H&H Care SA Pty Ltd

SUPPORT WORKER TRAINING & WORKPLACE PROTOCOL

Personal Care with Dignity, Privacy and Consent

Training Category: Personal Care & Professional Conduct
Applies To: All H&H Care SA Support Workers
Service Setting: In-home Care, Disability Support and Community Support
Document Type: Staff Training Article & Proposed Workplace Protocol
Review Frequency: Annually or following relevant changes to legislation, standards or organisational procedures

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1. Purpose

At H&H Care SA, we believe that every participant deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, kindness and compassion.

Personal care is one of the most sensitive responsibilities of a disability support worker. It may involve assisting participants with showering, dressing, toileting, grooming, oral hygiene and other daily living activities.

These activities require more than practical skills. They require workers to respect the participant's personal boundaries, preferences, cultural background, independence and right to make decisions.

Our guiding principle is simple:

Every participant has the right to feel safe, respected, comfortable and in control of their personal care.

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that H&H Care SA support workers deliver personal care safely, respectfully and consistently while protecting participants' dignity, privacy and consent.

2. Understanding Dignity in Personal Care

Dignity means recognising the value and individuality of every person, regardless of their disability, age, communication ability or level of support required.

When providing personal care, support workers must ensure participants are treated as individuals rather than simply as people requiring assistance.

Support workers must:

- Speak respectfully and use the participant's preferred name.
- Explain each personal care activity before beginning.
- Encourage participants to complete tasks independently wherever possible.
- Respect personal routines, preferences and cultural beliefs.
- Avoid rushing participants or making them feel uncomfortable.
- Never make negative comments about a participant's body, hygiene, disability or appearance.
- Maintain a calm, patient and professional attitude.

Example:

Instead of saying:

"Come on, you need a shower now. Hurry up."

Say:

"Would you like to have your shower now, or would you prefer to wait a little? I can help you whenever you're ready."

This approach promotes dignity, independence and participant choice.

3. Protecting Privacy During Personal Care

Privacy is a fundamental human right. Participants must feel comfortable and secure when receiving personal care.

Support workers must protect both physical privacy and personal information.

Physical privacy

Workers must:

1. Knock before entering a participant's bedroom or bathroom.
2. Ask permission before entering private spaces.
3. Close doors and curtains during showering, dressing and toileting.
4. Keep the participant appropriately covered whenever possible.
5. Expose only the area of the body necessary for the care task.
6. Avoid unnecessary touching or observation of private body areas.
7. Respect requests for privacy or personal space.

8. Never allow visitors or unauthorised people to observe personal care.

Confidentiality

Workers must not discuss a participant's personal care needs, medical conditions, behaviour or private information with friends, family members or other unauthorised individuals.

Participant information should only be shared with authorised people when necessary for care, safety or legal requirements.

Important: Taking photos or videos of participants during personal care is prohibited unless there is a lawful, specifically authorised purpose and appropriate consent and organisational safeguards are in place.

4. Understanding Consent

Consent means that a participant freely agrees to receive assistance after understanding what the support involves.

Consent is essential before providing personal care.

Consent must be:

- **Voluntary:** The participant is not pressured or forced.
- **Informed:** The participant understands what assistance will be provided.
- **Specific:** Agreement to one task does not automatically mean agreement to another.
- **Ongoing:** Workers continue checking that the participant is comfortable.
- **Revocable:** The participant can withdraw consent at any time.

How to obtain consent

Before beginning a personal care activity, explain what you intend to do and ask for permission.

Examples:

"Would you like me to help you wash your back?"

"Is it okay if I help you with your shirt?"

"Would you prefer to brush your teeth yourself, or would you like some assistance?"

"Are you comfortable if I help you with shaving today?"

Workers must never assume consent simply because the participant has received the same assistance previously.

If a participant refuses care

Support workers must:

1. Remain calm and respectful.
2. Stop the proposed activity.
3. Ask whether the participant would prefer a different approach or time.
4. Explore whether pain, discomfort, embarrassment or another concern is affecting the decision.
5. Offer appropriate alternatives without pressure.
6. Follow the participant's care plan and organisational escalation procedures where refusal creates a health or safety concern.
7. Document the refusal factually, including the participant's response and actions taken.

A participant's refusal must never be treated as a reason for punishment, intimidation or disrespect.

