

Downs Industry Schools Co-Op (DISCO)**Policy: Risk Management**

Policy number: 6.3		Date adopted: 12/12/2023
Authorised by: DISCO Management Committee		
Date last reviewed: 1/12/2023 Version 10 – Dec 2023	Reviewed by Mike Paton - CEO	Date of next review: 01/12/2024

Refer to Section 6 below for information on the process for policy review.

Policy context: This policy relates to:	
Queensland Standards for Community Services	Standard 6 (Protecting safety and wellbeing)
Other standards	Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy Toolkit National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Commitment Charter for Children & Young People
Legislation or other requirements	Child Protection Act (1999) http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/C/ChildProtectA99.pdf Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld) Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 (Qld) Health and Safety Guidelines https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/ Work Health and Safety Act 2011

1. Purpose: Why do we have a risk management policy?

For the protection of clients of the organisation DISCO has developed this policy to ensure DISCO meets its obligations in relation to the protection of the individual whilst they are in the care of our service.

2. Scope

This policy will apply to all clients at DISCO who as a result of their involvement with the organisation may need to be protected or be confident in the way they protect others from accident or harm.

Specifically, our services are available to all 15-24 year old young people including:

- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander young people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Young people with disabilities
- All young people irrespective of issues that they feel may preclude them from service

3. Policy statement: Our commitment

DISCO recognises the importance of protecting clients of the organisation and has developed this policy to ensure that all parties are aware of the potential risks associated with

undertaking their roles and to ensure a clear understanding of the process steps required to minimise or avoid events which may contribute to an incident or accident situation.

4. Procedures

The following minimum requirements and guidelines have been put in place to minimise risk and ensure that all parties understand that they must comply with specific requirements when undertaking their work to minimise the chance of harm to themselves or others.

4.1. Meeting with clients and visitors

It is strongly recommended that meetings held on DISCO premises or in other locations where the DISCO officer and the client are the only two people present, that staff sit closest to the exit and that the door is left ajar in the interests of personal safety.

At any stage where a DISCO officer feels unsafe in a meeting (on or off site), either as a result of the discussion taking place, inappropriate access within personal space, inappropriate body language or other actions by the other party it is expected that the meeting will be terminated, and an incident report may need to be completed. This report must be completed at the location where the meeting took place as well as at the DISCO office. This report must be completed as soon as possible after the incident took place and reported to the Office Manager or the Operations Manager.

4.2. Activities with clients

At times, DISCO staff will be required to work with clients to assist their personal progression. A Duty of Care responsibility must be outlined by the DISCO Officer and agreed to by any relevant officer representing the business/organisation offering to support a client.

This may occur for example with an organisation agreeing to support a work experience placement with a particular client.

The relevant business/organisation must detail the workplace health and safety responsibilities of the workplace to ensure clients are appropriately inducted into the operation of the business including any specific safety requirements.

The business must be advised by the DISCO representative of their obligations regarding providing a safe and hazard free workplace and understand that they will be required to sign a document to commit to this prior to the placement commencing.

The business must also advise the client of any specific clothing or footwear requirements.

The relevant DISCO staff member (or client) should ask the business delegate to sign any relevant work experience/structured work placement Insurance Form with the completed signed copy then returned to the DISCO office for filing and forwarding to any other applicable group/person prior to the placement commencing. Please note that this form may require multiple signatures depending on the age of the client. If in doubt, please check with your supervisor or the Office Manager. PLEASE NOTE: If this document is not signed by all relevant parties the work placement cannot commence.

All staff and volunteers involved should, if concerned about a risk to their personal safety whilst working with a client, carry with them a personal security alarm. It would be strongly suggested that the alarms are carried in the following situations:

- Intake appointments for face-to-face counselling
- Walk-in appointments

- Home visits (These require approval from the Operations Manager)
- Ongoing face-to-face counselling clients where staff perceive a possible threat (in this case administration staff/manager are to be advised of the possibility that an alarm may be activated)

In the first instance, if staff or volunteers feel under threat from a client or other party present and believe that they are unlikely to be able to diffuse the situation, they should activate the personal security alarm. In the case of administration staff dealing with a client or visitor at the front counter, they should activate the alarm located under the reception desk.

