acia leading quality in community services

Prevention and Management of Adverse Events in Community Care Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the Australian Community Industry Alliance's (ACIA) approach to the prevention and management of adverse events in community care. It establishes ACIA's commitment to collaborative information sharing and proactive engagement with Scheme Funders and Certification Bodies (Conformity Assessment Bodies - CABs) to support participant safety, quality service delivery, and sector-wide continuous improvement.

This policy seeks to:

- Prevent serious incidents and adverse events through the early identification of provider risks and poor practice
- Enable timely and coordinated responses to support participant wellbeing and provider improvement
- Support continuous quality improvement and risk mitigation across the community services sector

2. Scope

This policy applies to all ACIA staff, contractors and representatives involved in quality assurance, certification and provider support activities. It also guides ACIA's collaboration with Scheme Funders and CABs in relation to providers certified, or seeking certification, under the Australian Community Industry Standard (ACIS).

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant ACIA governance, certification and information-sharing documents.

3. Guiding Principles

- **Proactive Prevention** – Priority is given to identifying provider risks and potential harm through the ACIS audit process and review of audit outcomes
- **Transparency and Accountability** – ACIA promotes open communication while respecting confidentiality and procedural fairness
- **Collaboration and Coordination** – ACIA will work constructively with Scheme Funders and CABs to ensure a coordinated approach to risk management and information sharing
- **Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality** – Information will only be shared where lawful, necessary and directly related to the identified risk
- **Participant Safety** – The safety, wellbeing and rights of individuals receiving supports remain central to all decisions and actions
- **Continuous Improvement** – Information gathered through audits, adverse events and risk reviews will be used to strengthen quality practices and sector performance

4. Policy Objectives

ACIA will:

- Establish structured channels for sharing relevant risk and quality information with Scheme Funders and CABs
- Contribute to the early detection of systemic risks, provider non-compliance and emerging poor practice
- Act as a conduit for escalating credible concerns regarding provider safety and quality
- Promote consistency in responses to serious risks across schemes and CABs
- Support learning and improvement through de-identified data analysis and trend reporting

5. Roles and Responsibilities

ACIA

ACIA will:

- Maintain records of ACIS-certified providers and certification cycles
- Facilitate meetings with Scheme Funders before certification or surveillance audits to identify relevant risks and concerns
- Facilitate regular discussions regarding sector trends and emerging risks

- Provide CABs with guidance on escalating significant concerns
- Notify relevant Scheme Funders where a certified provider presents a significant or imminent risk to participant safety

Certification Bodies

CABs will:
- Report material findings or concerns regarding provider conduct, capability or compliance to ACIA within agreed timeframes
- Apply consistent risk-based auditing approaches
- Identify and escalate emerging patterns of concern

Scheme Funders

Scheme Funders are encouraged to:
- Share relevant de-identified information regarding incidents, adverse events and provider risks that may impact participant safety or certification outcomes
- Provide information before scheduled audits where relevant to audit planning and risk assessment

6. Managing Serious Risks and Adverse Events

Where a serious risk is identified, ACIA will work collaboratively with the relevant CAB and Scheme Funder to assess the nature and severity of the risk.

Depending on the circumstances, ACIA may:
- Request the CAB undertake an early surveillance or spot audit
- Apply certification conditions
- Suspend certification
- Revoke certification in accordance with ACIS requirements

Where adverse events are reported to a Scheme Funder, the Scheme Funder may request ACIA to undertake a review. ACIA will apply the same risk assessment and escalation processes used for other serious risks.

ACIA may also share de-identified learnings arising from adverse event reviews to support sector-wide improvement.

The icare definition of Adverse Events and associated reporting requirements are included in Appendix A to this Policy.

7. Information Sharing

ACIA has established ACIA External 047 – Information Sharing Guidelines to support effective information exchange between ACIA, CABs and Scheme Funders.

The Guidelines identify:
- Matters that CABs must report to ACIA, including significant provider risks and major non-conformities
- Information that Scheme Funders should provide to support risk reviews and audit planning
- Information that ACIA may share with Scheme Funders and CABs to support risk management and certification outcomes

All information sharing must comply with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and applicable State and Territory legislation.