Where a participant has difficulty communicating or making a particular decision, workers must use accessible communication, allow time and follow applicable supported decision-making and legal consent arrangements. Disability alone does not mean a person lacks decision-making capacity.

5. Supporting Independence and Choice

At H&H Care SA, support workers should assist participants to do things *with support*, rather than automatically doing everything for them.

Promoting independence improves confidence, maintains existing skills and supports self-determination.

Examples include:

- Encouraging participants to wash their face or brush their teeth independently.
- Allowing participants to select their clothing.
- Supporting participants to complete parts of their shower routine.
- Offering choices about grooming and personal presentation.
- Providing enough time for participants to complete activities at their own pace.

Remember: Support should match the participant's assessed needs, abilities, preferences and care plan.

Workers should not provide unnecessary physical assistance when a participant can safely complete the activity independently.

6. Professional Boundaries During Personal Care

Personal care often involves close physical contact. Maintaining professional boundaries is essential.

Workers must:

- Only provide personal care tasks within their role, training, competence and authorised care plan.
- Explain physical contact before assisting.
- Use appropriate gloves and hygiene precautions.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- Respect gender, cultural and religious preferences wherever practicable.
- Never make inappropriate jokes, comments or gestures.
- Never engage in sexualised behaviour or exploit the participant's vulnerability.
- Report inappropriate conduct, abuse or suspected exploitation immediately through the required channels.

Workers must not perform intimate or high-risk procedures unless specifically authorised, trained and competent to do so.

7. Safe Personal Care Procedure

H&H Care SA support workers should follow this general procedure whenever providing personal care.

Step 1: Prepare

- Review the participant's current support plan and relevant risk assessments.
- Identify the level of assistance required.
- Prepare necessary equipment, clothing and hygiene products.
- Check that the environment is clean, safe and comfortable.
- Perform hand hygiene and use appropriate personal protective equipment.

Step 2: Communicate and obtain consent

- Greet the participant respectfully.
- Explain the intended care activity.

- Offer meaningful choices.
- Ask for consent before beginning.
- Confirm the participant is comfortable with the proposed assistance.

Step 3: Provide personal care

- Maintain privacy by closing doors and curtains.
- Encourage independence where safe.
- Assist gently and respectfully.
- Use safe manual handling techniques and approved equipment.
- Follow the participant's care plan and infection prevention procedures.
- Check comfort and consent throughout the activity.
- Stop and reassess if the participant experiences pain, distress or withdraws consent.

Step 4: Complete the activity

- Assist the participant to dress appropriately.
- Ensure the participant is comfortable and safely positioned.
- Clean and store equipment.
- Dispose of waste and PPE appropriately.
- Perform hand hygiene.

Step 5: Document and report

Record relevant information in the approved care documentation system, such as ShiftCare.

Document:

- Personal care assistance provided.
- Participant participation and level of independence.
- Relevant preferences or changes in support needs.
- Any refusal of care and the response.
- Any concerns about skin integrity, pain, discomfort or wellbeing.
- Incidents and actions taken, using the appropriate reporting pathway.

All documentation must be factual, accurate, respectful and completed promptly.

8. Responding to Distress, Discomfort or Refusal

Participants may occasionally become uncomfortable, embarrassed, anxious or unwilling to participate in personal care.

Workers should not assume that reluctance is deliberate non-compliance.

Possible reasons include pain, fear, cultural concerns, unfamiliar workers, communication difficulties or a preference for a different routine.

Appropriate worker response

- Stop and give the participant space.
- Speak calmly and respectfully.
- Ask what is causing discomfort.
- Offer alternatives where possible.
- Allow additional time.
- Seek guidance from a supervisor when necessary.
- Follow the participant's care plan and any applicable behaviour support strategies.

Never force personal care, threaten a participant or use unauthorised restrictive practices.

If there is an immediate safety risk, follow emergency procedures and seek appropriate assistance.

9. Cultural Sensitivity and Individual Preferences

Every participant has unique values, beliefs and preferences.

Support workers must respect individual differences, including:

- Cultural and religious practices.
- Preferred gender of support worker.
- Personal hygiene routines.
- Communication style and language.
- Clothing preferences.
- Personal boundaries and comfort levels.

Where possible, these preferences should be recorded in the participant's support plan so that care can be delivered consistently.

Workers must never make assumptions about what a participant wants based on their disability, background or appearance.

