POLICY NUMBER: NDIS STAFF 13

INTENT

Real Living Options Association Inc. believes effective infection control is central to providing high quality services to Participants and a safe working environment for Real Living Options Association Inc. employees and others.

DEFINITION

***Infection Control**: in the workplace aims to prevent pathogens being passed from one person to another. The foundation of good infection control is to assume that everyone is potentially infectious.*

POLICY STATEMENTS

- Real Living Options Association Inc. will manage the risk to Participants and employees contracting an infectious and/or preventable disease by identifying infection risks related to the Service and implementing precautions that are proportionate to those risks.
- Effective infection control is central to providing high quality support for Participants and a safe working environment for employees and others.
- As a registered NDIS Provider, Real Living Options Association Inc. complies with the NDIS Guidelines and Practice Standards and relevant State and Federal Government requirements.
- Infectious agents can be spread in a variety of ways, including:
    - Breathing in airborne germs - coughs or sneezes release airborne pathogens, which are then inhaled by others.
    - Touching contaminated objects or eating contaminated food - the pathogens may be spread to food or other objects, if their hands are contaminated.
    - Skin-to-skin contact - the transfer of some pathogens can occur through touch, or by sharing personal items, clothing or objects.
    - Contact with body fluids - pathogens in saliva, urine, faeces or blood can be passed to another person's body via cuts or abrasions, or through the mucus membranes of the mouth and eyes.

PROCEDURES

Vaccinations

Whilst vaccinations are not a mandatory requirement, it is recommended that medical advice be sought about appropriate vaccination measures for the following preventable diseases:

- Influenza.
- Hepatitis B.
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR).
- Varicella (Chicken Pox).
- Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DTP - commonly known as the 'whopping cough' injection).
- Pneumonia.
- COVID-19.
- Shingles.
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

Infection Prevention

Stopping the spread of infection is everyone's responsibility and includes:

- Practicing good hand hygiene.
- Following respiratory hygiene / cough etiquette.
- Wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where required.
- Correctly handling medical utensils.
- Correctly cleaning work environments.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the single most important strategy in preventing healthcare associated infections. Hand hygiene must be performed:

- When entering or leaving a Participants' residence.
- Before touching a Participant.
- After exposure to bodily fluids or substances.
- After touching a Participant.
- After the removal of gloves.

Hand hygiene may be performed by using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser. Soap and water should always be used if the hands are visibly soiled. If using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser special precautions must be taken.

These include:

- Alcohol-based hand rub must contain between 60% and 80% v/v ethanol or equivalent.
- Alcohol-based hand rub must be stored, and used, away from heat and naked flames.
- No tasks should be attempted until hands are completely dry.

Workers who have cuts, sores or abrasions on their hands must exercise extra caution by covering with a waterproof dressing and wearing gloves where required.

The use of gloves is not an alternative to hand hygiene.

Personal Hygiene

Workers must always adhere to standard personal hygiene practices when on shift. Standard personal hygiene requirements include but are not limited to:

- Bathing regularly.
- Keeping hair clean and pulled back from your face.
- Wearing minimal or no jewellery.
- Wear clean clothing.
- Practicing regular and proper hand washing techniques.
- Keeping fingernails short and clean.

Respiratory Hygiene / Cough Etiquette

Covering sneezes and coughs reduces the chance of infected people dispersing droplets into the air where they can spread to others. Practicing good respiratory hygiene means:

- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough, sneeze, wipe or blow your nose.
- If no tissues are available, cough or sneeze into your elbow rather than your hand.
- Encouraging Participants to use tissues when they sneeze or cough.
- Providing the means for prompt disposal of used tissues in general waste.
- If required, encourage the use of masks.
- Encouraging Participants and others in the workplace to practice hand hygiene.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Workers must have access to PPE as well as any other resources necessary to maintain safe working practices.

Gloves

Must be worn:

- For procedures with a risk of exposure to blood or bodily fluids e.g. assisting a Participant with toileting or applying basic first aid.
- When touching equipment or surfaces that may encounter blood or bodily fluids.
- When performing personal care procedures.
- When performing blood glucose monitoring.
- When caring for Participants who have an infection spread by contact.
- If the worker has broken skin, cuts or abrasions on their hand which may pose a risk to the Participant.
- When preparing food.

