




Working Alone (Remote or Isolated) Policy and Procedures

STATEMENT

The Paraplegic & Quadriplegic Association of South Australia Ltd (PQSA) is committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all workers are safe from injury and risk to their health and safety whilst undertaking their duties in the workplace.

Approved by:  Chief Executive Officer	Date: September 2022
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In this policy, 'us' 'we' or 'our' refers to The Paraplegic & Quadriplegic Association of South Australia Ltd ACN 644 670 977, which is a Company Limited by Guarantee and conducts its business through Lifestyle Support and HomeCare+ services.

Please note that printed copies are not able to be controlled and the Shared Drive should always be referred to for the most current version.

SCOPE

Compliance with this policy is a condition of appointment for all workers engaged to provide services on behalf of PQSA.

DEFINITIONS

Refer to the PQSA Policy and Procedure Definition Glossary

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is our responsibility to communicate our policies and procedures to all workers on a systematic basis. Individual Directors and Supervisors are responsible for monitoring workers' understanding of their obligations and need for compliance with policies and procedures. Workers are responsible for complying with our policies and procedures.

POLICY

PQSA will work collaboratively with its clients through the provision of information that ensures safe systems of work are provided for workers in a client's home. This collaboration will support quality service provision that complies with WHS legislative, regulatory and contractual requirements.

PQSA recognises that the Health and Safety of its workers and clients is of primary importance and ranks it equally with all other financial and operational considerations.

PROCEDURES

This procedure outlines PQSA's requirements and practices for the management of workers, students, volunteers and contractors who are required to work alone or in isolated circumstances and to ensure that work in client's homes does not pose a risk to health and safety by ensuring that any identified risks are acted upon as soon as possible.

Hazard Identification

A number of factors may influence the workers safety whilst undertaking a home visit or providing services to a client and may be assessed as follows:

- Emotional factors
 - client and family member's history and other services history of that client
 - client current behaviour
 - likelihood of changes in client behaviour, health status, domestic, social and support networks.

- Physical factors
 - substance abuse, smoking/vaping, access to weapons by client or by others on the premises
 - presence of animals or vermin
 - hazardous substances used in the home
 - infectious diseases
 - manual handling activities involved
 - equipment and work environment
 - heat/cold/confined spaces/noise/light/electricity/moving or falling objects
 - threat of violence by client or others, including neighbours, family members or pets.

Risk Management

- a pre-visit phone call may be needed to confirm time/place and check safety for the initial visit
- a Client WHS Home Assessment form is to be completed prior to commencing service or at time of first service. This is to identify any hazards or risks to the worker(s) when providing services in the client's home. This form is completed at least annually to review hazards and / risks that may have since developed
- a client risk profile may also need to be completed. Routine reviews of this information should be undertaken at least annually
- it is advised that two (2) workers undertake the first assessment
- the referring agency is required to provide a full client history, including a past history of violence and any existence of an Apprehended Violence Orders or sexual incidents
- in situations where safety is an issue, the initial client visit to obtain the risk profile should take place at a neutral venue. This venue should not be an isolated place.

Safe Work Practices – General Principles

Workers are required to:

- ensure their mobile phone is charged and kept on during a client visit. The phone should have a programmed emergency number. Workers are advised to download the Emergency Plus App onto their phone for use in any unsafe situations
- ensure their vehicle has adequate petrol and is in safe, working condition
- upon arriving at the home check for unsafe situations such as uncontrolled pets, unexpected visitors, heated arguments and do not enter premises if you feel unsafe
- identify any changes to the work or workplace where a hazard is identified and should be reported verbally to supervisor and documented via the hazard report form and entered into client communication book if available
- understand and be informed of the Behaviour Support Plans for clients with known aggressive / challenging behaviours
- understand the risk posed by a client with known aggressive / challenging behaviours.
- be aware if door is answered by an unfamiliar person and check that the client is present and expecting your call before entering
- maintain a level of professionalism and do not become over-involved with an issue.
- not provide clients with any personal contact information
- carry identification such as a business card or ID card which has office contact details included
- be aware for their safety at all times and where worker safety could be an issue, workers should park their car to allow for a quick exit and facing the direction of travel. It may be necessary to park some distance away
- if safety is an issue, workers may choose not to go to client's home. Client Services Coordinators will make a note in the clients Carelink and to the workers roster.
- avoid carrying valuables into the home whenever possible – consider use of a lanyard with car keys and mobile phone attached or carry in a pocket
- minimise the manual handling of materials and utilise suitable equipment and lifting techniques where transport is required
- estimate the length of the visit and arrange to ring the PQSA/Homecare+ office (or Homecare+ out of office hour contact number) on completion or to advise that extra time is required
- where visiting a number of clients a schedule of visits should be provided by the Rostering Coordinator so that they can be contacted and the worker should ring the office at the end of the shift or if problems arise

