

## POLICIES PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS

Even the smallest therapy clinic requires policies, procedures and standards to ensure that they operate efficiently and within legislative and ethical boundaries. For the clinic with a sole operator or only one or two people these might be no more than a set of general guidelines:

- Quality service policy
- Code of Conduct
- Infection control guidelines
- Housekeeping routines
- Administrative routines
- Emergency and evacuation procedures



Some of the above may be taken directly from Professional Association Codes of Conduct or Health Authority Guidelines. For others, they may be 'unwritten laws' that have been discussed and agreed between all who work in the clinic.

The trouble with 'unwritten laws' is that people forget that they exist, or the person who remembers them leaves and they are not passed on to his/her successor. Even the smallest clinic needs to spend some time developing a set of written guidelines so that everyone works the same way and achieves the same goals. It stops a lot of problems:

- People working incorrectly because they have been given the wrong information
- Wasted time running round to try and find out how to do unfamiliar tasks
- Wasted effort on having to do things over to correct mistakes
- Wastage of precious materials and resources
- Stress as individuals try to cope with poor work procedures and overloads
- Job dissatisfaction because workers have no say in how a job should be done
- Accidents and injuries because people are not informed about the risks and hazards in the workplace
- Retrenchments as organisations try to cut costs by downsizing rather than better management systems.

A more complex organisation, such as Yourtown Health Centre will have developed a number of more detailed operational guidelines. In fact, the clinic has gone as far as developing these into a formal Quality Assurance (QA) system. By doing this they find they have saved as much as 50% on operating costs and this means that they can put more of their budget into providing a better service for the clients.

In such a system, all the policies and procedures are developed through discussion with the staff who will implement them. This ensures 'ownership' and helps stop the system being 'set in concrete'. A quality approach recognises that the best person to say how a job should be done is the person who does the job.

QA systems are living documents, that is, they are meant to be **used, lived and followed** at all times. This is why a good organisation will involve their staff in developing the procedures, even if the policies come from the top level of management.

In a formal system, all the documents have identification and version numbers to ensure that people are only using the most current versions of the system.

In formal and audited systems the authorising person is usually the head honcho, unless that authority has been delegated to a specific person with responsibility for Quality Assurance.

Quality systems are no good unless people live by them. They provide the whole work ethic for the organisation and for the conduct of the business. The more complex the organisation, the more likely it is to have invested time and money in developing a formal set of policies, procedures and guidelines. Health related organisations may also have to undergo **accreditation audits** under which they have to produce their documentation and **documentary evidence** that their staff are following the set procedures.

If you worked in aged or disability care, you would be face-to-face with such a system everyday. Every aspect of the job is strictly regulated and the workplace can be visited at any time by auditors who check that the procedures are being followed. The audits are mandatory and can have a life-or-death result for any organisation found to be non-compliant. Other organisations also have to meet national standards and external audits in order to be registered.

Your training organisation, for example, operates under a set of stringent national standards and has had to go through government audits, as we have at Sea Eagle Training. These audits have both the carrot and the stick effect. The carrot is that an organisation subject to accreditation audit gets to publicise their registration as proof of service quality. The stick is that if they fail to maintain that compliance they can have the status taken away.

Why should all of this concern you, you are just a new employee? Simply put, as an employee you have a responsibility to ensure that you maintain the organisational standards by working strictly to the guidelines they provide for the way that you carry out your work duties.

**The bottom line is – if your organisation fails to set and maintain industry standards, you will be out of a job.** The responsibility for ensuring that the standards are maintained rests with each and every employee, not just the management. This means you!

