



MS15	MASS Staff	Lone Worker – Providing Community Based and In-home services Policy and Procedures
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<b>What this policy aims to do</b>	Ensure that MASS staff who provide services within a client's home or residence understand the risks associated with the provision of care and take appropriate action for their own safety.
<b>Who this policy applies to</b>	All MASS staff and volunteers.
<b>Who is responsible for carrying out this policy</b>	All MASS staff and volunteers.
<b>What words used in this policy mean</b>	<p>MAP – Mansfield Autism Practitioner</p> <p>Program Manager – MAP Manager and/or Outreach Coordinator for the purpose of this document.</p> <p>Outreach Services - include working with clients in their own homes and providing community access. Programs can include activities such as developing daily living skills, social and recreational activities including access to the local community.</p>
<b>Legislation this policy is based on</b>	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
<b>Other relevant policies</b>	<p>HS15 First Aid</p> <p>A8 Providing Personal Care to Clients</p> <p>HS8 Positive Behaviour Support</p> <p>MBD4 Risk Management</p> <p>MS6 Staff Travel Policy</p>

	<p>MS16 Transporting Clients</p> <p>MS3 Staff Code of Conduct</p> <p>HS12 Client Incident Reporting</p> <p>HS14 Child Safe</p> <p>MS12 Workplace Health and Safety</p>
<b>References</b>	<p>Working Safely in Visiting Health Services. A handbook for workplaces. WorkSafe Victoria.</p> <p>A Guide to Working Safely in People's homes. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.</p>

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author/Editor</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1.0	15/9/18	Donna Stephenson		Policy created
1.1	1/5/20	C Trenfield	S Reeves	Updated post risk assessment sessions

## Safety in Providing Community Based and In-home Services Policy

MASS provides in-home services to clients and families and also outreach services that are community based.

In-home services are provided by a team of Behaviour Specialists to support the individual with ASD and their families and may include staying overnight in the client's home.

Outreach services include working with clients in their own homes and providing community access. Programs can include activities such as developing daily living skills, social and recreational activities including access to the local community.

Services provided in the residential and school program are not within scope for this policy and are covered by MS12 Workplace Health and Safety Policy.

### Duty of Care

MASS recognises there are risks for staff and volunteers in providing in-home and community services to clients with ASD. MASS has a duty of care to do what is reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of all staff.

*MASS will:*

- gather relevant information at the referral and client assessment stage to identify work health and safety (WHS) issues and assess and manage those risks
- clearly communicate and understand what services are to be provided
- regularly review current WHS risks to ensure that controls are still working and whether they need to be altered
- provide adequate training and supervision to ensure safe work methods are understood and followed
- assess individual services before they are performed
- document the monitoring of the service.

*Staff have a duty of care to:*

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- take reasonable care that they do not adversely affect the health and safety of others
- comply, so far as reasonably able, with work health and safety instructions and cooperate with MASS policies and procedures about work health and safety
- report any incidents of injury to clients or themselves, emergency situations and near-miss incidents when there is no injury but requires preventative actions (HS12 Client Incident Reporting Policy, HS14 Child Safe Policy, MS12 Workplace Health and Safety).

Clients, family members and visitors have a duty of care to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and should:

- maintain a safe environment (for example repair broken steps, mow long grass, restrain animals, provide adequate lighting)
- look after their own in-home safety (for example smoke alarms and safety switches)
- inform MASS staff of any known hazards.

## **Risk Management**

MASS will undertake a risk management approach to reduce the likelihood of injury or harm to employees providing in-home services and community-based services, most often as a lone worker. The approach will include:

1. the identification of hazards
2. a risk assessment
3. development of controls/actions to reduce the risk
4. the evaluation and review of any incidents and the effectiveness of controls

## **Hazard Identification**

Hazards or risks that staff may encounter in the delivery of services include:

- travelling to and from the residence of the client, remoteness of the residence or community location, and/or isolation of the worker. This includes hazards such as bushfires and floods.
- transporting clients
- potential for injury to the worker from challenging behaviours/violence from the client
- work related stress
- biological hazards or infectious diseases
- electrical hazards
- slips, trips and falls
- personal safety/security while in the home or a community location
- fatigue.

## **Risk Assessment**

MASS staff will undertake a risk assessment of the service to be provided based on the location/s of the client and service.

For in-home services provided by a Behaviour Specialist, the MAPs program manager will undertake a risk assessment of the home situation before the Initial Access Visit to

determine if there are any risks to be addressed before the home visit. A checklist has been developed for this purpose and risks will be documented and controls established to ensure the safety of the MAP Support Team Member who conducts the Initial Access Visit.

