

COMPETENCIES

6 / 10

Communication

6 / 10

Critical Thinking & Decision Making

6 / 10

Accountability

7 / 10

Teamwork & Collaboration

3 / 10

Leadership

SCOPE

This guideline applies to the provision of paid support services in the community. They are relevant Australia-wide or when a client is travelling overseas with their Australian team of support worker/s.

DISCLAIMER

This guideline is provided to help guide best practice in the disability, aged care and community support industry. This information does not in any way replace legislative, regulatory, or contractual requirements. Users of this document should seek appropriate expert advice in relation to their circumstances. ACIA does not accept any liability on the use of this guideline.

PURPOSE

This guideline is to assist:

Service providers (organisations and individuals), clients, stakeholders and funders regarding safe and acceptable maintenance of skin integrity in the community by support workers

DESIRED OUTCOME

- To maintain a quality and safe standard of care .
- To reduce confusion as to the role of support workers in the maintenance of good skin integrity for clients in the community.

BACKGROUND

- This guideline provides clarity around the roles of the support worker, service provider and Registered Nurse in the maintenance a client's skin integrity in the community.
- Furthermore, as client involvement and service direction has increased it is imperative to involve the client in all aspects of the service delivery and the direction of their services to their ability. It is further acknowledged that dignity of risk is an important part of this choice and control.

DEFINITIONS & SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Support Worker - A paid person who assists people to perform tasks of daily living so as to participate in social, family and community activities in the person's home and their community. Support Workers have been commonly known in the past as attendant care worker, disability worker, aged care worker, community worker, homecare worker, care worker or paid carer.

Service Provider - Organisation or person accountable for the delivery of supports to Clients.

Carer - a person that provides supports to the Client at no cost (generally family or friend).

Support Worker Competency - trained and assessed as competent by a Registered Nurse or a person deemed competent by the provider to safely and appropriately perform a specified task as a support worker.

Client means the service user, participant, user, care recipient, consumer or person receiving the nursing or support services.

Plan means a Service Plan, Support Plan or Individual Plan (however titled – the plan) is a document developed in response to a request for service. It is developed by a Registered Nurse or a person deemed competent by the provider from the service provider, prior to the commencement of service delivery. It outlines the expected outcomes of the requested care/services and the tasks, duties and interventions required to meet the care and service needs of the client (within the parameters of the funding program). The plan guides and directs the individual support worker or Registered Nurse in their day-to-day delivery of the services.

Registered Nurse means a person who has completed the prescribed educational preparation, demonstrated competence for practice, and is registered and licensed with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) as a Registered Nurse.

Pressure Areas are specific areas of the body that put greater pressure on the skin. These are usually bony prominence areas such as the buttocks, heels, elbows and shoulders. Pressure to these areas compromise the integrity of the skin causing painful reddening areas that without appropriate care and treatment will lead to pressure sores.

Pressure Sore is a neglected pressure area that rapidly deteriorates into a pressure sore (also known as an ulcer or wound). The skin is broken, tissue deteriorates and the wound continuous to enlarge.

Wound means skin tissue damaged by trauma. This may be deliberate, as in surgical wounds of procedures, or be due to accidents caused by blunt force, projectiles, heat, electricity, chemicals or friction.

Skin is the natural outer layer that covers a person. It comprises two layers of cells – the epidermis which is the thin outer layer and the dermis which is the thick inner layer.

Competent means having been trained and assessed by a Registered Nurse or enrolled nurse or approved assessor as competent to safely and appropriately perform a specified task.

Infection Control means infection prevention and control measures aimed at ensuring the protection of those who might be vulnerable to acquiring an infection both in the general community and while receiving care, in a range of settings. The basic principle of infection prevention and control is hygiene.

