



ABUSE & NEGLECT POLICY

Guardian Angel Home Care Pty Ltd

11 January 2024

INTRODUCTION:

Guardian Angel Care recognizes the right of all clients in aged care to feel secure and to live in an environment that protects them from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, or any other form of harm. We acknowledge the increased vulnerability of elderly individuals to potential harm.

The purpose of this policy is to take proactive measures in addressing any practices or behaviours that infringe upon the legal and human rights of our aged care clients. It also ensures the appropriate identification, reporting, and investigation of any allegations or suspicions of harm.

SCOPE:

This policy is relevant to all individuals employed or contracted by Guardian Angel Care, including paid staff, volunteers, and contractors.

Within the context of this policy, the terms 'harm' and 'risk of harm' relates to any form of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Chief Executive Officer:

- Foster a culture that values and safeguards the rights of all clients to live without experiencing harm.
- Develop, sustain, and periodically assess this policy.

Operations Manager:

- Ensure adherence to and continued application of the principles and requirements outlined in this policy.
- Facilitate and provide guidance for operational decision-making in accordance with this policy.

Manager/Client Services:

- Establish documented procedures to assist in executing this policy.
- Oversee the implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy to guarantee the identification and management of risks.
- Make certain that carers receive and comprehend the communication of this policy.

Carers:

- Ensure thorough communication and comprehension of this policy among clients and their chosen supporters.
- Cultivate an environment where the rights of clients are seamlessly integrated into daily operational practices.

POLICY STATEMENT:

1. Guardian Angel Care acknowledges the inherent rights of clients to reside in an environment free from harm. Our commitment involves establishing and sustaining a conducive setting that safeguards clients against violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination.
2. We approach our interactions with clients with sensitivity and respect, utilizing a strengths-based, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive approach. We recognize demographic factors that may influence a client's sense of safety.
3. Taking a proactive stance, we strive to protect clients' rights to decision-making, choice, control, safety, wellbeing, and quality of life. This is done with due consideration for individual risk factors and self-determined preferences.
4. Information sharing during the intake and support planning process is aimed at actively raising awareness of clients' legal and human rights, empowering them to exercise these rights at every available opportunity.
5. We acknowledge the vital role of families, guardians, friends, and advocates as protective factors in safeguarding clients from harm. With the client's consent, we collaborate with their support networks to develop preventive safeguards against harm.
6. Organizational-level preventive measures are in place to ensure clients can access supports that provide maximum protection from and prevention of harm. We develop and maintain robust procedures for identifying, reporting, investigating, and managing incidents or allegations of harm.
7. Safeguarding requirements are seamlessly integrated throughout the employment cycle through regular training, professional development, and performance management. Stringent screening processes are consistently applied to ensure the suitability of all individuals engaged with clients.

8. All employees, volunteers, and contractors are mandated to comply with the Guardian Angel Care Codes of Conduct, delineating acceptable standards of behaviour.
9. Employees are supported in understanding their safeguarding responsibilities, including training to recognize indicators of harm and respond appropriately to disclosures.
10. Reporting any suspicion or knowledge of actual, potential, or alleged harm is the responsibility of all employees, following guidelines outlined in the *Observing & Incident Reporting Policy*. Failure to do so constitutes a serious breach of duty of care and is subject to disciplinary action.
11. Any incident or allegation of violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation related to the provision of supports and services by Guardian Angel Care constitutes a Reportable Incident.
12. The Incident Reporting system is in place to identify and report when harm has occurred or may have occurred to a client. We ensure timely and appropriate responses to investigations of incidents and allegations of harm, involving the client in the management and resolution.
13. When allegations of harm are made, the client's access to and use of an independent advocate is supported and facilitated. We take all steps to ensure the immediate and ongoing safety of the client, providing appropriate support or referrals as required.
14. Robust reporting and complaints mechanisms are implemented to ensure accountability and address any misconduct that occurs. Concerns are treated seriously and acted upon through confidential reporting mechanisms.
15. We maintain compliance with relevant State and Federal laws including timely notification of Reportable Incidents. Criminal offences will be reported to the Victorian Police.

Through a continuous improvement process, we regularly review and update risk assessment and safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure ongoing alignment with influential factors, including findings from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation.

RESPONDING TO ABUSE

Abuse of a client by a staff member:

Client abuse by a staff member is thoroughly documented, and all incidents and allegations are promptly reported to a manager. Necessary measures are taken to safeguard the client from additional harm by preventing contact with the accused individual. The rights of the alleged offender and the responsibilities of the employer are observed in compliance with relevant legislation.

Abuse of a client by a client or a family member:

Guardian Angel Care oversees the interactions among individuals utilizing the service to prevent instances of abuse. Triggers that may lead one client to harm another are documented. If these strategies prove ineffective in preventing abuse, measures are taken to protect individuals from further harm. Any behaviour management strategies employed by the service prioritize safety, respect the individuals, and are non-abusive.

Abuse of a staff member by a client:

Incidents involving the abuse of a staff member by a client are meticulously documented, and any allegations or occurrences are swiftly reported to a manager. Appropriate measures are implemented to protect the staff member and prevent further harm by minimizing contact with the accused individual. The rights of the alleged offender and the are adhered to in accordance with current legislation.

DEFINITIONS:

ABUSE:

Abuse is characterized by any behaviour that entails mistreatment, irrespective of the specific context or individual involved. This mistreatment may manifest in various forms, including violence, exploitation, and neglect. For instance, verbal mistreatment can be considered a form of violence, while financial mistreatment may be regarded as a form of exploitation.

NEGLECT:

The failure to adequately address the physical, emotional, social, and cultural wellbeing and development of an individual.

EXPLOITATION:

Taking or attempting to take improper advantage of an individual for personal benefit, advantage, or gratification.

SAFEGUARDS:

Actions designed to protect the rights of people to be safe from the risk of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation, while maximising the choice and control they have over their life.

Authorised by,

Dennis Corea

Chief Executive Officer, Guardian Angel Care Pty Ltd