In the case of a personal security alarm being activated, it is the responsibility of the administration staff to identify the relevant room and inform the nearest available Manager (or two other staff) of the situation enabling support assistance to be provided. The personal alarm should be switched off as soon as it is safe to do so.

The nearest available officer should respond to the alarm by knocking on the door if it is closed and immediately entering (permission not required) and, after quickly assessing the situation, request the client or person making threats to immediately leave the premises. If deemed necessary, it should be mentioned that the police will be called if immediate departure does not take place.

The officer taking action (and any other staff involved) should also assess whether any or all staff/clients/volunteers should be evacuated from the building.

It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager or his/her delegate to ensure the debriefing of affected clients, staff and volunteers takes place after the event.

In the case of threats made by telephone, staff are required to report such threats immediately to the Operations Manager and/or CEO, and an assessment of appropriate action will be made. Such action could include notifying the police and in extreme situations evacuating the building.

All situations involving a threat to staff or volunteers by clients or other parties must be documented immediately after the event in the form of an incident report.

Home visits to meet with clients are allowed but on a case-by-case basis and operate under strict conditions. No Program Officer should undertake a home visit without approval from the Operations Manager. The meeting must be in an open area of the house and at least one other family member should be home at all times. Where possible the officer should attempt to confirm exactly who will be home at the time of the meeting to determine if it can proceed safely and effectively. Confirmation that other family members will be home should be established and/or requested prior to arriving at the residence. If this is not the case staff are encouraged to postpone the meeting or move it to a more public place.

The Program Officer is required to contact their supervisor just prior to commencing the in-home appointment and then at an agreed time either 30 or 60 minutes later to update their supervisor on the progress of the appointment or to confirm it has completed. If when arriving at the home the officer is concerned about any aspect of their personal safety related to the meeting, they should cancel it and reschedule it to another location. If the property is considered to be in poor condition, there are animals loose or any other factor represents, in the officer's mind that the meeting may be unsafe, they should leave and contact the client by phone apologising about the cancellation and reschedule it.

In such circumstances where an officer is meeting a client at a private residence a careful and detailed plan will be prepared in consultation with their supervisor and the Operations Manager to ensure their personal safety is managed appropriately.

It is recommended that when making home visits that an officer's mobile phone remains on at all times and this should be explained to the client as an aspect of the organisation's policy.

4.3. Client stated intentions

It is the responsibility of the DISCO officer to report and complete an incident report when a client makes statements or general threats similar to the following:

- I intend to hurt or injure myself
- I intend to hurt or injure someone else
- Threatens to take action (violent or otherwise) against an individual or property

In order to achieve this policy, the following principles will be adhered to:

- Where concerns of suicidal thoughts or behaviours exist, the staff member must first try to gain the clients' permission for a referral for further assistance
- If a client's permission is not forthcoming then the staff member must consult with a senior staff member, preferably the CEO, to ascertain if a breach of confidentiality is required
- If required, consultation with an external professional, without providing identifying information, is permitted to ascertain if a breach of confidentiality is required
- Responses to concerns of suicidal thoughts and behaviours must be prompt
- It is preferred that all staff having client contact should be trained in emergency suicide intervention, which will allow the staff member to make an accurate risk assessment
- The staff member involved in any situation where suicide has been a serious risk must debrief with the Operations Manager regarding the organisation's response to the situation and plan for any future involvement
- Once another agency has become involved, such as the Acute Mental Health Unit, the staff member must ensure that future contact is in cooperation with the external service if necessary
- Upon debrief a completed incident report must be signed by the staff member and the Operations Manager
- A discussion between the Operations Manager, the Office Manager and the staff member must then be undertaken to determine if any counselling support is required, and it must be offered at no cost to the employee

4.4. Threats to clients/children of clients/others

The same principles that apply to other threats apply in this situation. The authorities (i.e. Police, Family and Community Services, Queensland Department of Child Safety or the Department of Communities) may be contacted after discussion with the CEO.

The elements to be considered prior to any notification or report are to include:

- How the service acquired the information
- The source of the information and the reliability of the information
- The extent and recency of the harm
- Historical information about the person making the threat

- What we have informed the client/other of (if anything) and
- The details of the threat

Wherever possible, it is encouraged that clients notify the authorities if it is safe to do so.