GUIDELINE

Service Provider

As a part of any support service delivered by support workers the service provider will:

- Assess initial care needs with the client. Including (if required) clinical assessment of client's skin condition and pressure sore risks
- Particular attention must be given to all diabetic clients in relation to skin integrity as there is a far greater risk of breakdown of skin ultimately leading to gangrene and limb amputation.
- Determine the types of skin care interventions and maintenance tasks that the support worker may attend
- Develop plans with identified outcomes
- Provide written procedures on the provision of skin care, skin inspection and maintenance by the support worker – this may be included as part of the plan
- The Plan for pressure area or pressure sore management should be clearly documented in the home and only changed by the doctor or a Registered Nurse and access to policies and procedures made available to support workers.
- Identify education needs for support workers. Provide relevant competency-based education and assessment processes for the support worker/s to ensure they are competent to perform the prescribed duties, tasks and interventions
- Monitor, review, evaluate and adapt as required the service, plans and outcomes with the involvement of the client
- It is recommended that support worker duties be delivered under the direction and supervision of a Registered Nurse.

Service by a Registered Nurse

- Change and review the pressure sore or skin integrity regime
- Perform surgical and/or chemical debridement
- Perform any pressure sore/wound/sinus packing
- Assessment of skin integrity should consider (Payne, 2020);
 - Medication
 - Skin conditions
 - Wound healing capability
 - Exposure to sunlight
 - Living environment
 - Repeated falls
 - Menopause
 - Incontinence
 - Overall hygiene practices.

Support Workers

Support workers may NOT:

- Perform any duties that must be attended to by a Registered Nurse (as outlined above)
- Support workers may:
- Perform any task on the plan, apart from those that must be performed by a Registered Nurse (or other suitably assessed person), after having completed competency training and being signed off as competent in the task by the service provider. Examples include:
 - Observe skin regularly
 - Reporting changes in skin integrity or potential risks as identified during care and service provision
 - Encourage or assist with repositioning
 - Ensure bed clothes, clothes, seats and cushions remain smooth
 - Encourage hydration
 - Ensure skin is kept clean and dry

Support workers must:

- Follow the plan as provided by the service provider
- Report to their supervisor of any changes or variations for advice
- Not change the plan
- Identify, and report to their supervisor, any gaps in their ability to deliver the required service including difficulties in completing the tasks within the allocated time.

Guidelines for Optimised Skin Integrity (Feldhacker et al., 2022; Konya et al., 2021; Payne, 2020; Rumbo-Prieto et al., 2016; Strayer & Martucci, 1997)

- Daily application of emollients is advised, and soap should be avoided;
- Encourage the use of pH neutral soap substitutes to bathing and showering routines;
- Barrier creams should be applied where excessive sweating or moisture is evidence;
- Hot towel bathing may be considered due to poor skin integrity;
- Consider a multidisciplinary approach in these strategies;
- Engagement of clients in decision making approaches;

RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

- External ACIA Guidelines 002 – Care and Service Provision in the Community
- Feldhacker, D. R., Lucas Molitor, W., Jensen, L., Lohman, H., & Lampe, A. M. (2022). Occupational Therapy and the IMPACT Act: Part 2. A Systematic Review of Evidence for Functional Status, Medication Reconciliation, and Skin Integrity Interventions. *Am J Occup Ther*, 76(1). <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2022.049324>
- Konya, I., Nishiya, K., & Yano, R. (2021). Effectiveness of bed bath methods for skin integrity, skin cleanliness and comfort enhancement in adults: A systematic review. *Nurs Open*, 8(5), 2284-2300. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.836>
- Payne, D. (2020). Skin integrity in older adults: pressure-prone, inaccessible areas of the body. *Br J Community Nurs*, 25(1), 22-26. <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjcn.2020.25.1.22>
- Rumbo-Prieto, J. M., Romero-Martin, M., Bellido-Guerrero, D., Aranton-Areosa, L., Rana-Lama, C. D., & Palomar-Llatas, F. (2016). Assessment of evidence and quality of clinical practice guidelines on deterioration of skin integrity: ulcers and chronic wounds. *An Sist Sanit Navar*, 39(3), 405-415. <https://doi.org/10.23938/ASSN.0236> (Evaluacion de las evidencias y calidad de las guias de practica clinica sobre deterioro de la integridad cutanea: ulceras y heridas cronicas.)
- Strayer, L. S., & Martucci, N. M. (1997). Promoting skin integrity: an interdisciplinary challenge. *Rehabil Nurs*, 22(5), 259-262. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2048-7940.1997.tb02113.x>