Community Connections

POLICY & PROCEDURE

SAFETY AND WELL BEING

POLICY

Community Connections seeks to provide services in a manner that protects the safety and well being of people using its services.

RESPONDING TO VIOLENT INCIDENTS

PREAMBLE

All service users and workers have the right to feel safe and to participate in Community Connections' programs and services in a non-threatening environment. The CLA Committee of Management is responsible for ensuring that a non-threatening environment is maintained. When a violent incident occurs, the worker will inform the service user that their professional duty of care responsibilities requires them to immediately notify the Community Connection's Team Leader or the CLA Coordinator (where the violent incident involves the Team Leader).

Action will be taken to Support the person who was threatened or recipient of violence to take those options which will assist them to best resolve the issue for them, for example:

- Medical assistance
- Counselling
- Reporting to police
- Laying charges
- Seeking mediation etc.

Attacks on Property or Persons:
Employees are explicitly instructed not to put themselves at risk by intervening to prevent CLA property or other property destruction. Employees should feel no obligation to intervene if another person is physically assaulted. They should immediately sound alarm and ring police or ambulance if necessary. Employees should remove themselves from situations where they may become victims of physical violence.

PROCEDURE

In the event of a violent incident within the organisation, the following steps will be taken towards the person committing
the incident:

1. Meeting with the person to make them aware that their behaviour is unacceptable and that it must cease.
2. If the behaviour continues, a written statement will follow, explaining that the person's behaviour is unacceptable and that they risk being excluded from the service if it is continued

3. If this statement is ignored, a further written notification will follow giving the person a period of time for the behaviour to completely cease.
4. If the behaviour does not cease the person will be excluded from the service.

Where a service user is excluded from the organization, Community Connections will ensure that the service user is contacted as soon as possible to provide follow up, information and referral. Should the person wish to re-engage with the Community Connections, they should approach the organization to request a service and a process for re-engaging will be negotiated between the person and the organisation.

- Workers will aim to ensure that the incident is resolved at the earliest possible opportunity and that they do not play a role in escalating the violence
- Workers will complete a Critical Incident Report at the nearest opportunity following the violent incident (see Appendix I)
- The Community Connections worker who is involved in the violent incident or who has been made aware of a violent incident must notify the Team Leader or CLA Coordinator as soon as possible and provide them with a copy of the Critical Incident Report
- The Community Connections' Team Leader or CLA Coordinator will negotiate working alongside the worker to resolve the issue
- The Community Connection's Team Leader or CLA Coordinator will ensure that debriefing opportunities are provided for workers following a violent incident
- The Community Connections Team Leader or CLA Co-ordinator will ensure that the person who was recipient of threat or violence is supported to best resolve the issue for them
- Workers will contact the service user as soon as possible after the incident to provide follow-up support, information and/or referral.

RESPONDING TO SELF HARM

Preamble

Community Connections understands that self harming can be a way for people to cope with and express the emotions surrounding difficult or traumatic experiences in their lives. Self harming can include a range of behaviours characterized by the intention to cause physical harm, pain or damage. These behaviours may include: cutting, burning, scratching, ingesting, inserting, hitting and poisoning. Eating issues can also be considered a form of self harming behaviour.

Community Connections' workers have a duty of care to respond to service users who disclose self harm, in an effort to ensure the safety and well being of the service user. In the instance where a service user shares with a Community Connections worker that they have engaged in self harming behaviours, the worker will explore with the service user the steps they have taken to attend to the physical injury and encourage the service user to access additional medical support if required. Importantly, the worker will also explore the underlying reasons that gave rise to this behaviour and alternative strategies for coping in future instances.

Procedure

When a services user has self harmed, the worker will attempt to ascertain the severity of the injury or physical damage. If the severity of the injury is apparent and obvious to the worker, medical intervention will be sought (as per the next points).

If the worker is unclear about the nature or severity of the physical damage, they will either contact a co-worker or an emergency medical centre/hospital to seek advice. In the case of any misuse of medication or other substances, the Poison Information Service (Ph: 131 126) must be contacted for advice.