4.5. Traumatic, critical and distressing situations

At times, as part of the work undertaken by staff and volunteers of the organisation, a staff member or client may become involved in a traumatic, critical or distressing situation as outlined above.

It is the responsibility of the staff member to take what appropriate action they deem necessary and report the situation to the CEO as soon as possible to determine if action taken is appropriate and seek suggestions to provide additional support as needed.

4.6. Use of personal vehicle/travel

PLEASE NOTE: Under no circumstances should a client be transported in a private vehicle.

DISCO project staff may be provided with financial assistance to use their personal car for business use. It is the responsibility of the officer to ensure the vehicle is fully comprehensively insured and registered at all times.

Particular care must be taken to ensure that seat belts are worn at all times, the vehicle must be completely roadworthy as the driver (the DISCO employee) must be fully capable of managing the operation of the vehicle in all circumstances.

Staff members are encouraged to carry mobile telephones when they travel outside the building as they represent a valuable tool should a problem related to a breakdown or accident occur.

Any anticipated risk (e.g. visit to client's home, court appearance, travelling an unknown route) should be discussed with the Office Manager or the Operations Manager prior to leaving, particularly if the staff member is concerned about their potential safety.

Staff are expected to call the DISCO office if they are going to return later than anticipated. (This information is to be relayed to the Office Manager as soon as practicable). When staff return from their travels, even if this is after-hours, they are to contact the CEO or other staff member as negotiated beforehand. This applies even if the staff member is not returning to the DISCO office e.g. a staff member is working in Brisbane and will be returning directly to their home when they finish working at 5.00pm. Where they do not call, the Office Manager will try to call them on the mobile telephone. Their home (or motel) will be called to try and ascertain if they have returned safely. After these steps, the emergency services will be called.

Staff are also required to make appropriate decisions related to overnight accommodation if they feel that it would be safer to remain in a location overnight rather than drive home. The organisation encourages a staff member to contact their Office Manager to confirm this intention or other relevant staff member. However, if the relevant staff member cannot be reached the staff member should contact any relevant family members and book into a safe / modest hotel or motel for the evening.

4.7 Securing client's personal information

Access to information held by DISCO can be critical to the maintenance of safety for staff and clients alike. It is for this reason that several steps are taken to ensure that this information remains in the hands of staff only.

These include:

- Client notes are locked-up overnight
- Computer passwords are not revealed to non-staff members
- Home/mobile telephone numbers of staff/committee are not given to anyone outside the staff group or committee
- We do not confirm or deny that a particular person is a client of DISCO
- Clients of DISCO are not acknowledged by staff in public unless there is explicit agreement to do otherwise
- Information about a client will not be shared with any other agency or person, unless it is to comply with a subpoena, to protect a client/staff member (e.g. where a threat is acted on), or with the client's explicit permission
- If a legal requirement exists for client information or other material be provided to an external agency such intent should be discussed discreetly with any public State or Federal funding body prior to releasing the information

4.8 First aid

Each office has a designated First Aid officer who is able to attend to first aid matters and staff should seek this person's assistance if an issue arises relating to health and safety. Any occupational health problem that may arise should be brought to the attention of the CEO.

The First Aid Kit is situated in an obvious location in each office. Where an accident occurs which involves bodily fluids of any kind, the gloves provided in this kit are to be used. Any staff member can make a decision to call an ambulance, based on their judgement of the nature and extent of any injury. If a staff member or volunteer is taken to hospital/medical treatment, we will endeavour to forward our staff/volunteer contact details form to the treating practitioner so members of their direct family can be contacted.

4.9 Fire evacuation procedure

The following steps are to be taken if a fire should occur.

All DISCO buildings have a number of fire extinguishers, and you should make yourself familiar with where these are located. Please identify and study the Fire Evacuation diagram which should be visible around the area in which you work. If you can't find this, ask your supervisor to show it to you.

Smoke or Fire alarms may be fitted and once again you should identify where these are, so you are prepared for a possible emergency. If these alarms sound, staff are to assume that a fire has started and to leave the building following the evacuation plan adjacent to reception.

If a fire does start, the first person on the scene should yell 'fire' loudly to alert others in the building to the danger, even if the alarms sound. Where possible, the extinguishers should be used, by the first person on the scene, **if it is safe to do so**. Where it is not possible to put the fire out immediately, any staff member can make the decision to call the fire brigade. The referring staff member can make the call themselves or ask someone else to do it.