The MAP Support Team Member will conduct the assessment in the client's home using a template developed for the service. Any further risks will be documented as well as information on the client and their family situation.

The Outreach Coordinator will undertake a risk assessment of services to be provided to a client. The service may be in the client's home or in the local community.

For community-based services, a risk assessment profile will be established for the most common activities to assist staff to undertake a risk assessment before undertaking the activity. Staff are required to complete a risk assessment for activities conducted outside MASS premises or schools. Other risks can be included if required due to the nature of the service/activity. The risks will be documented.

### **Development of Controls/Actions to Reduce the Risks**

For in-home services, the Program Manager and the MAP, and Outreach Coordinator and staff member, will develop a plan of action to manage the risks associated with the delivery of services and this may include:

- the MAP notifying the Program Manager on the arrival and at departure from the client's home (may be a call or a text)
- developing a set conversation to be used to alert a manager of safety concerns and actions the staff member will be taking
- the use of a satellite phone
- a duress reporting device
- more than one person being present for the delivery of the service
- the MAP not staying overnight in the home
- the MAP not providing a service if a person in the home presents a threat to their safety.

For community-based services, the staff member will identify controls or actions to eliminate or mitigate the risks identified. If the risks are considered high, the staff member may elect to not conduct the service or activity.

### **Evaluation and Review of Incidents the Controls**

All staff will report any incidents related to their safety using the Incident Reporting Form (MS12) and the Program Manager will review the incidents and determine the level of

ongoing risk for staff and if any change to the delivery of service is required to reduce/eliminate the risk. The incident and resultant action will be documented.

If an incident includes a client, then the staff member must complete a client incident report (HS12) and all incidents must be reported and recorded.

## Lone Worker – Providing Community Based and In-home Services Procedures

MASS recognises there are risks in providing in-home and community services to clients with ASD and has a duty of care to do what is reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of employees.

MASS staff providing services in a client's home or in the community will take all reasonable steps to follow the procedures to enable the safest possible work environment.

Hazards identified for staff include:

1. travelling to and from the residence of the client and to community locations
2. transporting clients
3. potential for injury to the worker from challenging behaviours/violence from the client
4. work related stress
5. biological hazards or infectious diseases
6. electrical hazards
7. slips, trips and falls
8. fatigue

### 1. Travelling to and from the residence of the client

Driving risks are a significant part of a worker's day when providing services in people's homes or in community locations across Victoria. The hazards when driving and transporting clients may include:

- Poor weather and road conditions
- Bush fire and flood risks
- Remoteness of the location
- Fatigue and driving when tired
- Rushing due to tight timeframes and scheduling of work
- Distractions within the vehicle
- Safety operating unfamiliar vehicles
- Managing client behaviour while travelling
- Poorly maintained vehicles
- Speeding or not following the road rules/conditions
- Changes to usual route/s taken
- Unrestrained equipment in the vehicle.

Controls include:

- MASS has developed policies for Transporting Clients (MS16) and for travel using private and MASS owned vehicles (MS6). All MASS Staff are to follow the procedures in these policies.
- Staff to install the Vic Emergency app on their phones and set alerts for the region in which they are working. If there are warnings that could impact on their travel or the residence they are visiting, then the staff member should discuss their proposed actions with their manager to ensure their safety.
- Staff are encouraged to review their workload and timeframes with their manager to establish realistic timeframes and workloads.
- All loose equipment should be secured in the car boot or behind a cargo barrier.
- MASS will provide staff with a reliable means of communication between the worker and their manager and/or emergency services for the worker to access assistance.
- Having information at hand on how to obtain roadside assistance
- Have a fire extinguisher and a first aid kit in the car.

## 2. Injuries Related to Challenging Behaviour of Client or Family Member/Visitor

MASS staff can be exposed to work related violence and risks may arise from the actions of clients, their carers or others at the home or where services are provided.

MASS will:

- Ensure a risk assessment of the home situation is conducted before staff attend to provide a service and for the ongoing assessment of risk while the services are provided
- Provide training for workers on reporting all hazards including abuse and threats, how to deal with challenging client behaviour and de-escalation and avoidance strategies
- Ensure reliable communication devices to maintain contact between the employee and manager
- Provide personal duress alarms when identified as a control, with training in their use
- Ensure MAPs have access to well maintained vehicles so they do not break down in unsafe locations or times
- Refuse or modify the services provided to clients until the risk to a MAP in the home is eliminated or minimised. This may include the direction for staff to not stay overnight in a client's home.
- Provide additional support staff as necessary
- Provide counselling services for staff as required.



