

| Ref No. | TITLE |
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| S6.49 | PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND CONDUCT POLICY |

Target group/Applies to:

This policy applies to The Housing Connection for adults with disabilities. All THC workers are required to uphold this policy.

Version 4.1

Review Cycle: 3 years

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to apply a code of professional ethics to the workplace which is consistent with the mission, values, and objectives of The Housing Connection and with best practice in the industry.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The culture and behaviour that workers establish and practice is fundamental to the effectiveness and to the performance of The Housing Connection as a whole. This Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct establish the organisation's expectations for staff members who are required to comply with the highest standards of ethical conduct in all areas of their responsibilities.

This Policy is to be used in conjunction with the Staff Handbook and Staff Code of Conduct with which all Staff shall comply.

Any breaches of this Policy and Procedures or those contained in the Staff Handbook or Staff Code of Conduct will be dealt with under the Staff performance and Review Policy and related Policies.

Working with people

When dealing with one another, Board members, staff and clients, external stakeholders and other agency representatives and staff members will be respectful, honest and courteous. Staff members will give accurate information and prompt attention and observe fairness and equity in their dealings with others.

Working with clients

The Housing Connection operates as a community of interest in which power relationships between clients and staff are minimised. This allows reciprocity in relationships in which clients can experience the opportunity to both give and receive and to enjoy opportunities to socialise with staff and thereby learn the skills of social interaction. The professional nature of this work is acknowledged and staff members are respected in their role. At all times, it is understood that staff members will comply with professional standards of behaviour.

In order for these relationships to be conducted in a way that ensures the well-being of the people we support it is essential that when interacting or working with people using the services of The Housing Connection, staff will:

- always treat clients with respect and be mindful of their rights to privacy and confidentiality
- always show respect for people's linguistic, cultural or religious sensitivities or requirements, and ensure the responsiveness of the service to their particular needs and circumstances
- ensure that clients are provided with, and understand all information relevant to their situation, options available to them and conditions for use of the service
- ensure they have access to independent advocacy or support if they require these services in making any decisions
- be aware of personal boundaries and never enter into any form of sexual relationship whatsoever with a client
- not use their position to seek or obtain any financial or other advantages for themselves, or their family, or another person or organisation
- inform clients of their rights and respect those rights in all situations except where there is an immediate and real risk of harm to the client or a third party. In such a situation the approach used shall be that which causes the least infringement of the clients rights and then only for the time necessary.

Standards in the workplace

All staff members are required to:

- attend work in the times agreed with Managers/Team Leaders, notify Managers/Team Leaders and other stakeholders of their absences, report and account for all leave taken including sick leave, record attendance and obtain approval before changing their work times
- comply with the requirements of their job descriptions paying appropriate attention to quality and detail in their work
- provide accurate and honest information to Managers/Team Leaders about work completed and challenges experienced in completing work
- follow instructions that are reasonable and lawful and within their capability and training
- report any suspected corrupt or fraudulent practices of others. Any staff member making a report will be protected from reprisal in line with the 'Whistleblowers'/Protected Disclosures legislation.
- observe the requirements for conditions of employment and safety as described in The Housing Connection's Work Health and Safety Policy
- perform their duties unaffected by alcohol or the use of drugs other than those prescribed for them by a medical practitioner
- maintain a harmonious, co-operative and productive workplace, respectful of diversity
- ensure they do not use their position to exert inappropriate influence over others

- observe the requirements of the Staff Handbook and Staff Code of Conduct.

Upon commencing employment, all staff are required to sign an agreement per the **Staff Code of Conduct**:

“Staff Physical Presentation”

In order to promote a positive image for clients and the organisation and to ensure safety for clients and staff THC staff will:

- dress neatly and wear clean clothes;
- wear appropriate footwear for the occasion;
- dress modestly and ensure that modesty is maintained when bending and stretching;
- dress for the occasion (e.g. if supporting a client in community participation to dress in a way that is consistent with the occasion);
- maintain a high standard of personal hygiene;
- if providing direct support to clients ensure consistency with issues which have been raised in health care training.

Language

The way staff communicates with clients and the community may influence a client’s self-confidence and the community’s overall perception of people with disabilities. Staff are to therefore:

- use language which is respectful to clients, their families and friends, the community and other staff;
- use language which is both age appropriate and meets the person’s needs;
- use language appropriate to the setting.

Confidentiality

Staff may have access to a significant amount of confidential information and must treat such information with respect. Staff will:

- work in a way that is consistent with all THC policies & procedures and Mission Statement;
- work in a way that is consistent with THC Confidentiality Policy.