What this means for you, in real life, is that you cannot afford to cut corners or to ignore the rules 'just for once'. In terms of:

- seeing that work is carried out efficiently and in the right manner
- working safely and responsibly
- ensuring that the client is safe and protected from negligent actions
- making sure that every client receives fair and equitable treatment
- treating everyone with respect and courtesy, even people you don't agree with
- making the workplace a pleasant place to be
- getting along with your workmates, even if you don't like them much
- providing a quality service for the customer, no matter how hassled you are

**– you are it!**



## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR QUALITY

- ◇ *Meet the legitimate needs of the client/customer without error, defect or omission.* This may seem like a tall order in an imperfect world, but having the moon to shoot for does *up your game*. The more you see this as your goal the better your service becomes and the greater competitive advantage you have over your rivals.
- ◇ *Every person you meet or serve is your customer.* Every person who is an end user of your service, including other staff, suppliers and distributors, has the right to be treated according to the first commandment.
- ◇ *Every client/customer is important.* Each one is worth unlimited referrals or unlimited bad publicity. It becomes your choice to balance out the 'rules' to ensure that you do not alienate future sources of income. Where the 'rules' conflict with common sense, have the courage of your convictions and turn them into 'guidelines'.
- ◇ *The customer is always right.* In their own eyes at least. Agree with them and then (gently) convince them of the proper alternatives. Remember the *Moment of Truth*, and empathise if they have a legitimate complaint. Never antagonise them - you simply cannot afford to lose your credibility and their future patronage.
- ◇ *Never promise what you can't deliver.* To do so places an unrealistic expectation upon you, creates an illegitimate need in the customer and damages your credibility.
- ◇ *Keep the client informed.* Delays, wrong orders, life happenstances and glitches do occur when you are planning other things. If these things will affect a promise or appointment, then pass on the information to the client *without delay*.
- ◇ *Get it right the first time.* A large percentage of all time-cost losses incurred by business can be reduced by attention to accuracy and the fine detail. Quality is everyone's business, so all staff should be involved in developing work procedures and standards. Take pride in a job well done.
- ◇ *If it isn't visible, it doesn't exist.* If there is no visible evidence about how a job should be done, or how and if it has been done, then there is no guarantee that it has been done at all. How can you measure how well you are doing if you do not have established 'guidelines' to follow? In this context, **customer service and intellectual property are as much a 'product' as a widget**. Establishing written work procedures and pro-forma examples of how the finished product should be allows everyone to work to standards. This increases efficiency and quality.
- ◇ *Blame the system, not the people.* Eighty five percent of all breakdowns in service and communication can be attributed to faults in the system, not in the personnel. Most organisations put so much pressure on people to be *busy*, they forget to allow time for creative thinking. Encourage everybody to spend some time each day thinking about how to do the *work smarter*. If and when the wheels still wobble, examine the reasons and plan so that it never happens again.
- ◇ *No job is finished until the paperwork is done.* We live in an age where information has to be organised - constantly. Set up a good working system of record keeping. Allowing time for this each day makes for a more serene work environment.



## MURPHY'S LAW SAYS WHAT CAN GO WRONG, WILL GO WRONG

To minimise waste and lost time:

- examine the process and procedures to spot the places where Murphy is right
- look at how the error defect or omission can be prevented
- work out how any mistakes can be put right
- participate in training so you know how to 'Get it Right the First Time'

The major reasons why Murphy is right are:

- not checking the quality of raw materials before process
- not planning the job properly
- having no standard specifications
- not following the 'recipe'
- not setting work priorities
- rushing through work
- 'she'll be right, mate'
- being 'off with the pixies'



### Standards:

- produce a consistently good product or service
- reduce waste, costs and production time
- ensure that everyone turns out the same quality of work for the same effort
- train people to the same level no matter where they work or study
- make sure that the goods 'fit' the purpose
- make it easier for the consumer to choose the right product
- ensure the continuance of our export earning capacity
- reduce the incidence of faulty products and services
- encourage pride in a job well done

### Standards cover:

- products
- labelling
- safety
- machine operation
- job standards
- export and import
- training
- qualifications



These may require formal quality procedures or less formal checklists and specifications

**Standards developed by these bodies may affect your workplace:**

- International Standards Organisation (ISO)
- Australian Standards Association (AS)
- National Occupational Health and Safety Research Council
- Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)
- Competency Standards Bodies (various)
- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)
- Therapeutic Goods Administration

