Zero Tolerance of Abuse, Neglect, Violence and Exploitation Policy

Policy Name	Zero Tolerance of Abuse, Neglect, Violence and Exploitation Policy		Policy No.	P3003	
Effective Date	20/12/2023	Date of last revision	20/12/2025	Version Number	1
Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer		Responsible Executive Person		
Applies to	Meaningful Lives employees, volunteers,		labour hire staff and contractors		

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 People of all abilities have the right to live life and be treated with dignity, respect and be free from any form of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation at all times, and in all circumstances.

1.2 Meaningful Lives (Meaningful Lives) is committed to Zero Tolerance of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of all people associated with the organisation and its services.

1.3 Meaningful Lives is also committed to ensuring that services are delivered in line with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Code of Conduct.

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy’s purpose is to set out the standards Meaningful Lives expects of staff in avoiding abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of the people it serves, as well as to communicate how the organisation embeds its Zero Tolerance Framework in practice.

2.2 For the purpose of this policy, employees, volunteers, labour hire staff and contractors are referred to as ‘staff’ or ‘staff members’. 3 Policy

3.1 Meaningful Lives commits to ensuring people, who receive services from the organisation, are supported within a Human Rights-based approach.

3.2 Meaningful Lives has a duty of care to ensure that all people it provides services for are not subject to any type of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation.

3.3 This policy underpins the delivery of all services that Meaningful Lives provides.

3.4 Meaningful Lives will be proactive and ensure that all people are supported in safe environments and in a way that upholds their rights, dignity and individual needs.

3.5 Meaningful Lives is committed to embedding into organisational practice a Prevention and Response Framework which includes:

3.5.1 Understanding abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation

- provide organisational training on Human Rights
- ensure organisational understanding abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; and
- recognise risk factors and signals of abuse.

3.5.2 Primary Prevention – practices and safeguards which can help prevent abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation

- implement features that protect people's safety including: o assisting staff to undertake their role, e.g. keeping support plans up-to-date; provide training opportunities which will include formal training, mentoring and on-the-job supervision
- empower people with disability; and
- create the right organisational culture where people are not afraid to speak up.

3.5.3 Targeted Prevention – identify and address risk factors for specific groups and specific service settings

- identify and develop targeted approaches for groups at increased risk
- understand service features and settings that can increase risk; and
- understand behaviours of concern.

3.5.4 Secondary Prevention – responding to incidents and allegations of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation

- early intervention and response, including: o acting on all reported cases/suspected cases of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation o acting on all cases of failing to report witnessed or suspected abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation o agreeing never to take adverse action against any staff member or volunteer if they report abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation
- support the person; and
- meet organisational requirements.

3.5.5 Tertiary Prevention – analysis, learning and healing

- maintain and analyse records
- support sector initiatives to reduce risk of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; and
- continuous improvement. General principles Meaningful Lives adheres to in practice

3.6 People supported are informed of their inherent human rights and are supported to exercise these rights.

3.7 People supported have the right to participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, political and economic life of the community on an equal basis with others.

3.8 People supported have the right to live free from abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation.

3.9 People supported have the right to be respected for their worth, dignity, individuality and privacy.

3.10 People supported have the right to realise their potential for intellectual, physical, social, emotional, sexual and spiritual development.

3.11 People supported have the right to access appropriate assistance and support that will enable them to maximise their capacity to exercise choice and control, and realise their potential.

3.12 People supported have the right to pursue any grievances without fear of the service ending or of recriminations or retribution from Meaningful Lives.

3.13 People supported are empowered to determine their own best interests, including the right to exercise informed choice and take calculated risks.

3.14 People's cultural and linguistic diversity is respected.

3.15 People supported receive quality standards of care.

3.16 Intervention in the lives of people supported occurs in the least intrusive way, with the smallest infringements on the fewest rights.

3.17 Services and supports are based on contemporary evidence-informed best practice with a strong focus on person-led approaches.

Procedures

1. Responsibilities

1.1 Staff Member

1.1.1 It is the staff member's responsibility to comply with this policy and associated procedures.

1.1.2 All staff must:

- provide services without engaging in abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation
- take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of people with disability
- take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct
- provide services to people using a human rights-based approach, in a manner consistent with this policy
- act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination, and decision-making in accordance with relevant laws and conventions
- show respect for cultural differences when providing services
- respect the privacy of people with disability
- provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner with care and skill
- support the organisation's drive to create a culture of no retribution of reporting suspected abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation or sexual misconduct
- provide active support to other staff to create an appropriate service culture that aligns with this policy
- act ethically, with integrity, honesty and transparency
- promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that might have an impact on the quality and safety of supports provided to people with disability
- report any form of/suspected abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation by other staff, people supported, family members, carers or community members to their direct line manager (or other manager as appropriate) and in line with relevant organisational policies and legislative requirements (e.g. P1002 Incident Management Policy.docx)
- cooperate with the investigation of any complaint relating to the provision of services; and
- provide appropriate support to the person making a report of suspected abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation.

