECT AND INJURY POLICY

Target group/Applies to:

This policy applies to The Housing Connection for adults with disabilities. All THC workers are required to uphold this policy.

Version 4.1

Review Cycle: 3 years

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all clients are safe and receive services in environments free from all forms of abuse, injury and neglect.

To ensure that if abuse, neglect or injury does occur, The Housing Connection responds promptly and sensitively to protect clients from further harm, and to co-ordinate appropriate responses in line with its Policies and Procedures as well as its legal obligations.

It is against the law to abuse another person by threatening or touching them or frightening them in ways they do not want. Legally this is called 'assault'. This behaviour is not tolerated by The Housing Connection. If, for any reason, prevention strategies fail to afford protection, this policy and related procedures aim to provide workers with the capacity to respond quickly to any suspected or reported incident

2. POLICY

The rights of people with disability include their entitlement to feel safe, and to live in an environment where they are protected from assault, neglect, exploitation or any other form of abuse.

The Housing Connection aims to ensure these rights are upheld i.e. that clients supported by The Housing Connection are, to the greatest possible extent, protected from any form of harm or neglect and that procedures are in place to ensure their safety and wellbeing wherever possible.

The Housing Connection has seeks to create an environment for clients free of any type of abuse including sexual or physical assault and emotional and verbal abuse or neglect. Where abuse, neglect or injury occurs, our responsibility lies in responding promptly and sensitively to the allegations to protect the person from further harm and to offer medical and psychological assistance. As far as possible, The Housing Connection's Policy is to prevent abuse, neglect and injury of any form. These steps include:

- Our recruitment process which focuses on the values of staff members and their respect for the rights of clients;
- The induction and orientation process which includes ensuring an understanding of the policies of the organisations and legislation pertaining to abuse;
- Ongoing training and supervision of staff; and
- Ensuring staff are willing and trained to support clients and their families to access complaint mechanisms and raise any concerns they have about services.

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policy and related procedures aim to provide workers with the capacity to respond quickly to any suspected or reported incident

DEFINITIONS

Abuse used throughout this policy refers to sexual assault, physical, emotional, financial and systemic abuse, domestic violence, constraints and restrictive practices and neglect or injury that cause harm to a person with a disability.

There are eight types of abuse that are specifically addressed in this policy:

Domestic Violence:

Violence, abuse and intimidation perpetrated by one person against another in a personal relationship. Domestic violence occurs between two people where one has power over the other causing fear, physical and/or psychological harm.

Neglect:

Neglect is a failure to provide the basic physical and emotional necessities of life. It can be a wilful denial of medication, dental or medical care, therapeutic devices or other physical assistance to a person who requires it because of age, health or disability. It can also be a failure to provide adequate shelter, clothing, food, protection, supervision and nurturance or stimulation needed for social, intellectual and emotional growth or wellbeing. It can be the placement of persons at undue risk through unsafe environments or practices thereby exposing them to the danger of physical, mental or emotional harm.

Some physical signs of neglect are:

- malnutrition
- consistent and regular hunger
- poor hair quality
- low weight
- excessive weight gain poor hygiene, including dental hygiene and untreated sores
- inadequate or inappropriate clothing for the weather
- inappropriate shelter or accommodation
- lack of supervision consistent with support needs
- lack of necessary medical intervention
- health or dietary practices that endanger health or development
- social isolation
- non-organic failure to thrive.

Some behavioural signs of neglect are:

- eating hungrily or not at all or begging for, scavenging or stealing food
- constant fatigue, listlessness or falling asleep
- direct or indirect disclosure of body parts
- hunger for attention or affection
- anxiety about being alone or abandoned
- reluctance to go home
- rocking, sucking or self-harm or excessive self-comforting behaviours.

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse refers to behaviours such as verbal assaults, threats of physical or social isolation such as punishment, threats of abuse (this may also be considered physical assault), harassment, humiliation or intimidation, failure to interact with a person or to acknowledge that person's

existence and frightening, dominating or bullying actions. This may also include denying cultural or religious needs and preferences.

Some physical signs of emotional abuse are:

- speech disorders
- weight loss or gain

Some behavioural signs of emotional abuse are:

- depression or withdrawal or crying
- signs of feeling worthless about life
- sudden and significant changes in usual behaviour
- destructive or violent behaviour to self and others
- excessive compliance
- constant attention seeking
- low self-esteem
- inappropriate self-stimulating behaviour, rocking or sucking.

Physical Abuse or Assault:

Physical abuse is assault, non-accidental injury or physical harm to a person by any other person. It includes but is not limited to inflicting pain or any unpleasant sensation, and causing harm or injuries. It may include reckless behaviour or an intentional act. It can also include behaviour inducing fear of being harmed.