The referring staff member should then escort any clients to the assembly area. Other staff should escort the clients they are with outside the building, by the closest exit, and assemble at the assembly area.

Staff should make a final check of the building to identify any remaining persons and ensure all doors and windows are closed where possible and safe to do so.

4.10 Identifying and responding to hazards

Hazards become risks when there is a likelihood of the hazard resulting in damage to people or property. For example, a frayed cord on an electric jug is a hazard *and* it presents a significant risk of injury to a person using the equipment. The response to a hazard needs to be proportional to the risk the hazard presents. Consider the likelihood of a person being injured and the seriousness of the potential injury. In the example above, the hazard presents an immediate risk to anyone using the equipment and the potential for serious injury or even death is high.

In these circumstances the person identifying the risk should act to eliminate the risk, i.e. remove the dangerous item from use. Where the risk of serious injury is not high, it may be sufficient to use administrative controls such as putting up signs. For example, a wet floor is a hazard, but the risks of serious injury associated with it are not as high. Placing signs to alert staff to the hazard may be sufficient.

4.11 Lockdown process

During the operation of our service at all DISCO offices, management and staff must be aware of potential or actual threats or risks that may present during the day-to-day operation of the service.

As the exact nature of these threats can vary, it is the responsibility of the Office Manager or officer present to assess the risk and determine an appropriate course of action to minimise or prevent the risk of injury to staff or clients and the prevention of damage or destruction to business and personal property.

In a situation where it may be necessary to minimise danger the relevant staff member or manager should enact a lockdown procedure. The lockdown procedure will vary at individual offices. When it is safe to ask staff or clients to leave the premises the officer or Manager will escort them to the meeting point as outlined on the Fire Evacuation Plan displayed on plans in the building. When it is not safe to leave the building the Office Manager or staff member will direct staff and clients to an appropriate location within the building where they will remain until it is determined by staff and management or emergency personnel that it is safe to leave the building.

At the conclusion of this event an Accident-Incident-Near Miss Reporting Form and QLD Government Incident Notification Form should be prepared and provided by the Operations Manager to the CEO for review and possible further action.

4.12 Pandemic or Epidemic

Due to the possibility and risk of contagions the organisation prioritises the overall health and wellbeing of DISCO's clients, staff and volunteers. The organisation will take appropriate and immediate action to ensure no individual is placed at risk.

When the organisation becomes aware or is made aware by a State or Federal Government Health Department alert concerning a potential health crisis it will immediately take steps to prioritise the welfare of all individuals connected to DISCO and organise (if necessary) to ensure all clients and staff remain at home to ensure their immediate safety. DISCO will then take further action as appropriate including undertaking steps from our Pandemic & Epidemic Policy which may include the preparation of an appropriate risk management plan for approval by the Management Committee.

5. Other related policies and procedures

Documents related to this policy	
Related policies	6.1 Harm Prevention Policy 6.2 Harm Response Policy 6.5 Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy Policy 6.6 Pandemic and Epidemic Policy 8.7 Workplace Health and Safety, Risk Management and Harm Prevention Organisational Policy 11.10 Whistleblower Policy
Forms or other organisational documents	Risk Assessment Chart Risk Assessment Form Workplace Health & Safety Audit Checklist Business Worksite Assessment Form Workplace Insurance Form Accident-Incident-Near Miss Reporting Form Basic Life Support Flow Chart SP4 Risk Report Template DISCO Fire Evacuation Plan and RACE Checklist – By Office National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Commitment Charter for Children & Young People Other Undefined Forms

6. Review processes

Policy review frequency: This policy will be reviewed by annually or as necessary.	Responsibility for review: This policy will be reviewed by the CEO.
Review process: This policy will be updated and reviewed every twelve months and approved by the DISCO Management Committee annually.	
Documentation and communication: All volunteers, management and staff will be required to read and sign this policy upon employment commencement and review it annually (and as necessary) to ensure it can be implemented and adhered to correctly. Any alterations to the policy at any time will require all staff and management to reread it and sign it. Changes will be updated as necessary with an up to date version stored and available electronically.	