



Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policies & Procedures

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VIOLENCE, ABUSE, NEGLECT, EXPLOITATION & DISCRIMINATION

Scope

123 Support Services will encourage and support any person who has witnessed the abuse of a participant or, who suspects that abuse has occurred, to make a report and to be confident of doing so without fear of retribution.

Purpose

recognises the right of all participants to feel safe and to live in an environment that provides protection from assault, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, or any other form of abuse. People with disabilities, children and young people are some of the most vulnerable groups in our society. It is essential that 123 Support Services identify, consult, and respond to instances where persons with disabilities, children or young persons are at risk of significant harm.

Common reasons for people with disabilities, children, and young people to be at risk of significant harm include:

- domestic and family violence
- physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse
- neglect.

The impact of violence, abuse and neglect can span across all domains of a person's development and life experiences. People who experience violence, abuse and neglect are more likely to have problems with:

- learning and development
- physical and mental health
- behaviour
- social skills

The purpose of this policy is to prevent and mitigate the effects of violence, abuse and neglect on participants through training and implementing processes to inform staff and protect participants who are at risk of significant harm.

Definitions

Terminology	Definitions
Abuse and neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any behaviour that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e. neglect) and commission (i.e. abuse).
Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treating, or proposing to treat someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic which is protected by the law. Discrimination includes bullying someone because of a protected characteristic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protected characteristics include race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability etc.
Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The action or fact of mistreating someone to benefit from their work. The action of making use of, and benefiting from, resources.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violent behaviour by a person towards another can include abusive behaviour that is physical, sexual, intimidating, or forceful. People with a disability are more likely to experience violence from a carer or family member.

Types Of Abuse

Terminology	Examples	Signs and Symptoms
Physical abuse	Hitting; slapping; pushing; punching and burning, which entails an incident that is non-accidental resulting in pain or injury.	Bruising; lacerations; welts; rashes; broken or healing bones; burns; weight loss; facial swelling; missing teeth; pain or restricted movements; crying; acting fearful; agitation; drowsiness; hair loss; poor physical wellbeing.
Psychological/ emotional abuse	Intimidation; humiliation; harassment; threatening; sleep deprivation; withholding affection; and not allowing the person to maintain their decision-making powers,	Loss of interest in self-care; helplessness; withdrawn; apathy; insomnia; fearfulness; reluctant to communicate openly; chooses not to maintain eye contact; paranoia and confusion.

	which leads to a pattern repeated over time.	
Sexual abuse	Rape (penetration or oral-genital contact); interest in older persons' bodies; inappropriate comments and sexual references; inappropriate (possibly painful) administration of enemas or genital cleansing; indecent assault; sexual harassment, grooming, touching, taking, and sharing inappropriate photography and videos, sharing on social media, sexting, incest, stalking, any unwanted or coerced sexual contact, solicitation of minors through the internet; revenge pornography	Unexplained sexually transmitted disease; vaginal/anal bleeding; fearful of certain people or places; bruising to genital areas, inner thigh or around breasts; anxiety; torn or bloody underclothes; difficulty in walking or sitting; change in sleep pattern and repeating nightmares; interest in older person's bodies
Neglect	Intentional failure to provide basic life necessities including physical, educational, medical, supervisory, environmental or emotional.	Poor hygiene or personal care; unkempt appearance; lack of personal items; absence of health aids; weight loss; obesity; agitation; inappropriate clothing or lack of food.
Domestic and family abuse	Any controlling, bullying; threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship including emotional, physical, sexual, financial, or psychological abuse.	Witnessing abuse or being abused - as the norm - destroys the child's ability to trust others and undermines their ability to control emotions.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to participant safety
- value and empower the participant to contribute to decisions which affect their lives
- foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to disclose the risks of harm to participant safety
- respect diversity in cultures and child-rearing practices, while keeping the participant's safety paramount
- provide training to staff and volunteers on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards participants
- engage only the most suitable people to work with participants and ensure superior quality staff, volunteer supervision and professional development
- ensure participants know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise any issues

- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of the participant is at risk
- value the input of families and advocates and communicate regularly with them.

In the case that situation meets the criteria of a reportable incident, then the 'Reportable Incident, Policy and Procedure' will apply.

Statement of Commitment to Safety

is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all. This commitment is the primary 123 Support Services of our support and decision making. is committed to providing a safe environment where participants are safe and feel safe; their voices are heard and included in decisions that affect their lives. Attention is paid to the cultural safety of participants from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

has a commitment to report and fully investigate allegations or suspicions of abuse.

Code of Conduct

is committed to the safety and wellbeing of participants. Our organisation recognises the importance of, and responsibility for, ensuring our environment is a safe, supportive, and enriching environment that respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of all people, enabling them to thrive.

All Staff and volunteers are required to comply with 123 Support Services and NDIS Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate and acceptable behaviour (see 'Acceptable behaviours' below). These Codes of Conduct apply in all situations, including planned activities and the use of digital technology and social media.

