

Client Risk Management Policy and Procedure

Purpose

Early Start Australia’s (ESA’s) Client Risk Management Policy and Procedure assists staff to manage risks that may arise while providing support to clients, whatever the situation or location, so that adverse effects are minimised. It provides guidance on:

- Identification and assessment of client-related risk;
- Development of strategies to reduce the risk; and
- Monitoring and review of strategies.

Formal screening and assessment of risk enables staff to support clients in a manner that fulfils their responsibilities under duty of care, while remaining sensitive to the individual and changing needs of a client.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff providing direct services to clients of ESA. Refer also to the Safe Environment for Participants Policy and Procedure.

Policy and Procedure Statement

The central process to support client risk management is built into Lumary. This allows for client risk to be tracked over time, and for alerts to be added as necessary, for all ESA team members to see.

There are supporting documents in Ask the Goat and on estart to guide the risk screening process.

Client risk should throughout the client journey. It is the therapist’s responsibility to review client risk and to seek further clarification from the client (or their representative) about risks identified at intake. This discussion should include details of any existing management plans, such as behaviour support plans; or seizure management plans. Risk that is considered to require further management direction should be escalated to the clinical leader.

If the client is being seen by more than one ESA therapist, the therapists should work collaboratively to ensure that all team members are alerted to the risk/s identified and have input into the management strategies put in place for safe service delivery.

The client risk screen process also includes information about the client’s continuous support needs relating to therapy service provision. This is to ensure that in the event an emergency or disaster, there is clarity for ESA staff about their role in providing support, where appropriate, and information about other community supports that the client/family could access.

Screening Client Risk

During the intake process, the nominated person (Client Care Team member, clinic administration team member or therapist) will ask questions that consider:

- Health conditions and risk of allergic responses to substances;
- Behaviour that may affect client or therapist (or others) safety;
- Mental health;
- Family safety; and
- Any further issues that might present a risk to client or therapist (or others) safety

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The team member will also request contact details of a person to call in the event of an emergency and the client’s regular GP details.

After intake, the client risks should be reviewed and updated by the therapist:

1. During the initial appointment
2. When additional client information is received;
3. When documents/recommendations are made/provided by other support agencies; and / or
4. Related to further concerns or observations relating to the client.

Next steps / plan to manage

The therapist should consider the next steps / plan to manage in relation to any identified areas of potential risk. For example, if an allergy is identified, the next step / plan to manage is for an individual client allergy plan to be developed to ensure the safety of the client while they are receiving therapy.

After reviewing and finalising the next steps / plan to manage, the therapist, in consultation with their Leader, should consider and document whether the service will proceed (with next steps / plans to manage in place), or not proceed (where next steps / plans to manage will not sufficiently manage the risk).

Refer to the Client Risk Screen – Guidance for Therapists document for support with this.

Emergency and Disaster Management

During risk discussions, therapists should consider any special provisions or requirements for each client in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Refer to the Emergency and Disaster Management for Clients Policy.

Risk assessment in the context of Psychology Clients

Psychology Risk Assessment means something specific to assessing self-harm and suicide risk and is a professional requirement for psychologists (including provisional psychologists). Psychologists (including provisional psychologists) should undertake thorough psychological risk assessments as an ongoing process in addition to the ESA risk screen.

Compliance

Staff found to be non-compliant with this policy are subject to appropriate disciplinary action by ESA including, but not limited to one or more of the following:

- Counselling;
- Further training and development;
- Demotion;
- Suspension;
- Warning;
- Referral to appropriate legal and regulatory bodies as appropriate;
- Termination of employment (with or without notice or any payment); or
- Termination of engagement (in the case of contractors)

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Associated Documents

- ESA Safe Environment for Participants Policy and Procedure
- Client Risk Screen – Guidance Questions for CSOs
- Client Risk Screen – Guidance for Therapists
- ESA Incident Management Policy and Procedure
- Discussion Record Template
- Working Offsite or Alone Policy and Procedure
- Working Offsite Checklist Form
- OHS Checklist for Schools
- Suicide and Self-Harm Risk Policy and Procedure
- Psychological Risk Assessment Form

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