10. Documentation: Good Practice Examples

Example 1 – Personal hygiene support

"Arrived at 9:00 am. Participant was awake and preparing for the day. Explained the morning personal care routine and obtained consent to assist with shaving and hygiene. Encouraged the participant to complete tasks independently where possible. Assistance was provided in accordance with the support plan while maintaining privacy and dignity. Participant appeared comfortable throughout the activity."

Example 2 – Participant choice

"Participant requested to delay showering until later in the morning. Respected the request and offered assistance at the preferred time. Participant subsequently agreed to support with showering and dressing. Privacy was maintained and personal care was completed according to the participant's preferences."

Example 3 – Refusal of personal care

"Participant declined assistance with shaving during the morning routine. Respected the decision and offered the option of completing the task later. Participant continued to decline. No physical assistance was provided. Relevant information was documented and reported in accordance with the support plan."

These are training examples only. Workers must record the actual circumstances of each shift rather than copying sample notes.

11. Worker Responsibilities

Every H&H Care SA support worker is responsible for:

1. Respecting participant rights, dignity and privacy.
2. Obtaining informed and ongoing consent.
3. Following individual support plans.
4. Supporting participant choice and independence.
5. Maintaining confidentiality.
6. Practising safe hygiene and infection prevention.
7. Maintaining professional boundaries.
8. Recognising and reporting abuse, neglect or unsafe practices.
9. Completing accurate and timely documentation.

10. Participating in relevant training and supervision.

Workers must immediately escalate serious safety concerns and follow applicable incident management and mandatory reporting requirements.

12. Training Scenarios

Scenario A: Participant refuses a shower

A participant says they do not want to shower today.

Correct response: Respect the decision, explore whether there is a concern, offer another suitable time and follow the support plan and escalation process if necessary.

Incorrect response: Forcing the participant into the bathroom or threatening to report them for refusing.

Scenario B: Participant wants privacy while dressing

A participant asks the worker to leave the room while changing clothes.

Correct response: Respect the request, assess any identified safety needs and offer assistance from outside the room if appropriate.

Incorrect response: Remaining in the room simply because the worker is responsible for personal care.

Scenario C: Participant requires shaving assistance

A participant requests assistance with shaving.

Correct response: Explain the process, obtain consent, use appropriate equipment and safe techniques, and allow the participant to complete any steps they can manage independently.

Incorrect response: Beginning shaving without explanation or permission.

13. Key Principles for Every Shift

Before providing personal care, ask yourself:

- Have I explained what I am going to do?
- Has the participant agreed?
- Am I respecting their privacy?
- Am I supporting their independence?
- Am I following the participant's support plan?
- Am I providing assistance safely and professionally?

- Have I documented the care accurately?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, stop and address the issue before proceeding.

14. Staff Knowledge Check

Question 1: Can a support worker provide personal care without asking permission because the participant receives the same support every day?

Answer: No. Consent must be confirmed and maintained.

Question 2: What should a worker do if a participant refuses a shower?

Answer: Respect the refusal, offer alternatives and follow the care plan and escalation procedures when necessary.

Question 3: Why is privacy important during personal care?

Answer: It protects dignity, personal boundaries, safety and the participant's right to control access to their body and private information.

Question 4: Should a worker complete all personal care tasks for a participant to save time?

Answer: No. Workers should encourage independence and provide only the assistance needed for safe, person-centred care.

Question 5: What should workers do if they observe signs of possible abuse or neglect?

Answer: Ensure immediate safety, follow reporting procedures and escalate concerns through the required organisational and regulatory pathways.

15. H&H Care SA Commitment

At H&H Care SA, personal care is not simply about completing daily tasks. It is about building trust, protecting human rights and supporting each participant to live with dignity and independence.

Every support worker represents the values of our organisation through their communication, actions and professional behaviour.

Our commitment:

We listen before we act. We ask before we assist. We respect every choice. We protect every participant's dignity.

By following these principles, H&H Care SA workers can help create a safe, respectful and empowering care environment for every participant.

H&H CARE SA – SUPPORT WORKER TRAINING

Topic: Personal Care with Dignity, Privacy and Consent

Core Message: Respect the person. Protect their privacy. Always seek consent.

Document status: Proposed training and workplace protocol – subject to management approval and alignment with current organisational policies and applicable NDIS requirements.