

Freedom from Abuse and Neglect

Northern Support Services (NSS) aspires to be an organisation that is physically, culturally and emotionally safe; where there is no assault on, challenge to or denial of people's identity, understandings, needs or person. Everyone involved in NSS has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure the wellbeing and safety of our clients, our employees, and other key stakeholders. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable persons including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability. NSS is resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in providing services through NSS promote the inherent dignity and fundamental right of all our clients to be respected and nurtured in a safe environment. This commitment is reflected in our mission and vision and put into practice through our policies and procedures.

Policy

NSS is committed to ensuring that all clients are treated with respect and dignity at all times and in doing so, lead a life free from abuse and neglect.

This includes but is not limited to physical assault, psychological or emotional abuse, restrictive practices, sexual abuse/assault, neglect (physical, or passive), wilful deprivation, exploitation, or financial mismanagement of client's funds.

NSS acknowledges that although prevention of abuse or neglect is always preferable, it is important to have protocols in place to deal with any situations of abuse or neglect should they arise. These protocols aim to ensure;

- Clients are protected from abuse or neglect
- Clients, nominees and employees have the right to report allegations of abuse or neglect
- NSS realises its duty of care to protect clients from abuse and neglect
- Incidents are reported and investigated immediately

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to outline NSS' stance on client's rights in regards to abuse and neglect and the corresponding reporting process.

Scope

This policy and procedures applies to employees, volunteers, clients and nominees in NSS services.

References/Legislation

- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act (2013)
- Disability Act (2006)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006)

- Human Service standards (2012)
- Child Safety Standards

Procedures

NSS recruitment is conducted in accordance with the following NSS policies and procedures:

- Recruitment and Selection
- National Police Check
- Working with Children Check
- Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme

As part of the induction procedure employees are required to read the Freedom from Abuse and Neglect policy and procedure.

All NSS employees participate in cyclic training on Abuse and Neglect.

Clients and their nominees are provided with the Rights and Responsibilities Information Booklet when entering the service. The contents of the handbook is discussed with clients, and includes information about abuse and neglect, appropriate reporting mechanisms, advocacy and translation services.

NSS employees, volunteers, contractors, clients and/or nominees are required to report any concerns that they may have about the welfare of clients to an NSS employee immediately.

When a concern is reported the employee will:

- Inform the individual who has reported the alleged abuse/neglect that the matter will be investigated by NSS, the Department of Human Services or the Police (whichever is appropriate) and reassure the individual
- Ensure the individual that has experienced the alleged abuse and/or neglect has appropriate support and provided with whatever immediate care is required to establish a safe environment.
- Provide the individual with appropriate support and/or advocacy to deal with the situation
- Inform the relevant coordinator
- Complete an incident report

The coordinator will inform the General Manager who will perform a preliminary review of the circumstances, and

- Inform the individual and their nominee of actions that will be taken to address the report, including reporting obligations and protocols
- Relevant parties are informed, including but not limited, Department of Human Services or emergency services, or any other relevant authority
- If applicable, commence an investigation through the Incident Investigation Form within 24 hours
- All relevant parties are informed of the outcomes including any improvement practices which will be incorporated into the Corrective, Preventative and Improvement Actions Register

No one will suffer any adverse effects as a result of reporting concerns, regardless of the outcome of an investigation.

Responsibilities

Title	Responsibility
Employees	Listen and respond to incident with acknowledgement and reassurance – immediately report to appropriate coordinator Provides all individuals involved with incident the supports and contacts to manage the situation – including advocacy, counselling or legal services where relevant)
Coordinator	Investigates incident, reports to Operations Manager before end of working day
General Manager (if unavailable, CEO)	If incident deemed to have occurred, contacts relevant parties (including police ambulance, DHS) Coordinate investigation.

Definitions

Word	Definition
Culture	Forms and goals of interactions among members of a group, and how they understand and communicate with one another.
Cultural sensitivity	Appreciating that there are differences among cultures.
Cultural competence	Being skilled in understanding interactions among members of a culture on their own terms.
Cultural safety	The outcome of interactions where individuals experience their cultural identity and way of being as having been respected or, at least, not challenged or harmed.
Emotional Abuse	Threats or harms of abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, bullying, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation, or being prevented or withdrawn from receiving services or supportive networks
Exploitation	The wrongful or improper use of authority that results in the harmful, injurious or offensive treatment of a person. This includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse of property, possessions or benefits.
Neglect	The failure to provide an acceptable standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, or financial support, shelter or supervision for a person to the extent that the health and development of the person is significantly impaired or placed at risk
Physical abuse	Acts that cause physical harm or injury, from the intentional application of force. Injuries can include internal injuries, dislocated or broken bones, cuts, bruising, welts and burns. These may be caused by hitting, throwing, shaking, suffocation, strangulation, sexual assault, poisoning, mutilation or assault with a weapon.
Sexual abuse/assault	Rape, assault with intent to rape and indecent assault. Indecent assaults are assaults that are accompanied by circumstances of indecency. Examples include unwelcome kissing or touching in the areas of a person's breast, buttocks or genitals. Indecent assault can also include behaviour that does not involve touching such as forcing someone to watch pornography or masturbation. Rape is the intentional sexual penetration of another person without that person's consent. Sexual assault also includes unwanted sexual behaviour, for example, unwanted kissing or touching.