1.2 Direct Line Manager

1.2.1 It is the direct line manager's responsibility to ensure that they communicate and share information with their staff about obligations and responsibilities under this policy to prevent, identify and respond to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation:

1.2.2 Prevention

1.2.2.1 Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of, trained, compliant with and implement all policies and procedures on abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation.

1.2.2.2 Provide active support to staff to create a human rights-based service culture.

1.2.2.3 Ensure staff are trained to recognise and prevent/minimise the occurrence or recurrence of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of people within all modes of service delivery.

1.2.2.4 Develop coordinated and uniform approaches to promoting the rights of people within their families, communities and cultures.

1.2.3 Identification

1.2.3.1 Ensure systems are in place to identify and rectify gaps which contribute to a person experiencing abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation.

1.2.3.2 Ensure staff are trained in early intervention approaches where potential, or actual abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation is identified.

1.2.4 Response

1.2.4.1 Ensure there is no culture of 'fear of retribution' for any person who reports abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation.

1.2.4.2 Ensure guardians and substitute decision-makers are informed of alleged or suspected instances of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation, unless the guardian or decision-maker is the alleged or suspected perpetrator, in which case a decision should be made on a case by case basis.

1.2.4.3 Ensure relevant staff advise people being supported, their families and advocates about:

- support services which are equipped to identify abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation and able to refer individuals to appropriate specialist services; and
- their right to pursue grievances and complaints and access the criminal justice system.

1.2.4.4 Ensure any concerned person, including but not limited to, the person being supported, another person supported, relative, friend or person from the community is able to make a report or an allegation of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation, without fear of retribution.

1.2.4.5 Ensure all staff supporting people are respectful of their rights and needs.

1.2.4.6 Ensure abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation of people is reported to the relevant authority in line with the state specific requirements.

1.3 Executive

1.3.1 It is the Executive's responsibility to ensure that all managers, supervisors and staff are aware of their obligations and responsibilities in communicating and sharing information with their staff.

1.3.2 The Executive must:

- promote a human rights culture and proactive systems approach to prevent and identify abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of people it serves
- support and resource training of staff in all services
- develop and implement effective communication strategies to promote this policy and all resources to services and the people Meaningful Lives serves
- report to the relevant authority or agency as required; and
- support and monitor the implementation of this policy and all associated policies.

2. Process

2.1 Where abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation is alleged or suspected, the staff member's direct line manager (or equivalent manager as appropriate) must be informed immediately and the organisation's Incident Management Policy must be followed.

2.2 Where a Meaningful Lives staff member is suspected or alleged to have committed abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation against a person, Meaningful Lives' Misconduct Policy must be followed.

2.3 Where an allegation or suspicion of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation is made by a Meaningful Lives stakeholder (including, but not limited to: a person supported, their family member, care team professional or other stakeholder), Meaningful Lives' Complaint Handling Policy must also be followed.

3. NDIS Practice Standards

NDIS Practice Standard		Application
1.4	Each participant access supports free from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination	
1.4.1	Policies, procedures and practices are in place which actively prevent violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination	The Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour policy outlines the expectation of Meaningful Lives employees. Any evidence of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination is not tolerated and is dealt with in line with these policy guidelines. All Meaningful Lives employees are regularly trained on Zero Tolerance.
1.4.2	Each participant is provided with information about the use of an advocate (including an independent advocate) and access to an advocate is facilitated where allegations of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination have been made.	Information is provided to each person supported by Meaningful Lives on commencement of services with Meaningful Lives. The Advocacy Policy is available to all people supported by Meaningful Lives.
1.4.3	Allegations and incidents of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination, are acted upon, each participant affected is supported and assisted, records are made of any details and outcomes of reviews and investigations (where applicable) and action is taken to prevent similar incidents occurring again.	Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour or policy. Incident Management Policy. Investigations Policy. Guidelines of all of these policies are followed whenever there is an allegation or incident of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination,

4. Related Documents

- P1002 Incident Management Policy
- P1507 Misconduct Policy
- P3002 Complaint Handling Policy
- P3004 Code of Conduct Policy
- NDIS Code of Conduct

Authorisation

Drafted By	Chief Executive Officer		
Approved By	Executive		
Approved Date	20/12/2023	Review Date	20/12/2025