

14.1 DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

POLICY

SNF Development Center staff, volunteer, student and client safety takes precedence over all other concerns. SNF Development Center will endeavour to ensure that all staff are trained and ready to address emergency situations when they arise. This policy covers medical emergencies such as cardiac arrest, seizures or loss of consciousness. The individual who first responds to the call for help is responsible for coordinating emergency activities.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all SNF Development Center staff, students and volunteers.

PROCEDURES

When a health emergency occurs, the following steps are to be taken (adapt as necessary based on the location and the circumstances):

1. Stay with the person to the greatest extent possible. Do not move the person if possible until they have been assessed by medical personnel or someone with first aid training.
2. Seek help or ask someone to do this. Explain that there is an emergency and the nature of the problem.
3. Call emergency numbers or have someone call the emergency numbers. The caller should identify him/herself, the exact location where the incident has occurred.
4. Notify reception so that the receptionist can direct emergency response staff upon arrival. If reception is not available and there are other people present on site, delegate someone to direct emergency response staff.
5. Management staff should be advised of the situation at the first available opportunity (if they were not onsite or not involved in managing the emergency).
6. An *Incident Report* should be completed.
7. The relevant person in-charge should coordinate appropriate post-incident measures, depending on the nature of the emergency and those involved. These steps may be appropriate immediately following the emergency:
 - Provide/organize immediate attention and support to all those involved in the emergency.
 - Provide brief information about the event to others on the site to allay fears and concerns.
 - Ensure support from family or guardian is available.
 - A debriefing session should take place within 48 hours of an incident to provide staff with a brief update of the situation and discuss any follow-up.

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Crisis Intervention: A Step-By-Step Intervention Process

1. Make other staff on duty aware of the situation. Do not challenge the participant.
2. The first staff member on the scene becomes the “lead” staff, and the others act as back-up. If this is you and you feel that you are unable to handle the situation, ask reinforcement staff to act as the lead while you act as back-up.
3. Back-up staff should not rush into the situation. It can be very intimidating for a participant to suddenly be surrounded by staff, and this may serve to escalate the situation rather than defuse it.
4. “Back-up” staff should provide exactly that – back-up. It is more useful for all staff to be working together on one solution, than for each person to try to implement their own solution. If you have a concern with the way the lead staff is handling the situation, this should be addressed later, in private, or during the debriefing.
5. Ensure that other participants are out of the way. This will both ensure their safety and may help prevent escalation of the situation. If other participants remain present, their “audience participation” may trigger the participant.
6. If another participant is the target, get them to a safe place, and if possible, have someone else stay with them.
7. Keep a safe distance from the participant (but not very far). Give participant space to move and do not reach out to touch the person if they are agitated or angry.
8. Advise participants, in a calm, steady voice, of consequences if this behaviour continues. Give participants time to calm down.
9. Use de-escalation techniques (described further below) as you engage the participant.
10. Follow the behavior management plan.
11. Do a debriefing with the staff involved.
12. Fill out an incident report.

As much as it is important for staff to train, prepare, and think through their responses to crisis situations ahead of time, every person in crisis is an individual, and management approach needs to be tailored to the context of the situation and the particular people involved.

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Crisis Intervention: De-Escalation Techniques

Communication:

Making other staff aware of the escalating crisis is an important step. There needs to be mechanisms in place to facilitate information to other staff on duty.

De-Escalation Techniques:

Often, the best way to defuse an explosive situation is simply to provide some space to let off steam. De-escalation techniques are crucial for managing challenging situations and promoting a calm and supportive environment.

Here are some effective de-escalation techniques tailored to the unique needs of individuals in a special needs setting:

Maintain Calmness and Patience:

Approach the individual in a calm and composed manner, speaking in a soothing tone to help them feel safe and understood.

Respect Personal Space:

Respect the individual's personal space and avoid making sudden movements that may cause them to feel threatened or overwhelmed.

Active Listening and Empathy:

Actively listen to the individual's concerns or triggers, demonstrating empathy and understanding to validate their emotions and experiences.

Use Visual Aids and Communication Tools:

Employ visual aids, communication boards, or assistive technology devices to facilitate effective communication, particularly for individuals with communication challenges or language barriers.

Offer Choices and Distractions:

Provide the individual with choices or alternative activities to redirect their focus and alleviate feelings of frustration or agitation. Offer calming sensory tools, such as stress balls or sensory objects, to promote relaxation.

Implement Positive Reinforcement:

Acknowledge and praise positive behaviors and efforts, reinforcing a sense of accomplishment and self-worth to encourage cooperation and positive interactions.

Establish Predictable Routines:

Create a structured and predictable environment with consistent routines and schedules, as familiarity and predictability can help reduce anxiety and promote a sense of security.

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Collaborate with Support Team:

Work closely with the Center's support team, including therapists, and behavioral specialists, to develop and implement personalized de-escalation strategies that align with the individual's specific needs and behavioral patterns.

Implement Sensory Regulation Techniques:

Incorporate sensory regulation techniques, such as deep pressure input, calming music, or sensory-friendly environments, to help individuals regulate their sensory experiences and emotional responses.

Provide Post-Incident Support:

Offer post-incident support and follow-up discussions, allowing individuals to express their feelings and concerns, and collaboratively develop coping strategies to prevent similar situations in the future.

By integrating these de-escalation techniques into the daily practices, staff members can create a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes emotional well-being, positive interactions for individuals with diverse needs.

Documentation:

After an incident occurs, a report must be filled out as a record of what happened, who was involved, what staff interventions took place, and any required follow-up that needs to be done.

The incident report form should be filled online. This will ensure that important details do not get lost and forgotten, and will help to standardize the information that gets recorded and how it is used.

The record should be **filled out as soon after the event as possible**, so that the memory of all the details is still fresh.

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