8. Review and Continuous Improvement

ACIA will:
- Review this policy every three years or earlier where emerging risks, legislative changes or stakeholder feedback indicate a need for review
- Review this policy at the request of Scheme Funders or other key stakeholders
- Evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative arrangements and information-sharing processes through stakeholder feedback and operational experience

9. Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant ACIA documents, including:
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Relevant State and Territory Privacy Legislation
- ACIA External 031 - The Australian Community Industry Standards (ACIS)
- ACIA External 032 - The Australian Community Industry Certification Scheme (ACICS)
- ACIA External 045 - Audit Report Timeframes Policy
- ACIA External 047 - Information Sharing Guidelines

Appendix 1

Extract from icare Attendant Care provider Agreement:

Adverse Events must be reported to the icare contact, case manager and Attendant Care Team within 24 hours of the event occurring. If an Adverse Event occurs out of business hours, the provider must send the information to attendantcare@icare.nsw.gov.au to be accessed the next business day.

Adverse Event reports can be in the provider's own format but should include as minimum:
- The date the event occurred
- Identification of the participant involved
- A detailed description of the event
- Immediate action taken by the provider in response and the outcome
- Remedial or preventative action taken by the provider to prevent the occurrence of further adverse events

Providers must have a reporting and management system in place to identify and manage risks and incidents, including identification of Adverse Events.

Category	Description
Absent or missing participant	A participant is absent, missing, or uncontactable, and there are concerns for their safety and welfare, or that of others.
Alleged abuse, assault, or neglect of a participant or of another adult	There is an instance of abuse, assault, or neglect involving the participant or others involved in their care (e.g. family member or service provider). This includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, social, psychological, or financial abuse, assault, or neglect, and historical allegations of sexual abuse.
Child at risk	Where a child is at risk and/or a report has been or will be made to the Child Protection Helpline and there are implications for the participant or their services. This category relates to: • a child participant or their siblings, or • the child of a participant.
Death (of participant, their family member, support worker)	• Death of a participant • Death of a participant's family member where the family member is involved in the participant's care • Death of a paid support worker involved in the participant's care where the death has occurred while providing services or will result in significant disruption to services.
Fraud	Alleged fraudulent activity undertaken by a participant, their family member, or any service provider or support worker.
Homelessness or risk of homelessness	The participant is at risk of homelessness or has become homeless.
Illegal conduct	Alleged illegal conduct undertaken by a participant, their family member or any service provider or support worker during service provision.
Inappropriate conduct or poor performance of support worker	Inappropriate conduct or performance by a service provider, including failure to follow appropriate procedures, or the inability of the service provider to deliver the services required.

Environmental emergency	An environmental emergency including flood, fire, severe storm etc where the participant's life, property and/or service provision are at risk.
Notifiable disease or serious illness	When a participant, their family member or a service provider has been diagnosed with a disease that will have a significant impact on their treatment, rehab or care, or an illness that requires mandatory reporting to an Australian health authority (e.g. COVID-19).
Privacy	Alleged inappropriate disclosure of the personal or health information of a participant or their family.
Significant or intentional property/equipment damage	Property damage requiring significant cost to repair that impacts the participant and/or their service provision.
Unauthorised use of restrictive or prohibited practices	Any unauthorised use of a Restrictive or Prohibited Practice on a participant such as physical, chemical, environmental, or mechanical restraint, or seclusion.
Risk of harm (to participant, support worker, health professional, icare staff member or others)	Any situation where there is a risk of harm including threatening behaviour, self-harm, refusal to accept services, atypical high-risk behaviour, or environmental risks that place the participant, providers, family members or icare staff at risk of harm.
Injury (to participant, their family member, support worker, or member of the community)	Injury sustained by a participant or other people involved in their care. This includes any injury sustained by paid support during the provision of services to the participant, or a member of the community as a result of the participant's actions. This may include falls, medical episodes, accidental injury, or medication mismanagement.
Service provider disruption or viability concern	• Significant organisational disruption, mismanagement or change in ACIS Certification status affecting a service provider. This also includes the inability of a service provider to deliver required services because of recruitment or viability concerns. • Concerns regarding ongoing financial viability of the service provider. • Any issue that could have a potential or actual negative effect on icare's reputation or operations, for example as a result of media coverage.
Suicide attempt	Any actions taken by a participant where it is reported they were taken with the intention to end their own life.
Suicide ideation	Any expression of the desire to end ones' life made by the participant directly to icare staff or a service provider.