

## Managing Violence and Aggression

**Life Choice** is committed to the prevention and management of violence and aggression in its service delivery environment, and to delivering services in an environment that is safe for participants, staff and visitors.

This policy will outline Life Choice's processes for:

- Identifying, managing and assessing the risks of violence and aggression
- Responding to violent and aggressive incidents
- Roles and responsibilities of workers, Board, management and participants

### Record of policy development

Version	Date approved	Date for review
2021/1	August 2021	August 2023

### Responsibilities and delegations

This policy applies to	Board of Directors, CEO, managers, supervisors and workers <i>(inclusive of volunteers).</i>
Specific responsibilities	<p><b>Board of Directors:</b> responsible for ensuring the organisation has systems in place to adequately address the required Legislation and Standards.</p> <p><b>CEO:</b> responsible for ensuring training and awareness is undertaken according to current policies and procedures.</p> <p><b>Supervisor:</b> responsible for preparing and overseeing individual worker safety, awareness and improvement.</p> <p><b>Workers:</b> responsible for maintaining their own safety and that their activities do not create hazards and risks to all others within their areas of control or operations.</p> <p><b>Contractors:</b> responsible for ensuring their own safety and that their activities do not create hazards and risks to all others within their areas of control or operations.</p>
Policy approval	Board of Directors

### Policy context – this policy relates to:

Standards	AS/NZS ISO 45001:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems-Requirements with guidance for use
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queensland Work Health and Safety Act 2011</li> <li>• Queensland Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011</li> <li>National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013</li> </ul>

<p>Organisation policies</p>	<p>Ethics &amp; Code of Conduct          Risk Management          Work Health &amp; Safety          WHS Responsibilities          Incident Management          Home Visits          Bullying &amp; Harassment          Complaints Management          Critical Incidents          Grievances</p>
<p>Forms, record keeping, other documents</p>	<p>Risk Register          Code of Conduct Agreement          Worker Incident Register          Worker Incident form          Risk Assessment          Incident Register (CTARS)          Home Visits Risk Assessment          Training Register</p>

## Definitions

**Workplace violence and aggression** means actions and incidents that could physically or psychologically harm another person, which take place in the workplace or service environment. Violence and aggression include situations where workers or participants are threatened, attacked or physically assaulted in the service delivery setting. They include but are not limited to: verbal, physical or psychological abuse, punching, scratching, biting, grabbing, pushing, attacks with weapons, throwing objects/furniture, intimidation, bullying, sexual assault.

## Principles

Life Choice:

- Deems aggression and violence to be unacceptable forms of behaviour.
- Will not tolerate aggression and violent behaviours by staff, participants, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, families and/or carers.
- Constitutes violence and/or aggression as misconduct that may/will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Recognises and accepts its responsibility to ensure a safe environment.
- Acknowledges that it is always preferable to withdraw from violent situations.
- Recognises that evasive self-defence should only be used in situations where the person under attack believes their life is threatened or they may be at risk of becoming seriously injured if they do not take steps to defend themselves
- Recognises that self-defence responses should only be conducted with sufficient force to enable the victim to escape further harm.

## Procedures

### Risk identification and management

#### Service environment/workplace risks

Life Choice provides a secure work environment by:

- Ensuring buildings are well lit both internally and externally;
- Ensuring ease of access and exit from buildings;
- Limiting the availability of hiding spaces for possible aggressors;
- Removing or restricting access to equipment that could be used as a weapons;
- When possible, restricting business hours to safe times and locations;
- Ensuring workers are not alone when dealing with potentially violent participants or when they have to raise and handle issues that may invoke violence or aggression;
- Ensuring staff and participants have easy access to telephones, especially those working alone or in isolated regions.
- Ensure staff undertake and action a home visit risk assessment prior to initial (and as needed) home visits.
- Ensure staff do a pre-visit safety check prior to entering any premises

#### Managing service environment/workplace risks

Life Choice manages risks in the workplace by:

- Ensuring workplace policies and procedures related to participants' and workers' responsibilities are documented, communicated, promoted and adhered to;
- Ensuring appropriate hiring procedures are in place and adhered to and staff security vetting procedures are in place where required for the position;
- Ensuring fair employment conditions are maintained;
- Ensuring workers feel supported and that their concerns are heard, and are provided with opportunities for feedback;
- Ensuring regular supervision and performance reviews of staff;
- Promoting that harassment and bullying will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action; and
- Implementing robust incident and complaints management policies and procedures.

#### Safety and security risk management strategies

Life Choice installs security and safety systems including but not limited to:

- Providing a "safe area" for workers to retreat in the event of an emergency.
- Installing security and access key, card and/or code systems

#### Participant and staff risks

Life Choice implements measures to remove the incentive and motivation for participants and staff to resort to violent and aggressive behaviours, including but not limited to:

- Ensuring there are always sufficient staff to participant ratios;
- Ensuring staff are trained in violence and aggression detection and management, including

complaints and grievances handling;

- Communicating to participants their rights and responsibilities, including their responsibility to refrain from any form of violent or aggressive behaviour;
- Always striving to deliver the highest quality of service/care in order to decrease the risk of participant frustration, which could escalate to aggression; and

Life Choice undertakes a Participant Risk Assessment for each participant, which includes the likelihood that they could demonstrate aggressive or violent behaviour. Life Choice will communicate participant behaviours of concern to ensure that all staff who interact with such participants are aware of the risks they may face when dealing with them, such as:

- Distress or pain as a result of illness;
- Frustration;
- Physiological imbalances or disturbances;
- Substance misuse or abuse;
- Intoxication;
- Dementia and delirium;
- Acute and/or chronic mental health condition; or
- History of violent or aggressive behaviours.

