

COMPETENCIES

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Communication

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Critical Thinking & Decision Making

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Accountability

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Teamwork & Collaboration

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Leadership

SCOPE

This guideline applies to the provision of paid support services in the community. They are relevant Australia-wide or when a participant 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 to consider in the planning for some of the major and reasonably foreseeable emergencies that may impact vulnerable persons being supported by community supports and/or services in the community setting.

DESIRED OUTCOME

- To maintain a quality and safe standard of service delivery support
- To assist service providers to best respond to an emergency event in situations of Severe Weather (Fire / Flood) or Health Emergency (e.g., Communicable disease) in the interests and safety of their clients and personnel in the home and community setting.

DEFINITIONS & SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Community Supports and/or Services is defined as the provision of paid supports and services in a client's home or community. It includes but is not limited to, the following activities of daily living:

- personal care or support
- housework or domestic assistance
- transport assistance
- community access
- social support
- nursing services
- clinical supports
- gardening and home maintenance
- palliative care
- respite care

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.

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.

Emergency Event: is an event involving a sudden and large-scale alteration in state or circumstance which may also include Police / Military Operations, and Terrorism where there is the potential for widespread implications. In terms of its definition within this guideline, it refers to Natural Disaster, Severe Weather (Fire / Flood) and Health Pandemic with the potential of widespread implications for service delivery.

Natural Disaster / Fire / Flood - 'Catastrophic' is the highest fire danger rating. If a fire starts during catastrophic conditions, lives, and homes will be at risk.

GUIDELINE

- Service providers should:
 - Ensure that policies, procedures, or instructions in the management of Health and Safety relating to emergency planning for large-scaled events are reviewed regularly to ensure currency of information on a regular basis and included as part of their internal audit program.
 - Provide planned education on emergency policies, procedures or instructions for all staff and document same in the organisation's training register.
 - Communicate with clients as to what is planned in the event of an emergency, and how the organisation will continue to support them.
 - Review or develop a Business Continuity Plan to reflect actions in an emergency and ensure their workforce are familiar with their role/s in the plan.
- Client Risk Register
 - The Risk Register can be used as a tool to identify clients residing in areas potentially may be affected by an emergency event. By identifying the impacted area, it enables the service provider to quickly identify and respond to those at risk considering their medical or physical conditions, which in turn may add further risk if not identified promptly.
 - It is recommended that service providers maintain records of each client, with the details of persons at most risk stored in a Client Risk Register, with an assessed rating, which may be accessed remotely by the service provider when required. This includes persons at risk of both Environmental / Natural Disasters and critical Health Events / Pandemics in the community.
 - In the event of emergency evacuation, document where would the client relocate to (obtain address and contact details to verify their safety should you be unable to contact them)
 - If they need to evacuate and relocate for an interim period, where would they go and what are the contact / location details
 - Service providers may also consider developing a checklist of actions useful in providing guidance for staff when presented with an emergency event.
 - Service providers have a responsibility to ensure their staff follow instructions to keep their clients safe. This includes:
 - Knowing where their staff are located to identify if they are scheduled to provide services in areas that are or may be affected by severe weather and to avoid deploying staff into those areas in an emergency.
 - Maintaining regular communication with staff to ensure they are safe and well, either through SMS or phone conversations.
 - Documenting Services Users' individual requirements in their file and their support plan for reference in the case of an emergency.
 - Refer to available resources that can provide guidance on emergency services that are available in the client locations, including specific websites and flyers that can be printed for the clients' home as a reference guide.
 - Providing regular communication during an event utilising available technology, such as phones, SMS to mobile phones, or social media, reminding clients and staff to:
 - Listen to the radio to receive updates and information on what is happening in their local community.
 - Avoid flood waters reminding them not to drive, ride, or walk-through flood waters or roads which are affected by floods.
 - Avoid fires – reminding them not to drive into an area where there is fire or fire warning.
 - Additional information and resources have been developed specifically for clients and service providers.
- Communication during an emergency
 - Service providers should develop a communication plan to be used during an emergency event to ensure all staff, clients, family / next of kin and funders are kept informed of any changes or developments.
 - Staff should participate in training as part of the service providers annual mandatory training requirements. This should include potential emergency situations such as flood, fire, and infection control.
 - Home Safety and Environmental checks are integral to ensuring everyone's wellbeing and should include fire safety equipment, location, risk, and evacuation method.
 - Encourage clients to have an evacuation plan and to be prepared to evacuate if advised by emergency services.
 - After an emergency event, a follow up and wellbeing check on clients and staff to assess service or support requirements.
- Communication Plans during Crisis
 - Having a clear communication plan for clients and their families, as well as staff, affected by a disaster aids in providing a sense of calm and reassurance of the wellbeing of everyone along with supporting the ability to continue to deliver some essential services where they can be provided, in a safe manner. This stored information requires regular updates and review to ensure its currency.