Remember:

- Gloves are not to be used in replacement of hand hygiene.
- Remove gloves when a care activity is finished, change gloves before starting a different care activity.
- Dispose of used gloves immediately after use in a manner appropriate to the work environment.

Gowns and Aprons

Gowns or aprons are used to stop contamination of workers' clothes and skin such as when there is a risk of splashes or sprays of blood or bodily fluids.

When using gowns or aprons:

- Perform hand hygiene before and after using them.
- Remove and dispose of gowns or aprons as soon as care is completed in a manner appropriate to the work environment and Participant waste management process.

Gowns or aprons can be used:

- When clothes may be exposed to blood or bodily fluids, but it is low risk that arms will be contaminated.
- When the worker's clothes might get wet (e.g. showering a Participant).
- Only once.
- Dispose of used gowns and aprons immediately after use in a manner appropriate to the work environment.

Face Masks

In some cases, Real Living Options Association Inc. may encourage the use of face masks when providing support to Participants. Face masks protect the workers nose and mouth from sharing infectious agents and are used if there is a risk of:

- A spreading of airborne contaminants

- Droplets or aerosols
- Splashes or sprays of blood and bodily fluids

When using face masks:

- Check the manufacturer's instructions before use.
- Do not touch the front of the mask with your hands once the mask is in place.
- Use the mask for the care of one Participant only.
- When the activity is complete, discard mask and perform hand hygiene.
- Dispose of used face mask immediately after use in a manner appropriate to the work environment.

Protective Eyewear

Protective eyewear protects a worker's eyes from exposure to infectious agents and is always recommended when there is a risk of:

- Droplets or aerosols.
- Splashes or sprays or blood or body fluids.

When using protective eyewear:

- Remember that the outside of the eyewear is contaminated.
- When care is complete, remove eyewear using the headband or earpieces.
- Clean eye shield after each use with detergent and water and allow to dry.
- If eyewear is single use, dispose of after completion of care activity.

Incidents and Spills

Managing Spills

Prompt clean-up of spills (e.g. vomit or diarrhoea) helps to stop infectious agents spreading from the environment to people. When managing spills:

- Select the appropriate PPE such as gloves depending on the size of the spill.
- Immediately wipe up smaller spots and spills and cover larger spills with absorbent material.
- Dispose of contaminated cleaning materials as per policy NDIS WHS 8 Management of Waste.
- Clean with detergent solution and consider following with disinfectant for infectious or larger spills.
- Always perform hand hygiene.

Exposure to Blood or Bodily Fluids

If, during the provision of supports and services to Participants, a worker comes in contact with blood or bodily fluids, the following steps are to be taken:

- Flush the area with running water.
- Wash the area with soap and water.
- Report the incident to the Support Manager.
- Record the incident as per the Real Living Options Association Inc's policy NDIS GOV 17 Incident Management (Including Reportable Incidents).
- Seek medical assessment as soon as possible, preferably within two hours of the exposure.

If any clothes are contaminated, rinse the item under running water, soak in a bleach solution, then wash separately from other clothing or linen with hot water and detergent.

Needle Stick Injuries

During the course of work duties, workers may come into contact with needles or devices used for injections such as EpiPens or insulin syringes or pens. Accidents can happen and needle stick injuries can occur.

Where this happens, the following process is to be observed:

- Immediately wash the affected area with soap and water.
- If the skin is penetrated, wash the area with soap and water; apply a mild antiseptic, then cover the wound with a band aid or dressing.
- Seek medical assessment as soon as possible, preferably within two hours of the exposure.
- Report the incident to the Support Manager or Support Facilitator.
- Record the incident as per the Real Living Options policy NDIS Gov 17 Incident Management (Including Reportable Incidents).

Sharps Disposal

- All used sharps must be placed in a clearly labelled, puncture resistant container that complies with Australian Standards.
- Sharps containers must not be filled beyond three quarters full.
- Sharps containers must be disposed of by a waste disposal contractor according to the Qld State Government Regulations.

