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| Policy No: 5.15 | Policy Name: **Safe Outreach and Home Visits** |

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| Applies to:  | Version:  |
| Specific responsibility:  | Date Approved: |
|  | Review Date: |

# Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the processes that staff are required to follow when working in outreach and /or home visiting clients to promote work health and safety.

This policy applies to all staff working in [Service Name] as they engage with clients in their homes or the broader community.

# Policy statement

Staff who undertake home visits or community outreach may be exposed to increased risks due to the time and location of the work. [Service Name] will utilise a structured risk management approach to minimise risk for staff working in such situations.

# References

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)

Workers Compensation Act 1987 (NSW)

Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998 (NSW)

Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Act 2012 (NSW)

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cwlth)

Work Health and Safety Regulations (2011) (Cwlth)

Model Work Health and Safety Regulation (2019) (Cwlth)

# Definitions

Nil

# Procedure

## Advising the Manager of lone working

It is the individual responsibility of each employee to advise their Manager on every occasion that the employee is likely to work alone. Information that should be provided includes:

* location(s)
* duration
* who the employee is meeting
* expected time back to the office
* mode of transport used to access the location
* any concerns or anticipated issues.

## Plan to reduce the risk of alone work periods

If any concerns or anticipated issues are identified, then a plan to reduce the likelihood of such incidents occurring must be developed. Common strategies include:

* organising an additional employee
* aborting appointment
* completing an initial phone assessment
* meeting the client in an open space.

## Mobile phones

In every event of lone working, the employee must have a fully charged mobile phone. Conducting outreach or home visits without a mobile phone is not permitted.

## Records of planned alone work

A record of the visit location and expected duration should be retained in the employee’s office, in accordance with the program protocols that requires staff members to note where they are going and their expected return time on the staff movement white board.

## Running late

Staff are required to inform [Service Name] office as soon as they are aware that they will be returning late.

If the employee is overdue in returning to the office or in making contact, then the [Service Manager] is required to call the employee and check.

If the employee cannot be contacted for thirty minutes, then the police should be informed.

## If an incident occurs

If a lone employee encounters a situation in which he or she feels threatened or unsafe in any way, then the lone employee is required to immediately leave the location and call [Service Name].

If it is impossible to leave a situation or environment, then the police should be called (no. 000).

## Responsibilities of supervisors

Supervisors are required to undertake the following responsibilities:

* being aware and alert to staff in the field and their anticipated return time
* having access to a fully charged mobile phone when they are away from their desks
* within 15 minutes of a lone employee not returning to the office or touching base, attempting to contact the lone employee and continuing to do so for the next 15 minutes
* contacting the police if communication was not successful.

## Risk prevention strategies for alone work

Outreach staff should never:

* enter a property alone that has not been risk assessed—unless this was discussed with the [Service Manager] prior to the visit
* enter an unknown or ‘new’ property alone
* leave the office without access to a charged mobile phone. They should also assess the level of mobile phone access prior to undertaking alone work
* leave the office without advising their supervisor or another staff member
* leave the office without providing written details of where they are going and when they expect to return
* engage or stay with a person who actively uses illicit drugs or is intoxicated by alcohol.

## Staff security—home visits

[Service name] takes a risk management approach to home visits and to maximising workers’ safety during a home visit. There are several pre-visit actions that staff must take to prepare for a home visit. Staff are required to consider all threats to safety that may be likely during each home visit. To achieve this, workers are required to actively seek information about the environment and the people likely to be on the premises. The following actions are required prior to conducting a home visit:

* complete a Working Off-Site Checklist
* conduct a client risk assessment prior to attending the client’s home
* assign a safety backup in accordance with this policy
* reassess risk after the visit
* maintain emergency procedures.

**On arrival at a client’s home workers must implement the following:**

* Do not park their vehicle in the driveway.
* Park the vehicle facing the way they will exit.
* Do not enter if there are unrestrained and potentially aggressive animals (phone the client and request that he or she come out and restrain any animals).
* Before knocking, listen for arguments and be observant for any signs that the situation may be unsafe.
* Check the locking mechanism on the gate and ensure that they know how to work it.
* If an unfamiliar person answers the door, check that the client is home and ask that he or she come to the door before entering.
* Leave all valuables (e.g., wallet) locked in the boot of the car.

**During the home visit workers must implement the following:**

* Only take in what is essential for the visit.
* Keep their mobile phone and keys on them at all times. Keep their phone within visible reach.
* If the client is not home, do not leave any identifiable material.
* Conduct the visit in a location where they have clear access to an exit.
* If there is any activity occurring in the home that would put them or the visit at risk, use the ‘tips for leaving’ and leave immediately. Tell the client that they will contact him or her to reschedule the visit.
* Activities that justify leaving the visit may include
* evidence of illegal drug use
* client intoxication
* violence, aggression or argument
* evidence of firearms or weapons
* another event that is taking priority in the home (e.g., other visitors).
* Tips for leaving:
* Say that they need to get something from the car.
* Say that they have just received a text from the office and need to call/leave.

**Post–home visit**

It is the worker’s responsibility to contact the office and advise that the visit has been completed safely:

* The worker can call at the end of one appointment and before the next.
* If the worker is returning after hours or is going straight home, then he or she must contact [Service name] office to advise that the visit has been completed.

# Related documents

Work Health Safety Policy

# Review

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| **Reviewing and approving this policy** |
| Frequency | Person responsible | Approval |
| [How often will this policy be reviewed] | [Position of person responsible for reviewing policy] | [position of person/group who approves this policy] |

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| **Policy review and version tracking** |
| Review | Date approved | Approved by | Next review date |
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