- if the worker feels they are at imminent risk of harm, they must remove themselves from the situation as safely as possible, considering the risk to the client in doing so
- in the event of a serious incident involving a client, the worker should contact the relevant Emergency Services team, and immediately call their PQSA / HomeCare+ office to outline details of the incident
- record any incident on the FOUR Incident Database even if considered minor and the visit has been completed as it may warn of future more serious problems
- if there is no alternative to using a client's phone, other random numbers should be punched into the keypad after the call to ensure that a 'recall' facility cannot be used to trace the call
- in the client's home, choose a safe place to sit. Be aware of access and egress of the premises and ensure exits are not locked
- know where a torch is kept if the power fails, especially if working an overnight shift
- only undertake the agreed work and refer any other requests for other tasks to the Director, Supervisor / Client Service Coordinator/Team Leader
- request that clients do not smoke in the house during a visit and any animals are restrained unless they are assistance animals
- complete all file notes and reports at a suitable work area or in the SIL office
- share any concerns about safety with their supervisor before leaving the office to meet the client. If necessary, the worker may be accompanied by another worker. A contact person should remain available until the worker rings to report that he/she has left the situation
- report all incidents or injuries resulting from aggressive or challenging behaviour in the FOUR Incident / Injury database
- wear the personal duress alarm that is provided to workers where care is provided to a client with known aggressive behaviour and are considered high risk.

Supervision

Supervisors and Managers are to provide support and counselling, including referral to the Employee Assistance Program if appropriate in the event of any traumatic incident experienced by workers or volunteers. Any hazard or incident report must be actioned as soon as received.

Training

Training in the areas of personal safety and the handling of difficult and or challenging behaviour situations, such as aggressive clients, may be provided to workers and volunteers and in response to perceived needs, according to the risk posed by the client. This training will cover, to varying degrees depending upon the needs and qualifications of workers and volunteers, issues highlighted in this procedure and in the Dealing with Exposure to Violent, Abusive and Intimidating Behaviour Procedures.

Emergency Procedures

Workers are to implement and practice protective behaviours whilst working in the Client's home and in particular when they find themselves in a high risk and / or emergency situation.

Where workers are concerned for their safety at a client's property, they should remain at the clients home in the safe room and call the Police for immediate assistance.

If at any time workers feel that they or others are at risk of harm whilst undertaking work / home visits the workers should leave the situation immediately and lock themselves in their vehicle.

After leaving the situation, if there is concern for the welfare of the client or others, police assistance should be requested at all times in the first instance.

All incidents are then to be reported to PQSA / Homecare+ immediately or as soon as safe to do so.

RELATED LEGISLATION

- Work Health and Safety Act 2012
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2012

SUPPORTING PQSA DOCUMENTATION

- FOUR Incident / Injury Reporting
- Client WHS Home Assessment Form

BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

A **breach** of this policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Ignorance of these procedures will not generally be accepted as an excuse for non-compliance. Only in extreme circumstances and where such ignorance can be demonstrated to have occurred through no fault of the individual concerned will PQSA accept such an argument.

DISTRIBUTION AND REVIEW

PQSA will ensure all persons engaged to provide services either paid or unpaid will be aware of this policy and will have easy access to it in an appropriate format. All policies are to be reviewed on a periodic basis or when legislation or government policy determines.