Staff will:

- Undertake a risk assessment of the client's behaviour, the home situation and the location of the home before a service is delivered and develop a plan for the safe delivery of the service
- Develop a plan with their supervisor that can be enacted if a client or other person in the home displays aggressive behaviour
- Carry a communication device to notify their manager or emergency services if they are concerned for their safety
- Understand the triggers for a client that may escalate challenging behaviour and the actions to de-escalate and/or remove themselves from potential harm
- Ensure their car is easily accessible from the home or community location and not able to be parked in or blocked
- Maintain their private vehicle appropriately if used for work purposes

### 3. Work Related Stress

Work related stress describes the mental, physical and emotional reactions of workers who perceive that their work demands exceed their abilities or resources to do the work. Providing specialist in-home or community-based interventions/behaviours support/ activities for clients and their families is a demanding, albeit rewarding role, and can result in burn-out and stress.

To prevent or minimise work related stress, MASS will:

- Regularly review staffing levels to ensure appropriate staffing skills mix and numbers relative to client load/demand
- Provide clearly defined job description, policies and procedures
- Ensure managers have the skills required to manage the work team and able to support staff whilst managing their performance
- Have clear policies and procedures for managing conflict and workplace bullying
- Provide training and strategies on how to manage workloads, resolve conflict and maintaining a balanced relationship and appropriate boundaries with clients
- Provide counselling services for staff where required
- Refuse or modify services to a client if an environment is too high a risk.

Staff will:

- Communicate any concerns with safety and/or stress to their manager or the Director if required
- Report incidents of abuse, injury or concerns for safety to a manager
- Assess the risk to their safety in a client's home or community location and take actions to ensure their safety

#### 4. Biological hazards or Infectious Diseases

Biological hazards expose workers and clients to infection risks and can cause serious illness. Staff may be exposed to infectious disease through:

- Handling contaminated items and equipment
- Unsafe food handling and storage practices
- Contact with a client's animals and animal excreta
- Handling soiled laundry.

MASS will:

- Provide information, instruction and supervision in infection control practices
- Provide workers with hand hygiene facilities (for example alcohol-based hand rub) where hand washing facilities are not readily available in a client's home or community location
- Implement an occupational immunisation program in accordance with the current edition of the Australian Immunisation Handbook
- Provide adequate supplies of personal protective equipment

Staff will:

- Follow protocols for managing accidental exposure to blood and body substances, sharps injuries and other infectious disease exposure including first aid, medical referral and post-exposure prophylaxis where indicated
- Arrange for aggressive animals to be secured before a visit to prevent animal bites.

#### 5. Electrical Hazards

Staff may have to use the client's electrical installation and electrical equipment (i.e. power points, lights, extension leads etc). To ensure electrical safety in a client's home staff should:

- Visually inspect the electrical installation to satisfy themselves of the electrical safety, paying particular attention to damaged or missing parts, and burning or discoloration of the electrical fittings (for example damaged light switch or cracked power point
- Avoid using the client's electrical equipment if possible, but if not, then inspect items before use with attention to damaged insulation, missing parts, frayed or faulty leads, faulty switches and exposed wiring.
- Ensure any extension leads are located where they are not likely to be damaged and do not present a trip hazard and are fully extended before using
- Report any incidents to their manager.

## 6. Slips, Trips and Falls

MASS staff, clients and their families may be exposed to slips, trips and falls inside and outside the home and when out in the community.

Hazards most associated with slips, trips and falls are:

- Contaminants on the floor, such as water, oil, talcum powder or plastic bags
- Slippery floor surfaces, especially in areas which may become wet or contaminated for example bathrooms and toilets
- Obstacles and other trip hazards such as uneven flooring, or cluttered walkways with low obstacles such as broken tiles.

When providing services within a client's home, staff should:

- Ensure there is adequate lighting within the house and for access to the house such as well-lit steps and pathways
- Remove any hazards within the working area to prevent a slip, trip or fall
- Wear suitable footwear that is comfortable and has an adequate non-slip sole.

## 7. Fatigue

Fatigue is mental or physical exhaustion which stops a person's ability to perform work safely and effectively. Fatigue can adversely affect safety at the workplace. Fatigue can be caused by factors which may be work related, non-work related or a combination of both and can accumulate over time.

Potential causes of fatigue include:

- Mentally and physically demanding work
  - Long periods of time awake
  - Inadequate amount of quality sleep
  - Poor work scheduling and planning.
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- MASS will arrange sufficient cover for workers who are on annual leave or sick leave.
  - MASS staff will inform their managers if they are experiencing fatigue and discuss and negotiate arrangements for safe work.