Infection Control Policy and Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide policy and guidelines to ensure safe practices around infection control are implemented across Woden Community Service (WCS) to minimise the potential risk of disease and harm to WCS staff, service users and the community.

Scope

This policy applies to all WCS staff and people who enter WCS premises (service users, staff from other agencies, community etc.). Within this policy, the term 'staff' applies to employees, volunteers, students, trainees and contractors.

Infectious diseases are diseases that can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another.

Policy

WCS has a commitment to provide a safe environment for all staff and other persons attending the service. WCS also has a legal obligation to provide and maintain a work environment for employees that is safe and without risk to health, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Consistent with this, WCS has procedures to identify hazards and assess the risk of infection in the delivery of service. WCS staff implement infection control precautions to address the risks identified.

WCS provides staff with the necessary infection control procedures, training and information to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to ensure a safe working environment.

WCS ensures that staff and service users who have an infectious disease are not subjected to unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Guidelines

Infectious diseases can be spread from person to person in a number of ways, including by:

- inhalation of airborne droplets spread by coughing, blowing the nose, sneezing and even talking
- contact with contaminated items or surfaces
- direct contact with infected blood or bodily fluids when there is broken skin, needle stick type injuries or splashes to our skin.

The following guidelines provide specific instructions and guidance for WCS employees to implement strategies to control the spread of infection in the workplace.

Risk assessment and control

Risk assessment

All staff are responsible for identifying and addressing hazards to prevent or reduce injury and illness in the workplace. Where possible, staff should eliminate risk but, if this is not possible, they should seek to reduce

risks and manage hazards. Dealing with infected service users may be unavoidable and staff need to conduct risks assessments to manage these situations safely.

When completing risk assessments, staff should consider workplace factors such as type of service provided and workplace setting. For example, there are different considerations for workers providing outreach or transporting service users.

WCS has a duty of care to reduce hazards. All staff have a responsibility to identify hazards and to report incidents promptly. With prompt reporting, managers can understand and address the risks, prevent further incidents and provide support where required. Refer to the WCS Incident Response Guide.

Examples of where staff may be at risk of contracting an infectious disease through the course of their work include:

- inhaling airborne droplets when working closely with infected staff and service users
- contact with surfaces that may have been contaminated if hands are not washed correctly after going to the toilet or sneezing
- direct contact with infected blood or bodily fluids when changing nappies, dealing with nose bleeds or vomit
- conducting home or off site visits where there may be drug use and risk of coming into contact with sharps.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that premises and practices within their area are set up to identify and reduce the risk of exposing staff and service users to infection, including:

- completing a workplace inspection with staff to identify infection hazards. For example, examine hand washing and food-handling practices of staff and volunteers and the adequacy of hygiene facilities
- reviewing incident reports to identify whether anyone at the service (including members of the public) has become infected in the past and how to prevent in the future
- asking employees if they have had any concerns about possible exposures to infectious diseases
- sourcing all information regarding the prevention of infectious diseases from a recognised health authority
- ensuring staff are aware of and follow procedures.

Risk control

To reduce the transmission of infectious illness, managers and staff are expected to implement effective hygiene and infection control strategies.

Consistent with this, managers are required to provide safe work procedures that can be implemented in the workplace, regardless of whether a person is infectious or not.

All staff are required to follow routine prevention and control practices to minimise the spread of infection, these include:

- practicing good hand hygiene and cough etiquette
- using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- keeping surfaces clean (routine environmental cleaning
- assessing risks of infection prior to delivering service
- staying home if unwell.

Managers will provide safe work procedures, incorporating additional precautions, establishing:

- safe practices for handling blood, body fluids and secretions as well as excretions
- appropriate waste management, including sharps handling and disposal
- protocols to deal with infectious diseases in the workplace (e.g. requesting staff to not enter the workplace if unwell, identifying safe options if a service user is unwell)
- prompt reporting and response to incidents.

WCS managers are responsible for implementing infection prevention and control strategies by:

- providing an immunization program for Hepatitis B and flu when relevant
- ensuring there is critical incident risk management planning
- training staff in risk control measures.

The control measures are covered in more detail in the next section.

Routine practices for all staff

Hand hygiene

Hand washing is the most important hygiene measure in preventing the spread of infection.

Managers will ensure that staff and service users are informed of the need to correctly wash their hands to protect against infection.

Hand hygiene strategies to follow include:

- washing your hands with soap and water for 10-15 seconds under running water, and dry them thoroughly
- using alcohol-based handrub if you don't have immediate access to soap and water.

Refer to ACT Health - https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/accreditation/infection-prevention-and-control - Hand Hygiene Posters and Flyers

Personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is required by all staff in circumstances where they have direct contact with:

- blood (including dried blood)
- other bodily fluids
- secretions and excretions, for example faeces, saliva, mucous and broken skin.

