

Pro_ 320	<b>Standard Operating Procedure – Managing Participant Violence &amp; Aggression</b>
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#### Record of SOP development

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

#### Responsibilities and delegations

<b>This procedure applies to</b>	CEO, managers and supervisors, workers ( <i>inclusive of volunteers</i> ).
<b>Procedure approval</b>	Quality & Risk Committee

#### Policy context – this policy relates to:

<b>Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AS/NZS ISO 45001:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems-Requirements with guidance for use</li> <li>• National Standards for Disability Services 2013</li> </ul>
<b>Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queensland Work Health and Safety Act 2011 -Queensland Regulations</li> <li>• Criminal Code Act 1899</li> <li>• Fair Work Act (2009)</li> <li>• Disability Discrimination Act (1992)</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013</li> </ul>
<b>Organisation policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WHS Policy</li> <li>• WHS Responsibilities</li> <li>• WHS Risk Management</li> <li>• Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Managing Violence and Aggression</li> </ul>
<b>Forms, record keeping, other documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Participant Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Risk Register</li> </ul>

## 1. PURPOSE

To provide Life Choice staff with appropriate intervention and management strategies to deal with aggressive and violent participants in the course of their duties.

## 2. SCOPE

This SOP applies to all Life Choice staff who interact with participants; in the community, in the participant's own home, or in a Supported Independent Living environment.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

To raise awareness among Life Choice staff:

- of the potential for conflict during participant contact
- to assist in recognising and responding to behaviour that is aggressive, threatening, intimidating and/or potentially violent, and to assist in developing techniques and strategies to effectively manage this behaviour.

When interacting with participants it is essential for staff to remain alert and aware of their surroundings with the safety of themselves and others in their mind at all times.

It is important during participant interaction for staff to:

- identify aggressive and potentially violent behaviour
- identify ways to defuse and/or avoid a potential for violent confrontations
- be aware of how staff behaviour can either escalate or defuse a situation
- assess individual crisis communication strategies
- assess techniques for managing intimidation, verbal abuse and threats
- identify opportunities to exit a scene
- recognise signs which may lead to aggressive and potentially violent behaviour
- adopt approaches aimed at reducing the likelihood of clients becoming violent
- adopt approaches to control anger and to stay in control
- adopt approaches to manage fear
- remain conscious of personal safety to avoid or reduce the likelihood of injury, and
- be conscious of the need to continually assess risk factors and to enlist strategies to avoid or reduce exposure to conflict or potentially dangerous situations.

## 4 PROCEDURE

### 4.1 Client aggression

Client aggression includes a wide range of unacceptable, hostile behaviours directed towards Life Choice staff. Work related aggression may occur at anytime during Life Choice staff working hours. Examples of behaviours which could be interpreted as acts of participants violence & aggression include:

- hostile or threatening gestures
- threatening or offensive behaviour
- verbal abuse of either a personal or general nature by means of innuendo, raised voice or obscenities, including racist and sexist comments
- physical violence against a person such as hitting, kicking, seizing, pushing or punching, or
- physical violence against an employee's personal property, possessions or objects.

## 4.2 Life Choice Commitment

Life Choice is committed to providing support and education to staff exposed to incidents of participants violence & aggression. Staff are not expected to deal with or tolerate situations involving participant violence & aggression without the support from Life Choice management. Any staff who, in the course of their duties is subjected to violence or aggression by a participant, will be given management supports appropriate to the specific incident.

Life Choice has a responsibility under the **Work Health and Safety Act 2011** to provide a safe and healthy workplace for its staff. This responsibility extends beyond the physical aspects of the workplace. It includes providing a workplace where workers are safe from participant violence & aggression.

Life Choice acknowledges the potential for incidents of participant aggression to occur given the nature of work undertaken by staff in delivering a range of services in the community, in the participants home & in a supported living environment. For this reason it is important for all staff to be aware of their responsibilities to recognise and report incidents involving participant violence & aggression. Staff also complete mandatory training and online components where required, to help understand and manage the diversity of participant violence and aggression.

## 4.3 Staff Responsibility

Should a participant become upset or agitated, staff should make every effort to ease the participants tension by continuing to communicate in a confident yet empathetic manner. Participants should be made aware that becoming agitated or aggressive will not assist with resolving of the concern, issue or situation.

Should a participant become aggressive or violent, staff should remove themselves and others to a safe place and contact the Police **000** in the first instance, then Life Choice **4123 6288** or On Call **0407 001 883**.

If a staff member has been assaulted as a result of physical violence or aggression, the staff member involved must obtain medical treatment as soon as possible, towards to nature or extend of the injury/ies.

If property has been damaged as a result of the participants violence or aggression, the property should not be discarded or repaired until inspected, either by Life Choice Management or the Police.

## 4.4 Incident Reporting

Any work - related incident is to be reported as soon as practical, within 24 – 72 hours after the incident involving participant violence or aggression. The staff member must complete a “Worker Incident Report” and a Participant “Incident Report”. A report of the incident will be forward to WHSO, Team Leader and or Coordinator. Once received an investigation will take place and a “Worker Investigation Form” will be carried out and submitted by the WHSO, Team Leader and or Coordinator.

Should staff wish to submit a worker’s compensation claim, staff will need to complete and lodge a Worker’s Compensation Application Form. Staff can be guided by their Team Leader, Management or WHSO to ensure the application is lodged in accordance with current administrative requirements.

## 4.5 Staff Counselling

Life Choice offers EAP to all staff. EAP is a network of competent counsellors who can engage to deliver personal counselling on a need basis. The service provided is highly confidential. Staff who are involved in participant violence or aggression incidents, will be offered EAP.

#### **4.6 Staff Debriefing**

Where staff have been exposed to incidents of participant violence & aggression, a structured and formal debrief is to be conducted to discuss issues arising from the incident. It is suggested that both an individual and / or team debrief is conducted in order to address issues in a thorough and confidential manner.

Should it be considered necessary or appropriate, the EAP provider can provide guidance or assistance with conducting debriefs. Enquiries should be made by Team Leaders or Managers to assist with facilitating this process.

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