



CLIENT PROTECTION POLICY

Overview

1.1 Policy Statement

Shift & Co is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its employees, visitors, volunteers and particularly to all clients.

Shift & Co's Client Protection Policy aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

1.2 Scope

This Client Protection Policy applies to:

- All service organisations or subsidiary bodies authorised by or under the control of Shift & Co,
- All employees, visitors, volunteers and contractors within Shift & Co or engaged by Shift & Co.

1.3 Definitions

Abuse: can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

- Elder Abuse, a single or repeated act, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.
- Physical Abuse, any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:
 - o hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers), shaking, burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair, alcohol and/or other drug administration.
- Sexual Abuse, any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.
- Emotional Abuse, the chronic attitude or behavior of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviors may include:
 - o Insulting, bullying, devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts in the aged or vulnerable person's presence.

Neglect: characterised by the failure to provide for basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's health or development.

Worker: any person over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of clients placed in their care whilst holding a formal position at Shift & Co. A worker could include but is not limited to:

- Mentors,

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- Coaches,
- Activity Coordinators,
- Counselors.

Client: any person, including children, who attends or participates in Shift & Co’s activities.

Organisation: Shift & Co.

Volunteer: any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited to assist in the support of clients.

Vulnerable Personal: any person who is or may be at increased risk of harm or exploitation by another person by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness.

Policy Review

This Client Protection Policy will be reviewed annually. Shift & Co will inform all interested parties when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by the interested parties should be submitted in writing to the governing body for consideration one month before the review date.

Obligations

1.4 Legal

All relevant organisations within Australia are bound by Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. Shift & Co is committed to adhering to all relevant legislation.

1.5 Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as abuse, but are unacceptable behavior for Shift & Co. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Recording or filming with or without prior consent.
- Acts of violence committed by a worker in the course of an activity.

Shift & Co will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

Selection & Screening

1.6 Employees, Agency Staff, Contractors (Workers)

Workers involved in activities or programs with children, aged and/or vulnerable people must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to commencing employment, the following precautions will be taken:

- All employees must provide a resume that outlines the details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them.

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- Both referees will be checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions which have been drafted by Shift & Co. The questions will seek to establish the applicant’s suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- All short-listed candidates must undertake a formal interview which includes an analysis of past experience working with vulnerable people.
- A Community Services check (Working With Vulnerable People [ACT] Working With Children’s Check [NSW]) which complies with the legislative requirements of Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales will be requested and received prior to the Employee or Volunteer commencing their proposed role. The check must show that the individual is not precluded from working with vulnerable people. Workers are also required to supply a police check (no longer than 6 months old) before beginning employment.

Where a relevant community screening authority (for example for: Working With Vulnerable People [ACT] Working With Children’s Check [NSW]) has identified that an applicant has previously committed an offence/s that preclude them from working with vulnerable people, they cannot be considered for employment or engagement with Shift & Co.

1.7 Volunteers

Volunteers involved in activities or programs with children, aged and/or vulnerable people must read/sign an Engagement Agreement (outlining: the principles of confidentiality/non-disclosure and their suitability for the role). If the volunteer will have 1:1 engagement with a client, without a Worker present; they will be required to provide evidence of a current Working With Vulnerable People [ACT] or Working With Children’s Check [NSW].

Training

All new Workers, including Agency Staff, Contractors and Volunteers will be issued with a copy of this policy and receive formal training in:

- The content and application of Shift & Co’s Client Protection Policy,
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

Refresher training courses based on current “best practice” and changes to legislation will be provided on an annual basis.

A Safe Environment

Workers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

Clients are provided with written information regarding procedures and an avenue for feedback and complaints in their service agreement with Shift & Co. This includes information regarding independent protection bodies such as the National Disability Insurance Agency.

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Reporting Procedures

Shift & Co actively encourages the reporting of all abuse including Sexual Abuse. Shift & Co is committed to building an environment where either a victim or employee/volunteer feels able to report such abuse.

Employees and/or volunteers must report reasonable suspicions of abuse to the senior management of Shift & Co. Reasonable Suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumor or observation of behavior. The details of those reporting abuse will be kept private and confidential.

An independent person will be appointed by Shift & Co with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations of harm or abuse that may arise. Where this is not possible within the organisation, an external independent service will be engaged/notified.

A documented reporting process with escalating procedures has been established by Shift & Co for handling allegations of abuse.

The escalating procedures will be as follows:

- The automatic suspension from work or other duties within Shift & Co while under investigation by Shift & Co, or by the police, for committing abuse;
- The automatic termination of their employment, or involvement with Shift & Co if found guilty of committing abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court.

If there is reasonable suspicion that a Client has been or is suffering abuse, the Police and the Shift & Co's Insurer will be contacted immediately.

The Police will also be notified if a Client discloses an incident of Abuse that has occurred somewhere other than Shift & Co's premises, (e.g. an outing).

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate support to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim.
- Not pushing them to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring them that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the Worker or Volunteer is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

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Any disclosures by a Client, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

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