

Building and maintaining positive relationships policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Access4u (we, our, us) employees understand the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with our customers, founded on trust, respect, and appropriate boundaries. This policy outlines how we ensure our employees create a welcoming and inclusive environment that fosters meaningful connections while avoiding any confusion, misunderstandings, or violations.

This policy must be read in conjunction with our Code of Conduct and Child safe policy.

Scope

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all employees involved in supporting our customers.

Responsibilities and delegations

This policy applies to	Governing Body. Staff and Volunteers
Specific responsibilities	The Board – Responsible for ensuring effective governance mechanisms are in place. The CEO and Managers – Responsible for monitoring and ensuring adherence to Policy and related procedures. Ensure due diligence and take reasonable steps to ensure Access4u are meeting their obligations. Ensure objectives of the policy are achieved. Staff – Responsible for adherence to this and related policies, procedures and forms that support this policy.
Policy approval	CEO

Policy context – this policy relates to:

Standards	• Family and Community Services Act 1972 • National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework • National Standards for Out-of-Home care (NOOHCS) • The Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People - Charter of Rights
Legislation	• Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA) • Children and Young People (Safety) (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2017 • Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 • Children's Protection Law Reform (Transitional Arrangements and Related Amendments) Act 2017 • Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992

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	• National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018 • National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 • National Principles for Child Safe Organisations • Privacy 1988 (Cth) • The Disability Act 2006 • The Disability Services Act SA 1993
Contractual obligations	• Government of SA, DCP Contract Management Framework • NDIS Code of Conduct
Organisation policies and procedures	• Code of conduct policy • Child safe policy • Therapeutic Care Framework • Adult Safeguarding policy • Individual needs and evidence informed practice procedure • Positive behaviour support policy • Cultural diversity and social inclusion policy • Incident management policy • Feedback and complaints policy • Open disclosure procedure • Investigations and disciplinary management policy • Learning and development procedure • Effective employee support and supervision procedure
Forms, record keeping, other documents	

Policy Statement

We are committed to providing high quality support to our customers.

We acknowledge that building positive relationships is of paramount importance to help our customers to lead fulfilling lives.

With many of our customers having suffered abuse, neglect or trauma, we must provide positive relationships that foster understanding, trust, and respect, while maintaining appropriate boundaries, to support our customers to heal and grow.

We understand that individuals who are traumatised are also at risk of developing complications with attachment. Attachment patterns are formed in the context of early experiences with caregivers and maintained by later interpersonal relationships in adulthood. Over time, attachment patterns become internalised and shape how individuals see the self and others in close relationships, which in turn influence how they perceive and cope with stress through their lifespan.

Policy principles

Building positive relationships

- Empathy and understanding
 - We will always approach our customers with empathy and a non-judgmental attitude.
 - We recognise the impact of trauma on their lives and behaviours and show understanding.
 - Refer to our Positive behaviour support policy for more information.
- Active listening
 - We will listen actively and attentively to our customers, allowing them to share their thoughts and feelings at their own pace.
 - We will validate our customers experiences and emotions, showing them we value their perspective.
- Respect for autonomy
 - We recognise and respect our customer's autonomy and decisions, allowing them to make choices about their lives and the support they receive.
 - Refer to our Cultural diversity and social inclusion policy for more information.
- Trauma informed care
 - We utilise trauma-informed care principles when interacting with our customers.
 - We support our employees to recognise the potential triggers, be aware of the prevalence of trauma responses, and create an atmosphere of safety and respect.
 - Our employees will be educated on trauma informed practices, and how to respond sensitively and appropriately. This includes understanding experiences that may be traumatic and the effects of traumatic events, such as harm, abuse, neglect and intergenerational trauma.
 - We will create a predictable and safe environment to help our customers gain a sense of security.
 - Refer to our Therapeutic Care Framework for more information.
- Understanding attachment
 - Our employees will be educated on attachment theory and its relevance to our customer's experiences.
 - This will support an understanding of our customer's relational patterns and enable supports to be tailored accordingly.
 - We will expand our concept of attachment theory to include a cultural lens, empowering cultural attachment and reflecting cultural differences. This includes understanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing ways of knowing, being and doing, and their sense of belonging, connection and attachment to their physical environment (Connection to Country).

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- Refer to our Therapeutic Care Framework, Cultural diversity and social inclusion policy for more information.
- Establishing trust
 - We will build trust gradually through consistent and reliable actions.
 - We will communicate openly, honestly, and transparently to foster a sense of safety.
- Boundaries and self-care
 - We will support employee well-being to ensure they can provide effective support.
 - We will set boundaries for employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
 - We will avoid becoming overly emotionally involved to ensure objective and professional support is provided to our customers.

Maintaining appropriate boundaries

- Clear communication
 - We will establish clear expectations and guidelines for the professional relationship between our customers and employees from the outset.
 - We will explain the limits of our role and the support we can provide.
 - We will use clear and respectful language when discussing sensitive topics.
- Personal space and touch
 - We will always ask for consent before physical contact, even if it seems harmless.
 - We will avoid overly personal gestures such as hugging, unless the customer expresses a clear desire for such interactions.
- Confidentiality
 - We always adhere to strict confidentiality protocols, respecting our customer's right to privacy.
 - We will obtain explicit consent before sharing any customer information with others, unless mandated by law.
- Dual relationships
 - We will avoid dual relationships that could blur professional boundaries and compromise the therapeutic alliance.
 - We will refrain from engaging in social, financial, or personal relationships with our customers.
- Gift giving and receiving
 - We are cautious about giving or receiving gifts, as they can create imbalances in the relationship.
 - Employees must consult with their manager if they are unsure about the appropriateness of a gift exchange.
- Social media and online presence

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- Employees must maintain professional boundaries on social media platforms to prevent potential confusion or violations.
- Employees must not connect with customers on personal social media accounts.
- Recognising boundary crossing
 - We will be vigilant in recognising when boundaries are at risk of being crossed.
 - Employees will seek guidance from managers if they feel unsure about a situation's appropriateness.

Reporting and accountability

- Reporting violations
 - Employees will report any potential or actual boundary violations to their manager and in our incident management system.
 - Refer to our Child safe environments policy, Adult Safeguarding policy, Incident management policy and Feedback and complaints policy for more information.
- Addressing mistakes
 - We will acknowledge and address any mistakes or boundary violations promptly and responsibly.
 - We will apologise if needed and take corrective actions to ensure they are not repeated.
- Training and supervision
 - Employees will participate in ongoing training on trauma-informed care, communication, and professional boundaries.
 - Employees will undertake regular supervision to discuss their interactions, challenges, and successes.
 - Refer to supervision procedure for more information.