### **Assessing risks**

When assessing the risks of violence and aggression, Life Choice will:

- Consider how likely it is that an act of violence or aggression will occur;
- Consider how severe the impact could be;
- Consider whether it could result in death, serious injury, illness or minor injuries;
- Consider how many people would be exposed to the hazard and could be harmed in and/or outside of the workplace;
- Consider whether a smaller incident could escalate into a larger or more severe incident;
- Ensure to use an Incident Register (CTARS & SPP) to log all incidents which occur, who was involved and how they were resolved; and
- Implement effective control measures for risks which could result in a violent or aggressive incident

A risk matrix is used to assess risk. This includes an estimation of both the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact it may have on the organisation.

		Impact			
		Very high (try to avoid)	High (try to reduce or minimise any risk)	Medium (consider actions to reduce risk)	Low (should be covered by regular procedures)
Likelihood of happening	Very high (almost certain)	1: Extreme	2: Very high	3: High	5: Medium
	High (probable)	2: Very high	3: High	4: Significant	6: Low
	Medium (may happen)	3: High	4: Significant	5: Medium	Negligible
	Low (unlikely)	4: Significant	5: Medium	6: Low	Negligible

### Responding to violence and aggression

Life Choice will make every effort to de-escalate and prevent violent or aggressive incidents from occurring. Life Choice's response to violent and aggressive incidents will vary depending on the nature and severity of the incident, the circumstances of the aggressor, and the skills and experience of the staff member/s involved.

Life Choice will make worker safety a priority, and always ensure there are options for staff to allocate the responsibility of the incident to a manager, senior staff, duress response team or local police.

When responding to a participant who has become violent or aggressive, Life Choice will:

1. Consider the possibility that the participant's underlying clinical condition could be a factor in their behaviour
2. Assess the level of the threat
3. Ensure that if the worker who is dealing with the threat feels unsafe at any time, they understand whom they can call for back up, or how to retreat
4. Key priorities include:
  - Calling for back up, where required
  - De-escalating and containing the situation
  - Preventing injury (to worker, patient and others)
5. Response techniques will vary depending on the severity of the incident, they may include but are not limited to:
  - Verbal de-escalation;

- Distraction;
- Issuing a verbal warning that aggressive or violent behaviour should cease;
- Issuing a written warning that aggressive or violent behaviour should cease;
- Request the aggressor leave;
- Retreat to a safer location;
- Seek support from other workers;
- Initiate internal emergency response in line with Life Choice's protocols;
- Initiate external emergency response in line with local protocol (e.g. police);
- If appropriate and deemed necessary for the safety of the participant or worker, utilise restraint practices;

### **Post violent or aggressive incident procedure**

Immediately after an incident, Life Choice will:

1. Ensure that all parties are safe.
2. Provide medical assistance where necessary.
3. Provide individual support where required, including practical, emotional and social support.
4. Report what happened, who was affected and who was involved to your Leader & Work Health & Safety Officer (WHSO)

Notify your work health and safety regulator if the incident results in:

- A fatality
- Someone requiring immediate hospital treatment
- Amputation
- Serious head or eye injury
- Serious burn
- Spinal injury
- Loss of a bodily function
- Serious lacerations

### **Incident management and investigation**

Following the incident, Life Choice will adhere to our relevant incident management procedures.

## Roles and responsibilities

Workers will:

- Adhere to the staff Code of Conduct, details of this policy and other organisational policies and procedures;
- Endeavour to maintain a safe working environment for other workers and participants;
- Treat people with respect and in a non-confrontational manner;
- Report any incidents of violence and aggression to their Leader and WHSO
- Competently identify signs of potential aggression or violence, in collaboration with carers, where relevant and take steps to reduce these risks from escalating at the earliest opportunity;
- Take steps to ensure their own safety; and
- Attend all required training, refreshers and read all workplace conduct policies.

Leaders and Coordinators will:

- Ensure all staff inductions include the roles and procedures relating to the contents of this policy, including;
  - Roles and responsibilities when dealing with violent and aggressive incidents;
  - Whom to contact and how to get assistance when responding to an incident;
- Communicate Life Choice's risk management policies and procedures, particularly those regarding participants with potential risks of demonstrating violent and aggressive behaviours;
- Ensure alarm and security systems are regularly checked and updated if necessary;
- Debriefing post-incidents is undertaken as soon as possible after an incident;
- Effective measures are taken to protect all workers, participants and visitors;
- Risks are regularly assessed and reviewed;
- All practical measures to reduce the risk of violent and aggressive incidents are undertaken;
- Ensure all workers are trained in the triggers for violent and aggressive incidents;
- Ensure all incidents are investigated and reported; and
- Ensure staff are aware of the legal, therapeutic, ethical and professional aspects involved in the therapeutic management of violence and aggression in the workplace.

Board of Directors will:

- Endeavour to provide a safe working and service environment for any person who comes into contact with Life Choice;
- Develop effective policies and procedures for the management of violence and aggression;
- Ensure appropriate and relevant training programmes are provided to staff;
- Ensure staff undertake training that is specific to the requirements of the position and relevance of their roles;
- Ensure staff training is documented in the organisation's staff training register;
- Be responsible for organisation-wide risk management, particularly identifying risks of potentially aggressive situations; and
- Work collaboratively with workers and other people within the organisation on developing effective strategies to provide a safe working and service environment and decrease aggressive or violent incidents.

#### **Review of this policy**

This policy will be reviewed and updated every 2 years to ensure it is up to date with relevant legislation, standards and is responsive to feedback from participants and workers.

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