Contagious Diseases and Pandemic Response

POLICY NUMBER: NDIS WHS 10

INTENT

The intent of this policy is to guide employees of Real Living Options Association Inc. on taking reasonable precautions to protect themselves and Participants from contracting infectious diseases including COVID-19. The policy outlines preparations for a Pandemic or where there is the possibility of contracting an infectious disease.

DEFINITION

COVID-19 *- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more severe diseases.*

Infectious: *spreading or capable of spreading rapidly to others through the environment.*

Contagious: *transmissible by direct or indirect contact with an infected person.*

Disease: *a specific, identifiable condition, often with measurable changes in the body's structure or function that can be diagnosed or treated by a healthcare professional.*

Illness: *a subjective experience reflecting the persons perception of their health and well-being which may or may not be directly linked to a specific disease.*

POLICY STATEMENTS

- Real Living Options Association Inc. (the Service) will endeavour to fulfil its obligations to deliver safe, quality supports and services while also managing risks associated with the support provided to Participants.
- This Contagious Diseases and Pandemic Response Policy and Procedure is in line with the Australian Federal Government, QLD Government, and NDIS guidelines regarding outbreak preparedness, prevention and management of a pandemic within the Service. This policy aims to avoid or minimise the transmission of any infectious/contagious disease or illness within the Service and the community.
- Throughout a pandemic and while there is a threat to the community, the Service will endeavour to maintain full-service capacity and continue to provide supports critical to the wellbeing, health and safety of its Participants while complying with state and federal regulatory requirements. In the event of a Pandemic, the Service may at times have to tailor its services or apply limitations to the provision of non-essential services.
- The Service is focused on preserving the health and safety of its Participants and employees. However, the Service acknowledges that Participants and/or employees may at times, contract an infectious/contagious disease or illness.
- State and federal government health orders frequently change in response to infectious/contagious outbreaks. On an ongoing basis, the Service will identify and implement any revisions required to the practices and supports undertaken to meet all requirements of the NDIS Commission and the state and federal government.

- The Service will identify threats that may require further analysis of the current work practices and supports. Reviewing current practices will inform Service risk management and continuous improvement systems.
- The Service has an Infection Control Policy in place that must be always adhered to in addition to any direction given in this policy.

PROCEDURES

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Participants, employees, and volunteers, the Service will follow these procedures in the event of an identified infectious or contagious disease or illness:

Implementation of Policy

- Real Living Options Association Inc. (the Service) will enact its Contagious Diseases and Pandemic Response Policy and Procedures as soon as a relevant risk is identified.
- This includes actions to protect and support all Participants, staff, and volunteers who may be affected.

Staff Responsibilities

- All employees must take reasonable precautions to ensure the safe delivery of supports and services.
- Employees must not attend work and must notify the Service immediately if they experience any respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, even if mild. These include:
    - Fever.
    - Cough.
    - Shortness of breath.
    - Sore throat.
    - Runny or congested nose.
    - Tiredness.
    - Loss of smell or appetite.
    - Diarrhea.
    - Vomiting.
    - Skin changes or rashes.
- If symptoms develop while at work, employees must:
    - Report to the Support Team immediately.
    - Follow the directions provided.

Positive Diagnosis

- An employee who has been diagnosed with an infectious or contagious disease or illness by a health professional or a positive test must:
    - Refrain from attending work during the infectious period.
    - Upon return, wear a mask for the first 5 days back at work.
- The Support Team must:
    - Inform any Participants (or their Representative Nominee) who were supported by the employee in the three days prior to the diagnosis.
    - Advise them to monitor for symptoms.

Participant Illness Notification

- Participants (or their carers/representatives) are required to inform the Service if they experience any of the above-mentioned symptoms.
- If a Lifestyle Assistant observes these symptoms in a Participant, they must:
  - Notify the Support Team immediately.
  - Follow instructions provided by the Service.

Staff Working with Unwell Participants

- Lifestyle Assistants will be notified when a Participant is unwell with an infectious or contagious disease.
- They may choose whether to provide support to that Participant during their illness.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- If a Lifestyle Assistant agrees to support a Participant who is unwell, they must wear appropriate PPE supplied by the Service, including:
  - A face mask.
  - Gloves.
  - A face shield (if requested).
- PPE protocol:
  - PPE must be put on before entering the Participant's home.
  - PPE must be removed immediately after exiting the home and disposed of in a sealed garbage bag.
  - Hand hygiene must be practiced before and after PPE use.
  - A new set of PPE must be used for each entry into the home.
  - Face shields may be disinfected and reused if not visibly contaminated.

Staff Monitoring Post-Exposure

- Any Lifestyle Assistant who has supported an unwell Participant must:
  - Monitor for the symptoms listed above.
  - Notify the Support Team immediately if they develop any symptoms.
  - Follow all directions provided by the Service.

DELEGATIONS

Management Committee

- The Management Committee has an obligation under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011(Qld)* to safeguard the health and safety of each Employee of Real Living Options Association Inc. and to ensure as far as practicable that the health and

safety of others is not affected by the activities of Real Living Options Association Inc.

General Manager
As far as practicable the General Manager must ensure that:

- The functional areas of Real Living Options Association Inc. under their control complies with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011(Qld),* all applicable standards and policies. As a supervisor, the General Manager has an obligation to ensure the workplace health and safety of all Employees and others under their control by preventing or minimising their exposure to risk.
- Employees of Real Living Options Association Inc. have access to appropriate PPE.
- Develop an infectious/contagious disease or illness plan that sets out the following:
    - Actions to help prevent the introduction of an infectious/contagious disease or illness in the workplace.
    - Workplace requirements - the level of face-covering or personal protective equipment (PPE) required.
    - The procedure on how the Service will respond to a suspected or confirmed infectious/contagious disease or illness in the workplace.
    - Details of how Real Living Options Association Inc. will meet all the requirements set out by the state and federal governments.

Support Manager
As far as practicable the Support Manager must ensure that:

- Employees who are supporting a Participant who has an infectious/contagious disease or illness are given the PPE required as per this policy.
- Employees who are supporting a Participant who has an infectious/contagious disease or illness have been given training and/or clear directions in the use of the prescribed PPE.
- Daily communication with the Support Team and the General Manager to keep all involved parties informed.

Lifestyle Assistants
As far as practicable Lifestyle Assistants must ensure that:

- All directions from the General Manager, Support Manager and Support Team are followed.
- PPE provided is donned prior to entering the home of a Participant who an infectious/contagious disease or illness and doffed immediately upon stepping outside of the Participants home and placed into a garbage bag that can be tied off and disposed of. Hand sanitiser must be applied immediately.

All Staff

- Follow the direction in Policy NDIS Staff 13 – Infection Control at all times.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION

Policy NDIS WHS 1 – Workplace Health and Safety
Policy NDIS STAFF 13 – Infection Control
Policy NDIS STAFF 17 – Employee Vaccinations
Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace

REFERENCES
Work Health and Safety Act 2011(Qld)
NDIS Code of Conduct (Workers)
QLD Government Health Advice website

AMENDMENTS/REVIEWS

Amended 02.02.23 Amended 07.12.23 Amended 04.07.24 Amended 04.09.25