

RECOGNITION AND REPORTING OF ABUSE, NEGLECT OR EXPLOITATION POLICY OPERATIONAL POLICY



POLICY TITLE:	RECOGNITION AND REPORTING OF ABUSE, NEGLECT OR EXPLOITATION POLICY		
VERSION:	004	DATE EFFECTIVE:	01/06/2006
AUTHORISED BY:	Chairperson	DATE REVIEWED:	11/05/2022

PURPOSE

To provide clear guidelines in the event that abuse, neglect or exploitation is recognised and how ARC Disability Services Inc. (ARC) will respond.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and Participants who access or deliver ARC services.

IMPLEMENTATION

Children and adults with a disability may be abused, neglected or exploited both within a person's home and in community settings. ARC acknowledges that some individuals seek to use voluntary and community organisations to gain access to children and adults with disabilities. As per the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Code of Conduct, ARC has an obligation to prevent violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation and to ensure that action is taken to promote quality and safety of supports.

The following may indicate that an individual is being or has been abused, neglected or exploited:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries, particularly if such an injury is unlikely to have occurred accidentally.
- An injury for which the child's or adult's explanation appears inconsistent.
- The child or adult with a disability describes an abusive act or situation.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness or sexually explicit behaviour.
- The child or adult with a disability is distrustful of adults or a particular person.
- The child or adult with a disability is not allowed to be involved in usual social activities.

The recognition of abuse is not always easy and ARC acknowledges this but will ensure that all employees, volunteers and Board Members are aware of, trained in and compliant with policies and procedures on preventing and responding to abuse, neglect or exploitation of clients.

It is not the role of an employee or volunteer to make a judgement, however it is their responsibility to act on concerns in order to safeguard the welfare of the individual.

REASONABLE GROUNDS TO SUSPECT ABUSE, NEGLECT OR EXPLOITATION:

- When a child or adult with a disability speaks about being abused or being in danger of abuse – about what has happened, about how they feel.
- When someone else (perhaps a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child) informs an employee that they suspect abuse and gives some indication as to what concerns them.
- When a child or adult with a disability tells an employee they know a child or person with a disability who has been abused (the child/adult maybe referring to him/herself).
- When an employee / volunteer observes a particular child/adult's behaviour, physical appearance, or condition that is of concern or their knowledge of the child/adult with a disability generally leads to suspicion of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

INCIDENTS THAT MUST BE REPORTED/RECORDED

If any of the following occur, it must be reported immediately to the relevant Manager:

- If you accidentally hurt a child/ adult with a disability.
- If a person you are working with appears unusually distressed in any manner.
- If you are concerned that a relationship is developing that could represent an abuse of trust.
- If you are concerned that the child/adult is becoming attracted to you.
- If you are concerned that a colleague is becoming attracted to someone in his/her care.

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- If a child/adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
- If you have had to use reasonable physical restraint to prevent a child/adult harming themselves, or another, or from causing significant damage to property.
- If a child/adult reports an allegation of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

If a child or adult with a disability says something or acts in such a way that abuse is suspected, the person receiving the information should:

- React calmly and with empathy.
- Tell the child/adult that she/he is right to share what has happened and that she/he is not responsible for what has happened.
- Take what the individual says seriously, believe what they say.
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum only to clarify what the individual is saying and not to interrogate.
- Not interrupt the child/adult when they are recalling significant events.
- Reassure the child/adult that the information will only be passed on to those people who need to be informed or can help.
- Make a full record of what is said and done, though this should not result in a delay in reporting the issue.
- Tell the person what you plan to do now, keep them informed about what is happening. Ensure ongoing support if this is required.

The record should include:

- Record of the Participant's disclosure, accurately as possible and shouldn't include assumptions or opinions.
- A detailed account of the nature of the disclosure or concern.
- A description of any visible physical injury (clothing should not be removed to inspect the child/adult).
- The child/adults account of what has occurred.
- Any dates, times or places any other potentially useful information.

Actions to take:

- The disclosure should be reported immediately to the relevant manager or CEO who will take appropriate action.
- If this is out of hours, then the appropriate Manager / Coordinator or CEO should be notified
- Once notified the Manager must enlist the support of another manager. Any actions going forward must involve both or more managers, who will oversee the follow up from the disclosure. Both Managers are to be involved to ensure this serious matter is actioned in a robust and transparent manner.
- It is recognised that employees may need support after receiving a disclosure from an individual and will be offered appropriate support and counselling.

REPORTING TO THE NDIS QUALITY AND SAFEGUARDS COMMISSION

ARC has an obligation to the Participants that we support to ensure quality and safety as well as prevent violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation. As per ARC's requirements under the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework, when violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation are identified this must be reported to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, within the defined timeframes, as defined within the NDIS Rules (2018).

In the event a concern is identified, this will be raised with the commission via an email as record of notification of observation. This shall be sent to the Incident Management and reportable incident team at the NDIS Quality and safeguards commission at Qldreportableincidents@ndiscommission.gov.au. This email is to be sent within 24 hours of observation. This is fulfilling ARC's obligation as a service provider under the NDIS Code of Conduct.

REFERENCES

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework

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AUTHORISATION

This Policy is approved and issued by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Brown'.

Elizabeth Brown

Chairperson

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