Exposure may occur during the cleaning of bathrooms, nappy changing, disposal of waste, cleaning of bodily fluid spills, or the administration of first aid. Staff need to use appropriate PPE for these situations.

Refer to ACT Health - https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/accreditation/infection-prevention-and-control - Hand Hygiene Posters and Flyers –Donning and Doffing

Clean environment

All staff to maintain a clean environment assists in reducing the spread of infection.

Managers will ensure cleaning precautions are implemented by staff and contractors when cleaning WCS facilities.

The following steps to consider include:

- establishing protocols outlining cleaning methods and frequency for routine cleaning of work areas to remove dust, soil and micro-organisms
- identifying priority areas for more frequent cleaning, including food preparation areas and surfaces likely to come into contact with bodily fluids, for example toys, bathrooms and nappy change facilities
- cleaning surfaces with neutral detergent and hot water both before and after an activity like nappy changing
- ensuring spills involving blood or bodily substances are cleaned with neutral detergent and hot water, using the appropriate PPE
- emptying buckets after use, wash with detergent and warm water and store dry; and mops should be cleaned in detergent and warm water then stored dry.

Response to risks and incidents

Risk assessment before delivering service

Staff are responsible for conducting a risk assessment and following procedures to minimise potential risk of infection before providing services. To encourage service user participation and support a two-way approach to infection prevention and control:

- ensure service users are aware of the service's infection prevention and control strategies
- encourage service users to disclose their health or risk status if there is a potential risk or source of infection
- provide opportunities for service users to identify and communicate risks
- inform service users about the protocols for protecting their privacy and confidentiality
- provide educational materials about infection prevention and control using a variety of media (e.g. posters, printed material, email) in a variety of accessible formats.

Staying home from work if you are unwell

All staff have a responsibility under the WHS Act to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and for the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions while at work.

Staying at home when you are unwell is an important measure to reduce the likelihood you will share your infection with a colleague. This will reduce the likelihood that the infection will enter the workplace and infect others.

You should also go home immediately if you feel yourself coming down with an illness while you are at work. Your manager may ask for a medical certificate stating that it is safe for you to return to work.

Staff are to consult with their manager to determine if there may be an opportunity to work from home.

Ref Work from Home Policy and Guidelines and Leave Policy and Guidelines

Safe handling of sharps

Infection control procedures when handling needles and other sharp contaminated objects include:

- never attempt to re-cap or bend used needles
- handle by the barrel with a gloved hand

Place in an appropriate puncture-proof container (that meets the Australian and New Zealand Standards AS 4031:1992 and AS/NZS 4261:1994) – this will be yellow, labelled 'Danger contaminated sharps' and marked with a black biohazard symbol.

Responding to risk of exposure to blood or bodily fluid

After exposure to blood or other body substances staff are to take the following action as soon as is safe to do so:

- Where the exposure involves a cut or puncture, wash the area thoroughly with liquid soap and water for a period of at least 30 seconds.
- If eyes are contaminated, while open, rinse them gently and thoroughly with water or normal saline.
- If blood or other body substances get in the mouth, spit it out, then rinse the mouth with water several times.
- Dispose of needles and/or syringes in the appropriate manner.
- If clothing is contaminated, remove clothing and shower if necessary.
- Consult with a doctor if a possibility of blood or body fluids entering the body.

Where water is not available, use of a non-water cleanser or antiseptic should replace the use of soap and water for washing cuts or punctures of the skin or intact skin.

The injured person should report the incident immediately to their manager.

All staff must follow the procedures in the WCS Incident Response Guide.

The manager is to ensure staff are informed of access to appropriate professional counselling through the WCS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with Relationships Australia.

Safe handling of waste

All waste generated from first aid treatments or the clean-up of spills should be handled with care, so as to avoid contact with blood and body substances. Disposable gloves should be worn when handling contaminated waste.

Place contaminated waste in a sealed, leak-proof bag and dispose of with general waste in accordance with the Waste Management Guidelines.

Soiled clothing should be identified as such and placed in a leak proof bag separate from other materials. Staff and service users should be advised to take home any soiled clothing belonging to them and to wash as soon as possible. Normal washing procedures and detergents are adequate for decontamination of most laundry items.

Follow the WCS Incident Response Guide regarding reporting and investigation of incidents resulting in clinical waste and hazardous substances.

Preventing spread of infectious diseases

Managers will follow these protocols when a staff member or other person at the service advises that they have an infectious disease:

- Maintain confidentiality but inform the appropriate staff.
- Determine the nature of the infectious disease. Ask for the specific name of the disease e.g. whooping cough (pertussis), measles etc.

- Confirm diagnosis – medical certificate/*doctor diagnosis*. Some people may advise that they have an infectious disease however they have not been to the doctor or they are still awaiting confirmation of blood tests. The Manger will advise them to stay at home until well and to phone to advise of the details of the infectious disease once confirmed by a doctor.
- Seek relevant information to manage the infectious disease and exclusion periods. Infected staff and service users may need to be excluded from the workplace to prevent the infection spreading to others.
- Consider alternate ways of supporting service users when they are excluded from the service.