Acceptable Behaviours

Staff or any other persons involved with participant-related work are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of participants by:

- upholding 123 Support Services and NDIS Code of Conduct
- treating the participant, their family and advocates with respect within the environment and during outside activities as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of the participant, particularly if they are reporting that they or another person have been abused; or that they're worried about their safety or the safety of another participant
- promoting cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through interactions with their community leaders and members

- promoting cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of people with culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds through engagement with the community accessing the service
- promoting the safety, participation, and empowerment of people with disabilities
- reporting any allegations of abuse or any personal safety concerns to management
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including state mandatory reporting), as they relate to protecting the participant from harm or abuse
- maintaining the right to live in a safe environment by promoting and informing the participants of their rights
- ensuring participants are safe and protected from harm, as quickly as possible, once abuse is suspected
- identifying themselves to a participant upon entering premises and show any required identification.

Unacceptable Behaviours

As front-line workers, volunteers and community members involved in participant-related work, 123 Support Services must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of abuse
- develop a relationship with any participant that could be viewed as favouritism or grooming behaviour, e.g. offering gifts
- exhibit behaviours, or engage in activities, with participants that can be interpreted as abusive and unjustifiable in an educational, therapeutic or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards young participants when they are overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with participants, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental/advocate guidance or a therapeutic setting
- treat a participant unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with an underage participant, through personal or private contact channels, e.g. social media, email, instant messaging or texting, except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to work or activities, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter.

Screening, Supervising, Training and Human Resource Practices to Reduce Risk

All staff are required to undertake checks including disability worker checks, relevant police, and working with children checks and the mandatory NDIS Worker Orientation Module. All records will be maintained in their personnel file.

Procedure

Strategies to Identify and Reduce or Remove the Risk of Harm

recognise that creating a safe organisation begins with a clear understanding of the potential risks to the participant, volunteers, and staff in an organisation's setting. will identify possible issues and problems and plan to reduce or remove these risks. To reduce the likelihood of harm 123 Support Services will consider, define, and act against its organisational risks.

These strategies may include:

- thinking about the organisation, its activities and the services it provides to participants
- planning how to make all activities as safe as possible
- developing a safety plan if appropriate for participants who require additional supports
- supporting participants with disabilities to understand plans and safety procedures using appropriate communication methods
- informing participants that they have the right to live in a safe environment
- acting proactively to reduce the likelihood of any risks.

Reporting Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination

A report must be made immediately to a manager/on call if staff observe any of the following:

- a participant shows a change in behaviour or mood which may indicate they are being abused
- someone is observed behaving towards a participant in a way that makes others feel uncomfortable
- a participant advises they are being abused by another person • a person advises that they are abusing another participant
- a participant or other person informs that they have observed abusive acts
- a participant advises that they feel discriminated against, e.g. language and actions
- a participant presents as unkempt or seeking food
- there is evidence of unexplained bruising or similar
- an action or inaction is witnessed that may be considered abusive
- when an individual, for any reason, believes a participant is being abused.

Failure to report an abusive situation may result in a criminal offence.

How to Report

Management will review the information and if abuse is suspected contact the police immediately to inform them of the suspected abuse.

Details to Provide

Senior Management will give the following information to the authorities:

- participant's name, age, date of birth and address
- description of injury, abuse, and neglect (outline current and previous)
- participant's current situation • location of the participant and alleged perpetrator, if known
- explanation of when and how abuse was discovered and by whom
- Communication needs • Any relevant information as it relates to the persons disability

Investigating Allegation or Incident

Senior Management undertakes a review of the allegation or incident by:

- gathering data from relevant person/s
- analysing the situation to determine what occurred, how it occurred, and the parties involved
- determining the effect on the participant/s
- consulting with relevant stakeholders; never seek information from a child or vulnerable person, as this requires a specialist, any questioning will be conducted by appropriate authorities once the incident is reported
- informing the participant or their family that they have access to a support advocate
- reviewing the outcome against practices
- undertaking action to prevent the incident from being repeated.

Support The Participant

Reported allegations or incidents require Senior Managers to gather all the relevant information and make a report to the relevant authority such as the police or via each state's reporting process.

Support will be provided to the participant/participants family or guardian relevant to the allegation or incident. Participant will be provided an appropriate advocate, if required.

Documentation

- Record all allegations and incidents in the Incident Register.
- Complete Incident Investigation Form, if required.

- Reports are to be included in the participant's file.
- Maintain records as required, in participants electronic file

Further Advice or Assistance

Further advice and information can be obtained from the:

» 123 Support Services' Complaints Handling Officer:

- by phoning: 07 4361 6848;
- by emailing: admin@123supports.com

Effectiveness and Review

The Director will review this Policy and Procedures document each 12 months on the anniversary of its approval.