If it is determined that the physical injury is not severe (e.g. burning with a cigarette, scratching or minor misuse of medication) the worker will still encourage and support the service user to receive appropriate medical intervention.
If it is determined that the physical injury or damage is severe and the service user is present with the worker, the worker will remind the service user that the worker's duty of care as a professional worker stipulates that they must ensure that the service user receives medical intervention. This will be achieved by the worker contacting the Ambulance Service. There is an expectation that the worker will accompany the services user to a hospital in the event that the service user needs to be taken to a hospital by the Ambulance Service. If for some reason the worker is unable to accompany the service user to a hospital, the worker will negotiate other support for the service user.

If it is determined that the physical injury or damage is severe and the service user is speaking to a worker by phone, the above processes will still apply with the following notes: After explaining the duty of care responsibilities, the worker will attempt to determine the service user's location and whether any other support people are present; the worker will negotiate with the service user for an ambulance to be contacted and may make arrangements to meet the service user at the medical facility. If the service user refuses to receive medical intervention, the worker will again explain the duty of care responsibilities and proceed to call an ambulance.

Workers will ensure that all relevant discussions and actions are documented in case notes.

Workers will complete a Community Connections Critical Incident Report and inform relevant workers/management of the incident at the nearest opportunity.

Workers will contact the service user as soon as possible after the incident to provide follow-up support, information and/or referral.

RESPONDING TO SUICIDE/SUICIDAL INTENTIONS

PREAMBLE

Whilst Community Connections respects a service user's right to have control over decisions in their life, the organisation does not in any way encourage or support a service user taking their own life.

Community Connections recognises that many suicidal inclinations are the result of a person's attempt to deal in some way with the enormity of their life experiences. Should a service user express to a Community Connections worker the desire to end their own life, the worker will express deep concern about the situation and respond in an effort to ensure the safety and well being of the service user.

PROCEDURE

Should a service user express to a Community Connections worker the desire to end their own life, the worker will express deep concern about the situation, undertake a Suicide Risk Assessment (if confident) and explore some of the following options with the service user:

- Explore the events which have led up to the situation
- Develop a list of crisis supports and explore other support options
- Encourage the service user to identify and explore other less destructive ways of dealing with their emotions
- Negotiate specific ways to ensure the service user's immediate safety e.g. contracting for the service user to contact the worker or other support agency prior to taking any action. After hour contacts include Life Line and Kids Help Line.
- All of these options are to be explored and a contract is to be negotiated

Where there is a high level of risk or the worker is uncertain of the level of risk, the worker will contact another worker or mental health professional for support in determining the level of risk.

Workers will ensure that all relevant discussions and actions are documented in case notes.

Workers will inform another direct worker within Community Connections at the earliest opportunity.

If the service user's suicidal inclinations should result in self harming behaviours, the worker will respond according to the Self Harming Policy.

HARM TO CHILDREN

PREAMBLE

To clearly identify the professional responsibilities of Community Connections' workers when they become aware of harm of children or intent to harm children by service users. This professional responsibility includes providing high quality ethical services and ensuring the safety and well being of service users and the community in general.

Community Connections will undertake any or all necessary actions to ensure the safety and well being of children who service users have disclosed they have harmed or intend to harm.

PROCEDURE

If a service user informs a Community Connections worker that they have an intention to harm a child, the worker will attempt to gain more information. The worker will ascertain whether or not the statement was meant as a means for expressing emotions without a subsequent intention to act or as an indication of a service user's intention to do harm through their actions to another person.

If it is clear to the worker that the service user intends to harm a child, the worker will inform the service user that their professional duty of care responsibilities requires them to immediately notify the relevant authorities i.e. the Police and Department of Families.

If a service user informs a Community Connections worker that they have seriously or repeatedly harmed a child, the worker will inform the service user that their professional duty of care responsibilities requires them to immediately notify the relevant authorities i.e. the Police and the Department of Families.

If the worker has reason to believe that the child would be at further risk of harm by informing the service user of the impending notification the worker can make the notification without informing the service user.

If the worker is in any doubt about the seriousness of the harm to a child, they will contact another direct worker within the organisation and/or a representative of the Department of Families to have a non-identifying conversation, to seek advice.

Workers will ensure that all relevant discussions and actions are documented in case notes.

Workers will inform another direct worker within Community Connections at the earliest opportunity.