Disaster Management Policy and Procedure

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of the Disaster Management Policy and Procedure is so our participants feel safe in the event of a disaster (natural or pandemic), knowing 121 Supports Hunter will provide them with continuity of service. 121 Supports Hunter 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 121 Supports Hunter provides them with an essential support lifeline.

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

121 Supports Hunter will endeavour to provide an adequate level of service to our participants before, during and after all types of emergencies.

2.0 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, build their resilience, and maintain their confidence in 121 Supports Hunter.

Our staff will be well informed and prepared to assist participants in coping in an emergency within the community, and in strengthening 121 Supports Hunter’s disaster resilience.

3.0 Policy

121 Supports Hunter 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 also work within any additional guidelines and instructions provided to our organisation by state and federal government authorities.

During any type of disaster, our senior management will undertake the following actions:
1. Follow all relevant government guidelines and instructions.
2. Communicate 121 Supports Hunter’s response to staff, participants and any other relevant parties.
3. Prepare participants (before any possible actions are taken) by informing how the current situation may affect their services.
4. Brief our entire staff on any possible or real action steps required by them.
5. Attempt to keep key workers allocated to the same participants.
6. Work towards maintaining continuity of support for each of our participants.

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Preparing for disasters and emergencies

An emergency is a situation of grave risk to health, life or environment. A disaster is any phenomenon, natural or human-made, that has the potential to cause extensive destruction of life and property. The mere mention of either of these two words is enough to make the community, particularly our participants, extremely nervous.

Some disasters and emergencies 121 Supports Hunter may face include:
- flood
- fire
- heatwave
- snowstorm
- storms or cyclones
- pandemic.

121 Supports Hunter will:
- stay informed regarding all state/territory and federal government directives and act upon these directives appropriately
- advise other organisations, who work with 121 Supports Hunter, of our disaster procedures and processes
- identify personnel who are critical in the delivery of essential frontline services
- identify 121 Supports Hunter participants, and their stakeholders, whose services may be impacted by the situation
- 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.
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.

Our 121 Supports Hunter will determine the best means to support our staff in a disaster situation and will implement all appropriate measures as detailed in our Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure.

4.3 Consumer preparedness

121 Supports Hunter 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 be able to provide the same level of service to our participants during, or immediately after, an emergency or disaster situation. For these reasons, all of our participants must be supported by 121 Supports Hunter to prepare for changes due to a disaster or an emergency.

121 Supports Hunter will:

- inform participants of the current situation and how the provision of their services and workers may be impacted
- 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 reason/s for these changes
- seek support within the local care community, if our staff are unavailable, and ensure that any new workers are appropriately experienced, trained and hold all relevant checks required.

4.4 Staff preparedness

Our team is our greatest asset; it is our focus that they and their loved ones remain safe during an emergency or disaster situation.
121 Supports Hunter 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, e.g. infection control, social distancing and evacuation
- seek feedback from participants regarding their services to adjust information distribution, if necessary
- inform staff of our participant’s requirements outlined in their support plan.

5.0 Related documents

- Contingency Disaster Plan Template
- Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- Information Management Policy and Procedure
- Human Resources Management Policy and Procedure
- Work Health and Environmental Policy and Procedure
- Business Continuity Policy and Procedure

6.0 References

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Commonwealth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Services Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2020