

# National Disability Council Workplace Health and Safety Policy

## Introduction

**Purpose of the Policy:** To ensure a safe, healthy, and respectful working environment in line with NDIS frameworks. This policy protects staff, participants, and other stakeholders from physical and mental harm.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all staff, contractors, subcontractors, directors, shareholders, NDIS participants, and their support teams.

## Workplace Safety Standards

**Physical Safety:** Implementing safety protocols such as regular risk assessments in the workplace and at client homes. For example, ensuring emergency exits are marked and accessible.

**Mental Well-being:** Acknowledging the impact of verbal abuse and implementing support systems like counselling services. Example: Offering debriefing sessions after challenging interactions.

**Prevention of Violence and Aggression:** Strategies such as conflict resolution training and clear guidelines on managing aggressive behaviour from clients or colleagues.

## Code of Conduct

**Staff and Management Conduct:** Promoting a culture of respect and professionalism.

**Example:** Zero tolerance for bullying or harassment, with clear disciplinary procedures.

**Participant Interaction:** Guidelines for positive and respectful communication with NDIS participants. For instance, staff should always speak to participants with respect and patience.

**Respect and Dignity:** Ensuring all interactions uphold the dignity of participants, such as by seeking consent before providing any assistance.

## Reporting and Response

**Incident Reporting:** Clear channels for reporting safety concerns, like a dedicated hotline or online form. Example: A staff member reports a case of verbal abuse from a client.

**Response Protocol:** Outline steps like immediate investigation, support for affected individuals, and corrective actions.

## Training and Awareness

**Staff Training:** Regular workshops on topics like disability awareness, emergency response, and respectful communication. For example, annual training sessions on understanding different types of disabilities.

**Awareness Campaigns:** Ongoing initiatives to promote workplace safety, such as monthly newsletters highlighting safety tips and policy updates.

## Continuous Improvement

**Policy Review and Updates:** Annual review of the policy to integrate new NDIS guidelines or feedback.

**Example:** Updating the policy to include new health and safety standards post-COVID-19.

**Feedback Mechanism:** Encouraging staff and participants to provide feedback through surveys or suggestion boxes.



## Conclusion

**Commitment to Safety and Respect:** Reaffirming NDC's dedication to a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for everyone involved.

## Handling Abuse/Violence from Participants

### 1. Zero Tolerance Policy

**Description:** A firm stance that any form of abuse or violence from participants towards staff or subcontractors is unacceptable. This includes physical violence, verbal threats, harassment, or any form of intimidating behaviour.

**Example:** If a participant becomes physically aggressive during a session, the incident is to be reported immediately, and appropriate actions are taken to ensure staff safety.

### 2. Prevention and Training

**Staff Training:** Equip staff with training in de-escalation techniques and recognizing early warning signs of aggression.

**Example:** Role-playing scenarios in training sessions where a participant becomes verbally abusive, and staff practice de-escalation strategies.

### 3. Reporting Mechanisms

**Clear Reporting Channels:** Establish a straightforward process for staff to report incidents of abuse or violence, ensuring confidentiality and support.

**Example:** A dedicated hotline or an online incident report form where staff can promptly report an abusive encounter.

### 4. Response Protocols

**Immediate Response:** Outlining steps for staff to take in the event of experiencing abuse, such as removing themselves from an unsafe situation.

**Example:** If a participant begins to verbally abuse a staff member, the staff member is trained to leave the situation and seek assistance.

### 5. Support for Affected Staff

**After-Incident Support:** Providing counselling services, legal advice, and other necessary support to affected staff.

**Example:** Access to a confidential counselling service for staff who have experienced abuse.

### 6. Participant Management

**Managing Aggressive Participants:** Procedures for handling participants who have exhibited abusive behaviour, which could include a re-evaluation of their service plan or involvement of authorities if needed.

**Example:** Temporarily suspending services to a participant following an incident, followed by a review of their care plan.

### 7. Collaboration with Authorities

**Legal Action:** In cases of severe abuse or violence, involving law enforcement or other authorities as necessary.

**Example:** Reporting to the police if a participant physically assaults a staff member.

### 8. Regular Review and Policy Update

**Ongoing Evaluation:** Regularly reviewing these protocols to ensure they are effective and updating them in response to new challenges or incidents.

**Example:** Annual review of incident reports to identify patterns and areas for improvement in staff training.

### 9. Communication with Stakeholders

**Transparency with Participants:** Communicating the zero-tolerance policy clearly to participants and their support network.

**Example:** Including a summary of the policy in welcome packets for new participants, emphasizing the importance of respect and safety for all.