Some physical signs of assault are:

- bruises and welts
- drowsiness, vomiting or fits (associated with head injuries)
- unexplained or poorly explained injuries
- unexplained scratches or bite marks
- cuts, scratches and sprains
- burns and scalds
- bite marks or scratches
- head injuries
- bruising specially around the eyes
- internal injuries
- broken bones
- swollen or painful joints accompanied by bruising

Where any of the above indicators are present, it is likely that the assault may be considered a serious offence.

Some behavioural signs of physical assault are:

- explanation inconsistent with the injury
- unusual fear of authority
- avoidance or fearfulness of a particular person
- passivity;
- wariness of physical contact
- unusual hunger for affection
- difficulty in relating to others
- constant watching for possible danger
- fear of going to a certain event or place

- sudden changes in behaviour – out of character aggression, withdrawal or excessive compliance
- onset of incontinence
- problems sleeping.

Restraints and restricted practices:

Unacceptable restrictive practices include restraining or isolating an adult for reasons other than medical necessity or the use of a less restrictive alternative to prevent self-harm where appropriate. This may include the use of chemical or physical means or the denial of basic human rights or choices. These practices are not considered to be abuse if they are applied under a restrictive practices authorisation.

Sexual Abuse or Harassment:

With respect to adults, sexual assault occurs when a person is subjected to any sexual activities without their informed consent. Consent occurs when a person freely and voluntarily agrees to sexual activity. Sexual assault occurs when someone is unable to and/or does not give consent. The law says that a person is unable to give consent when:

- asleep or unconscious
- significantly intoxicated or affected by drugs
- unable to understand what they are consenting to due to their age or intellectual capacity
- intimidated, coerced or threatened
- unlawfully detained or held against their will
- they submit due to the person being in a position of trust. This includes support workers.

Such activities can include suggestive behaviours, exploitative behaviour and comments that are inappropriate or make the person feel uncomfortable or intimidated and can take the form of rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment or sexual interference in any form.

Some physical signs of sexual assault are:

- direct or indirect disclosure of body parts
- sexual act described by client
- bruises, bleeding in genital area
- bruises to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs
- difficulty walking or sitting
- vaginal infection
- abdominal pain
- pregnancy
- recurrent headaches/migraines
- urinary tract infections
- sexually transmitted diseases
- psychosomatic illness
- itching, inflammation or infection in urethral, vaginal or anal areas
- unexplained accumulation of money or gifts
- foreign objects in genital, rectal or urethral openings
- torn, stained or blood stained underwear or bedclothes
- semen stain on clothing.

Some behavioural signs of sexual assault are:

- verbal report from the person
- repeat of bad or dirty words
- self-destructive behaviour, self-mutilation

- sudden changes in behaviour or temperament such as depression, anxiety attacks, crying, sweating, trembling, withdrawal, agitation, anger, absconding, seeking comfort and security, withdrawal and listlessness
- inappropriate sexual activity or advances to others
- fear of being alone with a particular person
- sexual themes in drawing, drama or sexual acting out
- self-injury or hurting others
- poor relationships, irritability, short tempered behaviour, weeping
- strong anxiety/fear about going to a particular place
- sleep disturbances, refusing to go to bed or going to bed fully clothed
- eating disorders
- refusing of shower or constant showering
- changes in social patterns such as refusing to attend usual social activities such as work and outings
- excessive compliance.

Financial Abuse:

Financial abuse refers to the improper use of another person's property or assets, or the use or withholding of another person's resources by someone with whom there is a relationship of trust.

Physical indicators of financial abuse include:

- Restricted access to or no control over personal funds or bank accounts
- No records or incomplete records of expenditure and purchases
- Forced changes to wills or other legal documents.

Psychological signs of financial abuse include:

- Stealing from others
- Borrowing money
- Begging

Systems Abuse:

Systems abuse occurs when the needs of people with a disability who are in receipt of support are not recognised and essential services are not provided or are inadequate, inappropriate or poorly coordinated. The impact on individuals can include neglect or abuse resulting from poor practice, exclusion from community life and the loss of basic human rights.

3. DOCUMENTATION

Documents related to this policy	
Standards, Legislation or other external requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Standards for Disability Services (2014) • Disability Services Act 1993 • Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993 • NSW Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act 2000 • Criminal Procedures Act 1986 • Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 • NSW Crimes Act 1900 and Section 316 • Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act, 2002

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims Rights Act 1996 • United Nations Rights of the Disabled Person 1975 • NDIS (Quality Indicators) Guidelines 2018 • NDIS ACT 2013
Related internal policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Rights Policies • Client Safety Policies • Community Participation and Social Inclusion Policies • Feedback and Complaints Policies • Service Access Policies • Service Management Policies • Restrictive Practices Policy • Financial Management Policy
Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client records • Incident reports and register • Complaints process

Reviewing and approving this document		
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