

Emergency Duress Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure provides detailed guidance for Inala Community House (ICH) Family Intervention Services (FIS) workers when facing emergency duress and risk to their safety.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, contractors, students and volunteers within ICH FIS. For the purpose of this procedure, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

3. Definitions

Emergency duress refers to when an ICH FIS worker's safety is at risk and they need to seek urgent assistance.

Safety refers to physical, emotional and psychological well-being which can be impacted by hazards, the state of the environment, actions or inactions of others, accidents and vicarious trauma.

NHA Life Alarm is a device used to monitor worker safety. It allows workers to discreetly indicate that they are feeling uncomfortable or are feeling unsafe and require immediate assistance.

Service User is any parent or family, or carer named in the referral for whom services will be provided, including children.

4. Procedure

4.1 Preparing for face-to-face visits

Assess and mitigate risk

The safety of ICH FIS workers while conducting face-to-face visits with service users is of the highest priority. Safety is managed through a risk assessment process which involves both the ICH FIS Manager and ICH FIS workers, with input from the Department as required. Risk management shall occur in accordance with the ICH Work Health and Wellbeing Policy and the ICH FIS Personal Safety in the Community Procedure.

ICH FIS uses a device called the NHA Life Alarm to help monitor worker safety while undertaking face-to-face visits with service users. It allows ICH FIS workers to make a SOS call to advise ICH FIS management that they are feeling unsafe and require immediate assistance. Refer to the NHA Life Alarm User Manual for further detail about this device.

Charging the NHA Life Alarm

When the NHA Life Alarm is not in use, it needs to be placed on the charging dock. It is the responsibility of the ICH FIS worker to place the device on the charging dock located next to the car packs in the ICH office upon return from a face-to-face visit. At a minimum the device must be placed on charge at the end of the work week.

Carrying the NHA Life Alarm

ICH FIS workers must take a charged NHA Life Alarm to all face-to-face visits with service users, along with a charged work mobile phone. The alarm should be discreetly located (for example in a pocket or bag) but easily accessible if the ICH FIS worker's safety is at risk and they are unable to leave the situation.

Refer to ICH FIS Personal Safety in the Community Procedure for further detail about preparing for face-to-face visits.

4.2 Using the NHA Life Alarm for emergency assistance



Figure 1: NHA Life Alarm

Initiating an emergency request for help

If a worker requires emergency assistance, press the SOS button on the front of the device and hold for 2 – 3 seconds (refer to button A in Figure 1). The button will emit a small vibration indicating that it has been activated. This will start the emergency response procedure.

Note: There is a 10 second window to cancel a false alarm by pressing the SOS button for 2-3 seconds until the display shows SOS cancelled on the screen.

Responding to emergency requests for help

Alerting emergency contacts through SMS alert and phone call:

Following the activation of the SOS alarm, the emergency response system will immediately send an SMS to the ICH FIS Manager, the HR and Administration Team Leader and the ICH CEO. The device will then commence calling through the list in the order outlined above. All of these contact details are pre-programmed into our NHA Life Alarm device and contacts have the device mobile details stored in their phones.

Receiving the SMS lets the contacts know to be aware that they are now on standby and may receive a call. The SMS will include the last known GPS and time the user was in that location. To check the position, send an SMS to the device number with the capital letter **F** for find, and this will force the GPS to update. It will also include the battery percentage.

When the emergency response system calls the ICH FIS Manager's mobile, upon answering the call, the system states: 'Alert from the NHA Life Alarm, please press 1 to answer'. Once answered, the ICH FIS Manager will answer the call on mute and listen to the situation to make an assessment as to the situation the user of the alert is in.

If the ICH FIS Manager does not respond to the emergency response system's calls by pressing 1, the call is repeated three times. It is then assumed that the call is going to voice mail. Calls are then made to the HR and Administration Team Leader, then the ICH CEO.

Contacting the worker:

The ICH FIS Manager (or contact person responding to the emergency) will call the ICH FIS worker on their mobile to check on the ICH FIS worker's safety. This is undertaken to avoid the conversation being audible through the NHA Life Alarm device and triggering any further danger.

Following contact with the ICH FIS worker, the ICH FIS Manager shall advise the ICH CEO and HR and Administration Team Leader to stand down if there are no concerns for the worker's safety.

If the ICH FIS Manager is concerned for the safety of the ICH FIS worker, the below process shall be undertaken:

- The ICH FIS Manager immediately discusses this with the CEO
- A response is determined, which could include contacting police.

Worker not responding to contact:

If the ICH FIS Manager cannot contact the ICH FIS worker on their work mobile phone, the process below shall be undertaken:

- The ICH FIS Manager will contact the worker on their personal mobile number via text and also by calling
- If there is still no response, the ICH FIS Manager will check the workers' calendar to determine if the GPS location matches with the planned service user visit
- If the worker cannot be contacted, the Manager contacts the CEO to determine further steps, which could include contacting the police.

4.3 Using the NHL Life Alarm to make non-urgent calls

ICH FIS workers can make non-urgent calls using the NHL Life Alarm to contacts saved in the device. For example, if they do not have access to an operational mobile phone. Non-urgent calls can be made by:

- Holding button 'B' (refer Figure 1), which then displays non-urgent contacts
- Using buttons 'B' and 'C' to scroll through the non-urgent contacts
- Hold button 'A' (SOS button) when to make a call to the non-urgent contact
- Hold button 'A' (SOS button) to hang up again or allow the contact to hang up which will automatically end the call on the device.

4.4 Reporting the use of the NHA Alarm and continuous improvement

Genuine use of the alarm will be recorded as an Incident and reported on the Incident register.

5. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed every three years.

6. Related Documents

Policies

ICH Health and Wellbeing Policy
ICH Risk Management Policy
ICH FIS Incident Management & Reporting Policy

Procedures

ICH FIS Personal Safety in the Community Procedure
ICH FIS Incident Management and Reporting Procedure
ICH FIS Working Alone Procedure
ICH FIS Worker Induction Procedure

Other documents

Incident Register
Incident Form
NHA Life Alarm User Manual