Relationships with Clients

Staff may spend many hours supporting clients and should conduct themselves in a respectful and friendly manner. Friendships often develop between clients and staff and it is important for staff to consider carefully the implications of their behaviour. Staff are to:

- discuss any concerns regarding their relationship with a client with their Project Coordinator/ Team Leader

Grievances

Staff are not to channel their complaints through clients and their families. THC has established mechanisms and channels for their complaints and grievances.

Promoting a Positive Image

Staff have a responsibility to clients and to THC to present a positive image of clients and the organisation.

Conflict between Staff

Staff are to consider how they deal with conflict and choose a setting that does not impact on clients. Where a conflict is unresolved, then staff are to discuss the issue with their Manager and may need to refer to the Staff Disputes & Grievances policy.

Modelling Appropriate Behaviour

Staff are to model appropriate behaviour at all times. Clients may look to staff as role models and may learn/adopt new skills from observing staff. It is therefore important that staff:

- model appropriate behaviour to clients at all times; and
- are aware of the strong influence that they may have on clients.

Staff Values and Beliefs

Each staff member brings to the organisation their own values, standards and beliefs. In some situations a staff member's values may conflict with the organisations, or a staff member may be considered to be 'pushing' their values on clients and/or work colleagues. Examples of values and beliefs which are often an issue include:

- religion
- dress
- gender roles
- hygiene

Staff are to ensure that they respect the choices of individual clients and staff and do not promote their own standards and values at the expense of the client's independence, or if those values conflict with the organisation's.

Gifts and Payments

Staff are often in a position of trust. Staff are not to use their position to seek or obtain any financial or other advantages for themselves, or their family, or another person or organisation. This includes soliciting or accepting gifts, rewards or benefits which may compromise the staff member's integrity. Staff are to declare any gifts to their Team Leader. Nonetheless, it is important that staff are sensitive to cultural and personal values in gift giving. Where refusal of a gift would be insensitive then staff are requested to discuss this with their Coordinator or Supervisor.

Conduct of Staff Outside of Work

Staff are not to conduct themselves in their private capacity in a manner which:

- adversely reflect on clients, their families/advocates;
- adversely reflect on the organisation or staff.

Conflict of Interest

If a staff member has some personal, financial or other interest that might affect, or may be seen to adversely affect their duties, he/she is to:

- discuss the situation with their Project Coordinator or Team Leader and if there is a perceived conflict of interest it should be recorded on the organisation Conflict of Interest Register;
- take whatever action is agreed upon to avoid a potential conflict of interest."

Work participation

Staff members will:

- share a commitment to the values and objectives of The Housing Connection
- work within priorities identified by the Board and Senior Management
- actively participate in planning and consultative processes where appropriate and contribute to the development of the organisation
- use the specified communication channels for reporting and direction
- provide and receive constructive feedback and criticism
- where the opportunity arises, promote the good name and work of the organisation

Teamwork

Staff members will:

- work together towards agreed work objectives and goals, and communicate regularly with one another about progress.
- work together to look for ways to improve work methods and to solve workplace and service related problems
- give support and guidance to each other, ensure appropriate training and development and recognise each other's results and achievements

Use of resources

Staff members will:

- ensure they have the necessary delegation to authorise expenditure or make use of organisational resources
- only use organisational materials, facilities, funds, people and equipment for authorised purposes and take responsible steps to prevent misuse by others
- conserve and efficiently use resources through recycling, energy saving and waste minimisation.

Information

Staff members will:

- observe the organisation's policies regarding privacy and confidentiality when disclosing sensitive or confidential information, and provide access to information when required by law or to assist other staff in their duties.
- not misuse information obtained at work either for financial reward or gain, or for taking advantage of another person
- observe the organisation's policies regarding information management and follow specified practices in the collection, storage and disposal of files and other records.

3. DOCUMENTATION

| Documents related to this policy | |
|---|---|
| Standards, Legislation or other external requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Disability Inclusion Act 2014</u> • <u>National Standards for Disability Services (2014)</u> • <u>Office of Industrial Relations</u> • <u>Jobs Australia</u> • <u>Australian Services Union</u> • <u>'Whistleblowers'/Protected Disclosures legislation</u> |
| Related internal policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Management Policies • THC Confidentiality Policy • Staff Grievances and Disputes Policy • Staff Performance Policy |
| Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Code of Conduct • Staff handbook |

| Reviewing and approving this policy | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Frequency | Reviewer/s | Approver/s |
| 3 Yearly | CEO | THC-Part Board |

| Version | Policy review and version tracking | | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Review | Date Approved | Approved by | Next Review Due |
| 1.0 | April 2011 | 27/6/11 | THC Board | April 2014 |
| 2.0 | Jan 2015 | 30/3/15 | THC Board | Jan 2018 |
| 3.0 | Jan 2018 | 10/4/2018 | THC-Part Board | Jan 2021 |
| 4.0 | Feb 2019 | Feb 2019 | THC-Part Board | Feb 2022 |