

Pro_287	Standard Operating Procedure – Wheelchair operations
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Record of SOP development

Version	Date approved	Date for review
2021/1		

Responsibilities and delegations

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

Policy context – this policy relates to:

Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS/NZS ISO 45001:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems-Requirements with guidance for use • Code of Practice – Manual tasks involving the handling of people 2001 • National Standards for Disability Services 2013
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Work Health and Safety Act 2011 -Queensland Regulations • Hazardous Manual Task – Code of Practice 2021 • Fair Work Act (2009) • Disability Discrimination Act (1992) • National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
Organisation policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHS Policy • WHS Responsibilities • WHS Risk Management • Code of Conduct
Forms, record keeping, other documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Risk Assessment • Client Risk Assessment • Risk Register

1. PURPOSE

Life Choice recognises its moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment for employees, volunteers, contractors, customers and visitors.

Life Choice is committed to preventing and reducing the risks associated with wheelchair operations to ensure a safe workplace.

2. POLICY OUTCOMES

- Staff will be consulted in the development and implementation of the Safe Operating Procedure and a record of such consultation maintained
- Clear guidance is provided to staff on how to effectively manage wheelchair operations
- Staff are educated in - staff, participant, carer and equipment handling procedures associated with wheelchair operations
- Systems and strategies are in place to eliminate or reduce the risk related to wheelchair operations
- Where appropriate Life Choice will endeavour to design, modify and implement environments and equipment suitable for reducing the risk of manual handling injury to staff and their participants.
- Staff will report any incidence of actual or potential injury due to manual handling issues. This will be facilitated through the Life Choice Workplace Health & Safety Officer and the Leadership Team, supporting a culture of reporting and no blame principles.
- Staff will risk assess each instance of wheelchair use. Life Choice does not mandate weight/height or measurement limits. Staff will need to consider:
 - the type and maintenance of wheelchair
 - The height, weight and physical fitness of the staff member
 - The height, weight and capacity of the participant
 - The environment where the wheelchair will be used

3. PROCEDURE

SAFETY CHECK:

- **Tyres**
The pressure in the tyres should be checked weekly. Use a tyre pressure gauge and pump up to the correct pressure marked on the tyre side.
Check for punctures or weak/cracked tread.
- **Wheels**
Check they are free-spinning. If there is any wobbling the wheel requires repair.
- **Spokes**
Check for loose or broken spokes.
- **Hand rims**
Check for rough or sharp edges.
- **Brakes**
Ensure brakes are tight and functioning correctly.
Check that the brakes and tyres are making contact. An incorrectly inflated tyre will diminish the effectiveness of the braking mechanism. If necessary, pump tyres to correct pressure.
Ensure braking mechanism moves freely. If lubrication is required use silicon spray not oil or grease.
- **Footrests**
Check that all pivot parts move freely. If lubrication is required use silicon spray not oil or grease.
- **Arm rests/leg rests**
Check for sharp edges.
- **Push handle grips**
Check that they are secure.
- **Frame**
Check for small dents or cracks – these can affect the frame strength.
- Dirt should be removed with a damp cloth.

Wheelchairs will be cleaned and maintained on a regular schedule and a record of same maintained

INSTRUCTION FOR PUSHING THE WHEELCHAIR

- Always make sure the brakes are on when wheelchair is not in motion.
- Make sure the participant's feet are safely on the footrests, and elbows along with blankets and other belongings are safely tucked in.
- Look well ahead for possible hazards
- Avoid steep, soft or uneven surfaces, this will make it harder to push the wheelchair and may also cause it to tip.
- Always let the participant know what you are doing – turning them, tilting the chair backwards, etc.
- Do not hang any heavy objects over the handles, as this may cause the chair to tip backwards.
- When ready to move wheelchair make sure the brakes are off.
- The support person should stand as close to the wheelchair as possible and push off using their dominant leg first.

TAKING THE PARTICIPANT DOWN A KERB

- Going down the kerb backwards is recommended as it is safer and takes less effort.
- Back the wheelchair to edge of the pavement.
- When the front castors are at the edge of the kerb, pull on the handles and push one tipping lever with your foot to balance the participant on the rear wheels. Pull the wheelchair further, lower the castors and turn ready to cross when safe to do so.

TAKING THE PARTICIPANT UP A KERB

- Push the wheelchair until the footplates are at the edge of the kerb.
- Hold the wheelchair firmly, tipping it backwards using the tipper levers, until the back wheels are touching the edge of the kerb.
- Use the handles to lift and push the wheelchair forward on to pavement.

GOING DOWN A STEEP SLOPE

It is safer if the wheelchair can be guided down a steep slope backwards by the support person.

GOING UP A STEEP SLOPE

It is always best to avoid going up steep slopes. Try to find an alternate way that is safer for you and your participant.

USING ELEVATORS & TRAVELATORS

It is always easier to turn the wheelchair around and go backwards

A – You don't have to turn around in an elevator

B – Easier to manage without the force of the wheelchair coming back on to you.

TRANSPORTING A WHEELCHAIR INTO A BOOT OF A CAR

- Push the wheelchair as close to the open boot as possible
- Apply the brakes
- Remove the foot rests
- Fold the wheelchair
- Grip either side of the wheelchair (fixed frame)
- Keeping your back straight and bending your knees, lift the wheelchair vertically to rest on the edge of the boot.
- Slide the wheelchair on its side into the boot (sliding sheet / blanket can be used).

TRANSPORTING A WHEELCHAIR INTO A VEHICLE WITH HOIST

Only specially adapted vehicles with mounting points and hoists can be used to transport a person still in their wheelchair. Please read manual of specialised wheelchair vehicles.

SAFETY TIPS

- Do **NOT** force the wheelchair down or up staircases, steep slopes and inclines.
- **LOCK** the brakes before getting out or into the wheelchair. The power should be turned off for motorised wheelchairs before transferring.
- Lift up or adjust the foot rests and arm rests if needed before transferring.
- Attach flashy items such as flashing taillights and flags to your wheelchair so that other pedestrians can see you easily in the dark or at night.
- Service and replace the casters regularly. If you are experiencing a side to side motion while going at high speeds this is a sign it needs replacing.

- Adjust and program your motorised wheelchair settings so that you are comfortable with the speed.
- Do not go out in rainy weather. Wheelchairs can lose traction and the controls of a motorised wheelchair can get wet.
- Avoid having a large heavy bag or items on the back of the wheelchair. This can cause the wheelchair to tip backwards during transferring.
- If safety straps are required (as per Occupational Therapist assessment): Always securely fasten the lap strap/harness

END OF DOCUMENT
