

Using policy to prevent and address everyday harm

Introduction

This guide aims to assist organisations to integrate ways to prevent and address everyday harm into their policy frameworks.

The guide suggests ideas, principles and actions that organisations can take to integrate or add everyday harm prevention into their policies. The goal is for people with disability, staff, managers and families to understand the steps they can take to prevent and address everyday harm.

It offers options for how to incorporate everyday harm prevention into your policies:

- Develop a new policy to prevent and address everyday harm
- Include information about ways to prevent and address everyday harm in existing policy about abuse, safety and good practice
- Use ideas about everyday harm to broadly shape other policy and practice documents.

1. Develop an everyday harm prevention policy

Your organisation may choose to develop a new policy to prevent and address everyday harm. This is useful when a cohesive policy on this topic is most suitable for your organisation.

A new policy on everyday harm should

- Define everyday harm
- Describe steps to prevent, address and repair everyday harm
- Be clear about how organisations can support everyone to understand, prevent, address and repair everyday harm.

Policy content for each of these elements is suggested in the box below.

Examples of how everyday harm is successfully prevented, addressed and repaired can be included in the policy to emphasise the importance of these steps. You can also link to other key policy documents which include examples, like the **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission Code of Conduct**.

Box 1

Content for everyday harm prevention policy

Everyday harm definition

Everyday harm is the negative impact on a person when someone does or does not do something (actions and inactions) in their daily interactions.

The harm can be to the person's relationships, reputation, growth and learning, feelings, mental health and physical health.

Everyday harm happens in all relationships, so it is important that we all know and use the steps to prevent and address it when it happens.

Steps to prevent, address and repair everyday harm

NOTICE • Name and describe everyday harm when it happens • Take time to develop trust with people • Learn about each other's communication preferences • Learn about each other's past experiences of harm

ACKNOWLEDGE • Ask if harm has happened • Name and describe the harm • Communicate about the harm experienced • Describe what caused the harm • Share feedback about support given and received

RESPOND • Ask how we can work better together • Share ideas about the cause of the harm, our own actions, other people's actions and the situation where the harm occurred • Plan together about how to resolve the harmful situation • Identify who can help us resolve the harm • Check if we need help from other people to resolve the harm

REPAIR • Apologise and express forgiveness • Ask for help from the supporters we trust • Listen and acknowledge each other

MAKE THINGS BETTER • Make changes in our relationships to prevent harm from happening again • Make positive changes in our support services to create a good vibe • Create safe spaces so that everyday harm stands out • Practise how to prevent harm

Learning about everyday harm safely means emphasising the actions that *can* and *should* be taken to prevent and address it. It is important that your policy does not just focus on the definition and types of everyday harm without also providing information on the steps to repair it. Because it is such a common experience, everyone experiences everyday harm at some point.

Be clear about how organisations can support everyone to understand, prevent, address and repair everyday harm.

A new policy should also emphasise that preventing, addressing and repairing everyday harm is reinforced by the way formal rules and informal cultures interact within your organisation.

- Formal rules are written-down policies, laws and procedures, including explicit principles, guidelines, procedures and practice frameworks
- Informal practices, such as unspoken social norms and expectations, are the informal culture of an organisation
- Formal rules and informal culture interact in positive and negative ways
- Rules should guide, rather than constrain, quality support and agency between people with disability and staff.

Policy to prevent and address everyday harm can include that

- Formal procedures, such as staff inductions, include positive messages about the rights and wellbeing of people with disability. This can create organisational cultures that encourage staff to prioritise people's support needs
- Rules are applied consistently. This can shape positive attitudes towards those rules, which means they are followed and respected
- Rules support good practice which helps build strong relationships. Strong relationships support the prevention of everyday harm by helping people feel able to communicate their needs and preferences
- Training and governance with and by people with disability about everyday harm prevention demonstrates what good practice looks like. This is important for quality and safeguarding.

Consider what must be in place in your organisation that would support a standalone policy to address and prevent harm:

- Allow people to choose who they work with. This promotes their agency over their support
- Promote consistent staffing. This builds trust and familiarity to prevent harm and encourages communication if harm does occur
- Normalise giving and receiving feedback. This helps increase support worker responsiveness and flexibility
- Invest in creating safe spaces – find out from the people in your organisation what helps them to feel comfortable and at ease so you can respond with ways to help people feel connected and heard.

A standalone policy on preventing everyday harm can link to other relevant policies, such as the NDIS Code of Conduct Guidance for NDIS Providers and the NDIS Code of Conduct Guidance for Workers (<https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au>) as well as other internal policies about quality and safeguarding. This situates everyday harm prevention within your organisation's broader policy landscape.

2. Adding everyday harm prevention to current policy about quality and safety

Information about everyday harm prevention can be added into your current policies on quality and safeguarding.

Including information about everyday harm prevention can demonstrate how preventing and addressing harm strengthens quality and safeguarding. It can also highlight the relationship between quality support and other forms of harm and violence that must be addressed.

The new information to add to current policy needs to always emphasise both what everyday harm is and the steps to take to prevent and address everyday harm together. See Box 1 and Box 2 for more information.

Ideas about everyday harm can also be used to inform policy about quality and safeguarding, even if these policies do not explicitly use the words 'everyday harm'. Harm does not need to be named to address and prevent it, and the steps to address and repair harm can be implemented without detailing what people might experience.

Examples are policies about feedback, supervision, reflection, making complaints, managing staff, organising support and choosing support. These are some areas where everyday harm might occur. Examples of how to prevent everyday harm within these policy areas are in Box 2.

Box 2

Examples of content about everyday harm prevention to include in other policies

In quality and safeguarding policy

- Explain the relationship between quality support, everyday harm and other harm and violence
- Emphasise what everyday harm is and the steps to take to prevent and address everyday harm together (see Box 1).

In complaints policy

- Giving and receiving feedback. This can normalise making complaints and build people's experience and confidence in feedback
- Multiple ways to give and receive feedback to raise concerns or complaints beyond traditional formal processes. These mechanisms can address complaints through a capacity building lens.

In staff management policy

- Foreground people's decision making in staff training
- Provide ways to translate this training into culture
- Build staff skills to expect and receive feedback from people with disability and colleagues.

In arranging support policy

- Promote regular check-ins to support people's agency, build trust and reliability, and foster collaborative approaches to problem solving
- Ensure structured, regular time for reflection through group reflection or individual supervision.

In support

- Safe places and times for people when they are distressed
- Choices about support arrangements
- Limit 'staff only' places to minimise hierarchies in places of support.