Waste Management

Waste Disposal will be as per Qld State Legislation and Regulations and the Service policy NDIS WHS 8 Management of Waste. Where there are no specific State requirements in place the following guidance applies:

- Clinical waste such as used swabs which do not contain expressible blood can be treated as general waste.
- Used swabs must be:
    - Discarded into a leak-proof plastic bag.
    - Kept out of reach of children.
    - Disposed of as general waste.

Cleaning

Cleaning is an important part of stopping the spread of infection and depends on the objects involved and risk of contamination. When cleaning:

- Most surfaces can be adequately cleaned with warm water and detergent and an anti-bacterial multipurpose spray.
- Allow cleaned surfaces to dry completely.
- A detergent solution followed by disinfectant may be appropriate when an infection is known or suspected on surfaces of equipment.

Handling Line and Bedding

To avoid spreading infectious agents from used linen:

- Wear appropriate PPE when handling linen of Participants who have an infection and or are ill.
- Place linen soiled with blood or urine or other body fluids into a leak-proof laundry bag/s. Do not carry soiled linen.
- Do not sort or rinse used linen in areas used to provide support to Participants.
- Wash all linen using a good quality (if not anti-bacterial) laundry detergent and set the washing machine to use the highest possible hot water setting.
- Where possible, dry linen in a clothes dryer using the 'hot' setting.
- Perform hand hygiene after handling linen.
- Store clean linen in a clean dry place, separate from used linen.

Food Handling and Preparation

Safe food handling is important to prevent food-borne illness. When handling food:

- Perform hand hygiene before putting on gloves and handling food.

- Perform hand hygiene after using the toilet, coughing, sneezing, blowing nose, touching face, nose, ears or mouth, handling rubbish or after cleaning.
- Avoid unnecessary skin contact with ready to eat foods.
- Tie back long hair.
- Do not sneeze, blow, cough over unprotected food or surfaces likely to encounter food.
- Do not eat over unprotected surfaces likely to encounter food.
- Do not touch food after touching body parts (hair, nose, ear, eye), skin lesions, saliva, mucus, sweat, blood or money without first performing hand hygiene.

When preparing food:

- Keep hot food hot (above 60°C) and cold food cold (below 5°C).
- Use separate storage, utensils and preparation surfaces for cooked and uncooked foods.
- Wash all utensils and preparation surfaces thoroughly with hot water and detergent after use or place in the dishwasher and run the dishwasher cycle.

Transporting Participants

When transporting Participants, care is required to reduce the risk of spreading infection:

- Perform hand hygiene before and after transport.
- If a Participant has a respiratory illness, encourage them to wear a mask and to perform respiratory hygiene / cough etiquette.

Virus Pandemic

Real Living Options Association Inc. will closely monitor outbreaks of potential pandemics and be prepared to take immediate steps to protect the health of its Participants and workers. Real Living Options Association Inc. will follow the instructions of both the World Health Organisation and Australian Federal Government throughout the pandemic. Where Real Living Options Association Inc. either directly or indirectly has contact with individuals diagnosed with the virus during the pandemic, they will:

- Contact the applicable Public Health Unit for further advice and direction.
- Communicate regularly with their Participants and workers to keep them informed of any possible impacts this may have on the provision of supports.
- Perform ongoing risk assessments on the risks involved in managing infectious / preventable diseases and outbreaks.

- Develop and implement a *Pandemic Management Plan* that specifically addresses business continuity, risk management to ensure continuity of supports and services where the workforce may be reduced and resources limited.

DELEGATIONS

General Manager

- Ensure as far as practicable that this policy is adhered to by all employees.
- Inform Management Committee of any incidents as soon as possible.

Support Manager

- Ensure as far as practicable that this policy is adhered to by all employees.
- Ensure as far as practicable that all staff have access to appropriate PPE.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION

Policy NDIS GOV 17 Incident Management (Including Reportable Incidents).
Policy NDIS GOV 26 Epidemic/Pandemic.
Policy NDIS WHS 8 Management of Waste.
Real Living Options Association Inc. Pandemic Response Plan.

REFERENCES

Work Health and Safety Act 2011.
NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators.

AMENDMENTS/REVIEWS

Amended 07/09/2023.
Amended 02/07/2026.