- Clients
 - Contact Information – requires that current contact information (phone, mobile, email and next of kin and emergency contacts) for clients be stored in a central and accessible location.
 - Client Communication Procedure – should be detailed on the support plan, which should be stored in a central and accessible location.
- Staff / Organisation
 - Staff Contact Information – requires that current contact information (phone, mobile, email, emergency contacts) for all staff be stored in a central and accessible location, i.e.: hard copy, digital, via an organisations app etc.
 - Staff Communication Procedure – provides instructions of recommended methods of staff communication during the emergency (mass email, call tree).
 - Intra-Organisational Communication – identifies people within the organisation that need to be contacted to report and coordinate responses.
 - Emergency Services – lists contact numbers, websites, or apps for emergency services.
- Communicable Diseases and Health Threats
 - Service providers should remind staff to stay home if they are unwell to protect vulnerable clients and other staff and be able to evidence regular training on the importance of universal precautions/infection control and the use and disposal of PPE.
 - Clients should also be made aware of the importance of informing a service provider if they are unwell with a potentially highly communicable disease.
- Reporting
 - It is important to comply with general health orders and government directives and to remain updated on Commonwealth, State / Territory requirements for reporting during emergency events including the need for service providers to report any cases of communicable disease or interruption to service delivery.
 - Service providers should maintain awareness of these obligations, either through communication or alerts from those Authorities, checking their websites for updates or contacting them directly.
- Information access / storage
 - Organisations that fail to make contingency plans for their electronic and essential data may be inviting serious business disruptions when an emergency occurs.
 - Consideration and measures put in place to support your organisation if you need data protection, backup, and / or disaster recovery.
 - The types of disasters include not only environmental (flood, fire, earthquake), but may also include power outage, evacuation of premises, terrorism etc.
 - Identify Risks
 - For many organisations, losing data and information is the biggest threat. Start by identifying where the data is stored, if there are copies, and if so, where are the copies stored (onsite or in a separate location).
 - Think About Off-Site Backups
 - If an organisation does store data separate from its primary location, is it accessible now and later when you need to restore your data.
 - Consider Disaster Recovery Solutions
 - Many companies use cloud storage as a backup since it is easily scaled and cost-effective. Evaluate the physical and virtual locations of the data, then review how susceptible both would be to loss from fire, floods, or other events,
 - In addition to having cloud-based disaster recovery technology implemented and tested, IT teams need to practice their disaster recovery plans to understand what works well and where there are opportunities for improvement.
 - Things to consider and include in your planning:
 - What are the core functions of our business that we need to continue, no matter what?
 - How do we process payroll if we cannot access the building or computer systems?
 - How do we contact staff and clients if we do not have access to the building or computer systems?
 - How is our electronic data backed up?
 - How do we access our data offsite? Have we tested this? e.g. Client information

RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

- External ACIA Guidelines 002 – Care and Service Provision in the Community
- External ACIA Guidelines 031 – Infection Control in the Community
- Australian Community Industry Standards ACIS