

2.9 Emergency and Disaster

2.9.1 Emergency and Disaster Management Policy and Procedure

2.9.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Emergency and Disaster Management Policy and Procedure is so our participants feel safe in the event of a disaster (natural or pandemic), knowing Nepean Centre will provide them with continuity of service. Nepean Centre focuses on maintaining service delivery to our participants in times of stress and uncertainty.

Though disasters and emergencies may be infrequent, we acknowledge our services are especially important before, during, and after such events, as many participants are beyond the reach of other services, and Nepean Centre provides them with an essential support lifeline.

Nepean Centre recognises that preparedness for disasters and emergencies is a priority for our organisation and a requirement to ensure the safety of our participants.

Nepean Centre will endeavour to provide adequate service to our participants before, during, and after emergencies.

2.9.1.2 Scope

The scope of this policy includes our participants and staff. Our participants will be informed of our emergency procedures to assist them in preparing for an emergency, building their resilience, and maintaining their confidence in Nepean Centre.

Our staff will be well informed and prepared to assist participants in coping in an emergency within the community and strengthening Nepean Centre's disaster resilience.

2.9.1.3 Policy

Nepean Centre places the safety and care of our participants at the forefront of our operational procedures. During a disaster, our team will adhere to this policy framework and work within any additional guidelines and instructions provided by state and federal government authorities to our organisation.

During any disaster, our senior management will undertake the following actions:

1. Follow all relevant government guidelines and instructions.
2. Review continuity of support plans and ensure each participant's safety, health, and well-being – **before, during and after** an emergency or disaster.
3. Communicate Nepean Centre's response to staff, participants, and other relevant parties.
4. Prepare participants (before any possible actions are taken) by informing them how the current situation may affect their services.
5. Brief our entire staff on any possible or real action steps required by them.
6. Attempt to keep key workers allocated to the same participants.
7. Work towards maintaining continuity of support for each of our participants.

A participant may refuse to have a Personal Emergency Preparation Plan. During the participant onboarding:

- Explain that the plan is a requirement under the NDIS Standards
- Focus on the plan is about their safety and how we can provide support to the participant in an emergency or disaster situation.
- Discuss the fact that there is no way to know about future events, and the plan is to help them.

If the participant refuses to let us create, test, and adjust a personal emergency preparation plan, then ask them to sign the section in the plan where they refuse to have a plan (Section 11). Ask the participant if they have a plan from another provider; if they answer yes, ask them to sign the Third-Party Information Release Consent Form in the Personal Emergency Preparation Plan. Store the documents in their file and note on the Support Plan that the participant:

- Refusal on the creating, testing, and adjusting of the Personal Emergency Preparation Plan
- Refuses, but another provider has a current plan – complete the support plan with the relevant information in the support plan and train the staff in the process. Review annually.

2.9.1.4 Procedure

2.9.1.4.1 Preparing for disasters and emergencies

A disaster is any phenomenon, natural or human-made, that has the potential to cause extensive destruction of life and property. An emergency is a grave risk to health, life, or the environment. The mere mention of either of these two words makes the community, particularly our participants, extremely nervous. Having all parties know and understand the plan is the key to being ready for disaster. Nepean Centre management will consult with participants, support networks, and staff to periodically review plans, so their management is relevant to the current situation.

Some disasters and emergencies Nepean Centre may face include:

- flood
- fire
- heatwave
- snowstorm
- storms or cyclones

- pandemic

Nepean Centre will:

- consult with participants to create a Personal Emergency Preparation Plan incorporating all aspects - before, during and after any emergency and disaster
- stay informed regarding all state/territory and federal government directives and act upon these directives appropriately
- advise other organisations who work with Nepean Centre of our disaster procedures and processes
- communicate with participants and relevant networks in a manner determined in the support plan
- identify personnel who are critical in the delivery of essential frontline services
- identify Nepean Centre participants and their stakeholders whose services may be impacted by the situation
- train staff in the implementation of any strategies
- implement this policy in conjunction with our Risk Management Policy and Procedure, our Information Management Policy and Procedure and our Human Resource Policy and Procedure
- ensure Personal Emergency Preparation Plan explain and guide how the organisation will respond to and oversee the response to an emergency or disaster
- develop Personal Emergency Preparation Plan through consulting with participants and their support networks to create plans for preparing for and responding to disasters that may include
 - making changes to participant supports
 - adapting, and rapidly responding to changes to participant supports and other interruptions
 - communicating changes to participant supports to workers and participants and their support networks.
 - informing participant and their support network in the manner set out in their plan
 - exit strategies (e.g. disaster)
 - continuity of supports, including potential staff replacements and options (e.g. disaster or emergency), see *Continuity of Supports Policy and Procedure*
 - supports during emergency or disaster
 - actions to be taken by staff
 - actions to be taken by management
- implement the Personal Emergency Preparation Plan as per the consultation if required
- attach any Personal Emergency Preparation Plan on the service agreement and add them to the participant's file.
- Test and adjust the Personal Emergency Preparation Plan in the context of a particular disaster by:
 - undertaking a trial run of the Personal Emergency Preparation Plan, where the plan will be:
 - acted out
 - reviewed with participants, networks and staff
 - adjusted to meet the needs, preferences and goals of the participant
 - documented strategies in the plan made, and staff informed
 - reviewing each plan when a potential disaster is evident (e.g. fire, pandemic)
 - adjusting plan due to changes in circumstances
 - ensuring continuity of supports is in place
 - communicating with the participant and support networks in a manner that allows for an understanding of what will occur before, during and after the emergency or disaster
- review the Personal Emergency Preparation Plan in consultation with the participant and relevant support networks during the annual risk assessment of the support plan review to enable adjustments due to the changing nature of any disaster or emergency
- gain oversight of participants' plans during management meetings to gain a whole organisation's strategy.

2.9.1.4.2. Supporting the supporters

Vicarious trauma is a real and grave health concern for staff and volunteers of community service organisations such as ours, mainly when working with disaster-affected individuals and communities.

Nepean Centre will determine the best means to support our staff in a disaster situation and implement all appropriate measures as detailed in our Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure.

2.9.1.4.3 Consumer preparedness

Nepean Centre understands that it is more likely that our participants will be adversely impacted by an emergency or disaster than others in the community.

We acknowledge that we may not provide the same service to our participants during or immediately after an emergency or disaster. All participants must be supported by Nepean Centre to prepare for changes due to a disaster or an emergency.

Nepean Centre will:

- inform participants of the current situation and how the provision of their services and workers may be impacted
- Consult with participants and support networks on the plan's development and any adjustments or changes in circumstances. Always ensuring that they are informed of what will occur before, during and after any disaster or emergency.
- continue to provide participants with the same key workers if they are available
- replace key workers with experienced workers who have the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate care to the participant
- inform the participant of any service changes and outline the reason/s for these changes
- communicate with participants to ensure that their needs, preferences and goals are met
- seek support within the local care community if our staff are unavailable, and ensure that any new workers are appropriately experienced, trained, and hold necessary checks

2.9.1.4.4 Staff preparedness

Our team is our greatest asset; our focus is that they and their loved ones remain safe during an emergency or disaster. Nepean Centre will help prepare our staff for an emergency or disaster by implementing the following:

- inform staff of the situation and what is required by them via email, online messaging, Zoom meetings or similar
- train workers in all required measures and strategies identified in the plan, e.g., infection control, social distancing and evacuation
- seek feedback from participants regarding their services to adjust information distribution, if necessary
- seek feedback from staff about actions undertaken, issues or concerns, and what worked well.
- inform staff of our participant's requirements outlined in their support plan
- test each plan to ensure that it will function before implementation
- adjust the plan accordingly
- inform management of the changes to plans to allow for organisational management adjustments

2.9.1.5 Related documents

- Committee of Management Induction Manual
- Committee Members Agreement
- Committee Meeting Agenda
- Committee Meeting Minutes
- Contingency Emergency and Disaster Plan Template
- Continuity of Care, section 11 of Support Plan
- Personal Emergency Preparation Plan
- Service Agreement
- Staff Training Plan
- Staff Training Record
- Support Plan
- Support Plan Easy Read
- Training Attendance Register – In house
- Training Register
- Business Continuity Policy and Procedure
- Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- Information Management Policy and Procedure
- Human Resources Management Policy and Procedure
- Work Health and Environmental Policy and Procedure

2.9.1.6 References

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Commonwealth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Services Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Amendment (2021 Measures No. 1) Rules 2021