Refer to the NHMRC exclusion table in Staying healthy: preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th edition), or

ACT Health- https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/fact-sheets

- In the case of outbreaks of a notifiable infectious disease, Managers will contact the Infection Control Unit of ACT Health. Public health staff can provide valuable advice, support and resources that can help manage outbreaks.

Refer to ACT Health - https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/disease-surveillance

- The Manager will complete an incident report, refer to the WCS Incident Response Guide.

Immunisation

Immunisation not only protects staff, but also the service users they work with, who may be more vulnerable to vaccine preventable diseases.

The risk of infection can be significantly reduced if staff and service users are up to date with their vaccinations.

Managers will make available information to staff and service users about the relevant vaccine preventable diseases.

Immunisation guidelines are available from the Department of Health National immunisation schedule - https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/national-immunisation-program-schedule

Staff should seek advice from their doctor about vaccinations. Some vaccinations are not recommended during pregnancy, or if a person has a disease or is undergoing treatment that affects their immune system.

Children Services managers will ensure the immunisation status of the children in care is kept in the enrolment record for each child enrolled at the education and care service. *(Education and Care Services National Regulations- Regulation 162.)*

All managers will inform staff of initiatives implemented by WCS regarding immunisations for relevant vaccine preventable diseases. WCS will maintain records of all staff who participate in corporate immunisation initiatives.

In addition, Aged Care managers will keep records of staff influenza immunisations received outside the corporate initiatives. *(Aged Care Quality Standards – Standard 3 – 3(g))*

Manager responsibilities

Risk management planning

WCS managers have a duty of care under the Work Health and Safety Act (WHS Act) to manage corporate risks—including work health and safety risks. WCS will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace and anything arising from the workplace does not put at risk the health or safety of any person. *(see WCS Work Health and Safety Policy)*

WCS will apply the steps to managing risk (see WCS Risk Management Procedures) to ensure infection risks are prevented or minimised. This includes critical planning to manage serious infection risks such as Pandemics, to ensure that additional infection control measures are implemented and maintained.

Consistent with this WCS has processes for effective monitoring and evaluation of infection management practice to identify areas where infection control practice can be improved. Where a problem is identified additional risk management strategies will be implemented.

Incident reporting

Manager are responsible for following the review process for incidents to ensure:

- incident reports are responded to promptly
- external notifications are completed and recorded
- reflections on the incident and control/corrective actions are implemented
- incidents are monitored to determine overall trends occurring in the service.

Refer to –WCS Incident reporting: manager review guidelines

Staff training in risk control measures

WCS acknowledges that effective infection control practice in a workplace requires ensuring people have both the knowledge and the skills required to minimise risk. WCS will provide specific education and training for all staff about infection prevention and control principles.

WCS also recognises the importance of providing training to staff involved in the management of waste and hazardous substances to ensure safe and appropriate handling of waste materials. This includes training on any protective equipment and clothing required when handling waste or hazardous substances.

Managers are to ensure that training is provided as part of orientation and current training/information provided when it becomes available. Managers are also required to have a Training Register to record staff training.

It is important to remember that everyone has a responsibility to ensure a safe workplace and work practices under Workplace Health & Safety legislation and to comply with WCS policies and procedures.

References

Related legislation and policies

ACT Work Health & Safety Act 2011

ACT Work Safety Regulation 2009

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012

Aged care Quality Standards

Internal documents

Work Health and Safety Policy (under review)

Incident Response Guide

Employee Assistance Program

Risk Management Procedures

WCS Waste Management Guidelines

Incident reporting: manager review

National Health and Medical Research Council, Infectious Diseases in Child Care Working Group. *Staying healthy: preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 5th Edition 2012

Work Safe Australia – Working Safely in Community Services, 2nd Edition. October 2006

Australian Government Department of Health. https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-cdna-norovirus.htm-l

Key contacts for infection control in Canberra and Hand Hygiene Posters and Flyers. https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/accreditation/infection-prevention-and-control

Immunisation guidelines are available from the Department of Health National immunisation schedule - https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/national-immunisation-program-schedule

ACT Health - Infection Control Office Practices and other Community Based Services 2006

World Health Organisation - https://www.who.int/topics/infectious_diseases/en/

Better Health Channel "Work Issues – Infection Control"

Policy review

Current version

Service line | Service area	Disability, Mental Health and Aged Care	Version	1.1
Process owner	Director, Disability, Mental Health and Aged Care	Date of issue	Aug 2020
Approved by	Pam Boyer	Scheduled review date	Aug 2023

Modification history (including current version)

Version	Date	Author	Approved by	Description of changes
1.1	6 Aug 2020	Jenny Pearce	Pam Boyer	New policy