Mental Health Policy

2.7.6.1 Purpose

This policy aims to establish, promote, and maintain an environment conducive to staff and participants' well-being and mental health. Nepean Centre is committed to equitable access, support for positive health practices and responsiveness to cater for the variance of needs of staff and participants regarding their health and well-being.

2.7.6.2 Scope

This policy applies to Nepean Centre work environments.

2.7.6.3 Definitions

Term	Description
Mental health	Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.
Mental Illness	Mental illness, also called mental health disorders, refers to a wide range of mental health conditions - disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behaviour. Examples of mental illness include: • depression, • anxiety disorders, • schizophrenia, • eating disorders and • addictive behaviours. Many people have mental health concerns from time to time. But a mental health concern becomes a mental illness when ongoing signs and symptoms cause frequent stress and affect your ability to function.
Psychosocial Hazards	The things at work that can harm mental health are known as psychosocial hazards, and these hazards can also cause physical harm. Psychosocial hazards include: • job demands • low job control • poor support • lack of role clarity • poor organisational change management • inadequate reward and recognition • poor organisational justice • traumatic events or material • remote or isolated work • poor physical environment • violence and aggression • bullying • harassment, including sexual harassment, and • conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions
Psychosocial risk	The risk to the health or safety of a worker or other person arising from a psychosocial hazard
Stress	When the term 'stress' is used in a clinical sense, it refers to a situation that causes discomfort and distress for a person and can lead to other mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression. Stress may also contribute to physical illnesses such as cardiovascular disease.

2.7.6.4 Policy

Nepean Centre is committed to protecting and promoting the health, safety, and welfare of those we work for and with. We seek to build and maintain an environment and culture that proactively supports mental health and well-being, promotes help-seeking behaviours, and prevents discrimination (including bullying and harassment).

Through continued education and awareness raising, Nepean Centre is committed to building the knowledge, awareness and capability of staff and participants around mental health and well-being issues, actions, and behaviours, normalising the conversation on this topic, reducing the stigma associated with depression and anxiety and encouraging help-seeking behaviours.

Our organisation acknowledges the importance of strategies that support our staff and participants, such as:
- supportive leadership and environmental climate
- developing a responsible culture of support
- increasing morale
- reducing psychosocial hazards through:
  - designing and managing a workplace to reduce physical fatigue and stressors through.
    - risk management – health and safety
      - identifying the risk
      - eliminating the risk
      - substituting to a lesser risk
    - consultation
    - monitoring of stressors and triggers
  - establishing workplace protocols that encourage positive interactions and behaviours.

This policy aims to promote positive mental health and well-being by creating a sustainable healthy work environment and conditions. As far as possible, we will prevent psychological injury through the following:
- encouragement of staff and participants to seek early assistance.
- discussing issues during annual performance and support plan reviews.
- reducing stigma or discrimination by awareness raising and education.
- promoting a caring, responsive community for the prevention of circumstances that may affect the well-being of self and others.

2.7.6.4.1 Stress in the workplace
Work-related stress can lead to illness, injury and decreases in performance. Stress can come from many sources, both work and non-work. Nepean Centre has a legal obligation to minimise workers' exposure to work-related factors that can increase the risk of stress. This obligation is the same for volunteers, self-employed people, and contractors.

We aim to eliminate or minimise staff members' risk of harm from potential stress at work. Our strategies include the following:
- informing staff that if feeling stressed to inform their supervisor.
- allocating a staff member to support the person.
- monitoring staff for stress.
- training any supervisor or management personnel in how to handle a person who seeks assistance and how to refer the stressed staff member to the delegate support person.
- actively listening to the person and devising a plan of action to eliminate or minimise their stress.
- determine if the stress is a result of work or home:
  - if work-related, then formulate a plan of action to eliminate or minimise their stress.
  - if home-related, consult with the person to identify if there are any ways to support the individual.

2.7.6.5 Procedure
Our organisation acknowledges differences in our diverse and inclusive community, and all people need to seek timely mental health support when they are experiencing poor mental health. Staff are encouraged to approach someone they feel comfortable talking to about their mental status.

2.7.6.5.1 Staff
Staff experiencing poor mental well-being or work-affecting mental illness will be supported to allow their health to improve. Our General Manager will refer them to support mechanisms (if relevant) and work with them using this procedure:
1. Notify the relevant people:
   a. Supervisor.
   b. Qualified specialist, e.g. doctor.
2. Spend time speaking with the person:
   a. Use active-listening techniques.
   b. Discuss some goals they wish to achieve.
   c. Use the Mental Health Checklist if relevant, that is provided by the medical practitioner.
3. Agree on one or more of the options:

          a. Hear their voice to determine strategies that may assist.

          b. Collaborate to determine how to reach their outcomes.

4. Schedule a series of check-ins
   a. Set timeframes for meetings.
5. Discuss reasonable adjustments, if necessary, by:
   a. Discuss what is working and what is not.
   b. Changing work practices.
   c. Working with specific participants.
6. Make adjustments that are agreed to.
7. Help them make an improvement plan:
   a. Setting small goals
   b. Setting timeframes

2.7.6.5.2 Participants

Staff are required to report any changes in behaviour to their supervisor as per *the Responsive Support Planning Policy and Procedure*. This procedure will generally be used to deal with participants' mental health. Below is a guide to assist:

1. Notify the relevant people:
   a. Supervisor
   b. Complete file notes
2. Spend time speaking with the participant:
   a. Use active-listening techniques.
   b. Discuss some goals they wish to achieve.
3. Agree on one or more of the options:
   a. Hear their voice to determine strategies that may assist.
   b. Collaborate to determine how to reach their outcomes.
   c. Record and adjust in the Support Plan.
4. Schedule a series of check-ins
   a. Set timeframes for meetings.
5. Discuss reasonable adjustments, if necessary, by:
   a. Discuss what is working and what is not.
   b. Changing strategies to suit.
   c. Working with specific workers.
6. Help them make an improvement plan:
   a. Setting small goals
   b. Setting timeframes

2.7.6.6 Related documents

- Mental Health Checklist
- Responsive Support Planning Policy and Procedure
- Human Resources Policy and Procedure
- Corporate Governance Policy and Procedure
- Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure

2.7.6.7 References

- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022