**There are special standards for:**

- primary production (including medicinal herbs)
- food production and labelling (including food supplements and dietary products)
- cosmetic goods
- therapeutic goods
- export of goods
- non-therapeutic herbal products
- special permits for certain classes of goods
- training in allied health professions and complementary health

**There are also Codes of Practice that affect your workplace:**

- employer specific, as shown in the model induction manual in your reader
- profession specific, as developed by a professional association
- occupational health as safety specific, as developed by national and State WHS authorities
- industry specific, often developed by cross-industry groups, often with government help

**If these affect you, then compliance is compulsory or:**

- you (or your employer) could be liable to prosecution
- you may not be able to trade across state boundaries
- you cannot export
- you could lose your production or sales licence (especially if agencies like the TGA are involved)

**What can you do to ensure that you meet workplace Quality Assurance requirements?**

If you are self-employed, it is advisable to write a set of workplace instructions, Codes of Conduct and guidelines similar to the ones given in your reader. If you are an employee:

- read and FOLLOW any workplace manuals you have been given
- obey all legitimate and legal instructions given to you by your employer or supervisor
- never be tempted to cut corners and do the job properly the first time
- participate in workplace health and safety committees or workgroups
- participate actively in all staff meetings, especially those dealing with work procedures
- ensure that you know your obligations under Duty of Care
- follow strict Infection Control guidelines at all times

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Many organisations now have a risk management plan to ensure that they minimise the risks to their:

People: the safety and welfare of their staff and clients.

Property: protection to losses of investments, buildings, content and equipment

Income: working out ways to protect the sources of income against all foreseen and unforeseen events

Goodwill: this is the most vulnerable area for small business because reputation and customer loyalty can easily be destroyed and are more difficult to replace than things

There are several ways of minimising the risks that can destroy the profitability of an organisation, and so protect the jobs of the workers:

- Operate ethically and within the law
- Employ the best people for the job
- Train the people to do their job well
- Have good management systems
- Operate under a quality service policy
- Develop a Safety Plan and Safety Codes of Practice
- Take out the necessary insurances



If you are self-employed, these are all things you will need to consider, but as an employee only some of these items relate directly to you. We have already explored some of them.

One of the primary risk management strategies is for the organisation to ensure that they treat their employees well. This means that within the organisation, everyone has to be informed of their rights and responsibilities. There are several ways that this can be established.

The organisation can publish their corporate plan so that everybody knows what makes the place tick.

The organisation can develop and distribute procedural manuals which set out who is responsible for what and does what.

Every employee can be issued with a job and person description that lists their primary duties and responsibilities.


The employees can be given the right to join a Union or other employee organisation that protects their rights to be treated fairly and equitably in the workplace.

Employees can be employed under the appropriate Industrial Award (if there is one for their occupation) to ensure that receive their just and proper rights.

The employers can belong to Chambers of Commerce or other commercial organisations that ensure that they stay informed of business trends.

Everyone can belong to the appropriate professional association to ensure that they stay informed of trends in their respective health disciplines.

Staff can be trained in essential aspects of the job, such as safe working practices.



**Assessment Three:** Please go to page 13 of your Assessment Manual and complete the questions.

**ASSESSMENT RECORD**

Student Name:	
Student Number:	
Postcode:	
e-mail:	
Assessor/Trainer:	
Telephone:	
e-mail:	

Topic One	Assessments	Date	CA
The organisation of work	1A. Local health services		
	1B. Snapshot of indigenous health issues		
	2. Organisational structures		
	3. Policies and procedures		
	4. Workplace rights and responsibilities		
	5. Work roles		

Assessor's comments:

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Assessor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign-off date: \_\_\_\_\_





5. Why do you think it is important that staff follow Codes of Practice?

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6. To whom would you report if you noticed another employee breaching the conduct guidelines given as the causes for termination of employment given in your Induction Manual. Why do you think these rules are important to the organisation?

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7. Looking at the Code of Practice, what are the rules regarding the treatment of minors.

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8. Do you think that these rules will apply to your job role? Why/why not?

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9. Why is it important for therapists to follow the rules regarding modesty, client comfort and chaperonage?

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