EMERGENCY POLICY – FRIEND IN ME INC

1. Purpose

1.1. Emergencies and critical incidents in the workplace can affect people physically and psychologically, and affect program continuity of Friend In Me (called "FIM", "we", "our" and "us" in this policy).

1.2. The purpose of this policy is to ensure FIM prepares for, and effectively responds to emergency situations and critical incidents through the appropriate use of resources. The prevention and effective management of emergency situations and critical incidents can assist to minimise the negative impact of an unexpected event.

1.3. This policy applies to all staff, consumers, volunteers, Board and committee members

2. Definition of Emergency

2.1. **Critical Incident:** is an unexpected traumatic event, involving personal or professional threat, which evokes extreme stress, fear or injury. Providing appropriate support following a critical incident is part of emergency management.

2.2. **Emergency:** means an unplanned or imminent event that affects or threatens the health, safety or welfare of people, property and infrastructure, and which requires a significant and coordinated response. The defining characteristic of an emergency event or situation is that usual resources are overwhelmed or have the potential to be overwhelmed. Emergencies may be a specific event with a clear beginning, end and recovery process, or a situation that develops over time and where the implications are gradual rather than immediate.

2.3. **Emergency Management:** means the coordination of an emergency response and management of recovery. The aim of emergency management is to minimise physical and psychological impacts on all parties and to minimise damage to assets, operations, reputation and staff productivity.

2.4. **Traumatic Event:** one in which a person experiences, witnesses or is confronted by experiences that involve actual, threatened or perceived death or serious injury and/or threat to own or others physical and emotional integrity. The person's response may then include intense fear, feelings of helplessness and horror, which impact on their sense of 'self'.

3. Principles

3.1. Emergency management planning is being prepared for events or incidents that stretch our ability to cope beyond normal day-to-day capacity. FIM is committed to the protection of consumers, staff, volunteers, Board members, Committee Members, students and visitors during emergencies.

3.2. FIM swiftly and effectively responds to emergency situations, with the foremost goals of preserving life, protecting the organisation's property, and restoring operations as quickly as possible.

3.3. Critical incidents can be a threatening experience and appropriate supports are required to minimise long term effects arising from exposure to the trauma.

4. Outcomes

Emergency situations are prevented as far as practical. The negative impacts of emergency situations and critical incidents are minimised through effective management.

5. Functions and Delegations

5.1. Position Delegation/Task

5.1.1. Board of Directors

(a) Develop and review Emergency and Critical Indicent Policy

(b) Compliance with Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.

(c) Management Compliance with Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.

5.1.2. CIO

(a) Ensures development and implementation of Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.

(b) Ensures potential disaster and emergency situations are identified, and appropriate emergency management plans are in place.

5.1.3. Director of Community

Lead responsibility for implementation of emergency and critical incident procedures, including identification of potential situations, developing, documenting and communicating response plans, reporting on actual situations, and reviewing policy and procedures following a disaster or emergency situation.

5.1.4. Administartive Officer

Coordinate staff training in emergency and critical incidents, such as fire response, building evacuation, etc.

6. Risk Management

6.1. All Board members, Committee members, staff and volunteers are to be briefed on disaster and emergency response procedures and trained in disaster and emergency response procedures during the onboarding period.

6.2. Disaster and emergency management plans are reviewed annually and/or following the event of a disaster or emergency situation.

6.3. As far as possible, traumatic events are prevented, and the impacts of trauma are minimised following traumatic events.

7. Policy Implementation

7.1. All staff must have access to and be familiar with policies and procedures relating to disaster emergency management.

7.2. All staff have information which outlines actions to follow for various disaster and emergency situations, and are supported to undertake training for specific roles in emergency and critical incidents.

8. Policy Detail

8.1. FIM identifies, prevents and manages disaster and emergency situations within its sphere of responsibility and influence, until the arrival of appropriate emergency services.

8.2. A range of emergency situations may occur on the premises with the potential to impact on the safety of staff, Board members, Committee Members, volunteers, students, visitors and consumers, including:

    (a) Fire

    (b) Gas Leak

    (c) Water Leak

    (d) Vehicle Accidents

    (e) Chemical, Radiation, Biological Spill

    (f) Bushfire

    (g) Storm

    (h) COVID-19

    (i) Earthquakes

    (j) Bomb Threat

    (k) Civil Disorder/Illegal Occupancy

    (l) Hostage/Terrorist Situation

    (m) Death

    (n) Robbery

    (o) Physical/Verbal (including sexual) assaults.

9. Risk Assessment

9.1. FIM uses risk assessment processes to identify and control barriers to effective emergency management.

9.2. Staff, Board members, students, volunteers and consumers are expected to behave in a way which minimises the risk of emergencies occurring.

9.3. FIM needs to think about any risks to safety that might be present at an event and rate their risk level. Use a scale from 1-5, with 1 presenting a negligible risk and 5 presenting a very severe risk.

9.4. Hazards to Consider

9.4.1. **Trip or equipment hazards:** Are there any cables or guy ropes that people could trip over? Is there glass people could bump into? Could people come into contact with generators or other electrical equipment? Is there equipment that could get wet?

9.4.2. **Crowd management hazards:** Could crushing/overcrowding occur? How would aggressive behaviour or misconducted be handled (and is alcohol involved)? Could people be at risk around roads or car parks?

9.4.3. **Crew hazards:** How will we protect those working for us from lifting and carrying injuries? If we invest in lifting equipment does it comply with safety regulations (which can differ from state to state)?

9.4.4. **First aid hazards:** Could people become injured through the activities of our event? What injuries could occur? Could attendees suffer heat exhaustion in high temperatures? Have a strategy in place for dealing with first aid issues should they occur, from minor injuries to critical situations.

9.4.5. **Weather hazards:** Could the ground become slippery when wet? Could the wind pose a risk to the stability of your structures, or kick-up harmful dust storms? Could equipment get wet or become overheated? Is there a risk of bushfires at the time of your event?

9.4.6. **Environmental hazards:** Could any event activities damage the venue or site? Could rubbish pose a risk to local wildlife? Could contamination occur from any spillages?

9.4.7. **Fire hazards:** How will you control smoking in the venue or onsite? Could campers use barbecues or stoves? Could an electrical fire occur? Are there fire extinguishers and fire safety procedures in place?

9.4.8. **Catering hazards:** Could ovens or hot water urns cause a risk? How will food allergies be handled? Are the containers for hot food and drink suitable?

9.4.9. **Child protection hazards:** Is there a risk of children becoming lost? Could there be allegations of abuse or neglect? Remember that in Australia, for any work that is "child-related", all staff require a valid Working With Children Check.

9.5. Preparedness

9.5.1. All staff, Board members, students and volunteers are provided with training to ensure they are familiar with implementation of disaster and emergency management plans.

9.5.2. All staff, Board members, students and volunteers familiarise themselves with emergency evacuation procedures, including their responsibilities and the emergency evacuation assembly point.

9.5.3. All fire safety activities undertaken by the organisation are recorded and reviewed to identify gaps in training, knowledge, equipment or processes. Fire activities include, but are not limited to, fire safety training, drills and exercises, records of maintenance and inventories of equipment kept.

9.5.4. Where relevant, all staff, students and volunteers familiarise themselves with techniques to minimise physical and emotional harm from other people.

9.6. Response

9.6.1. When a disaster or emergency situation arises, the primary aim of the response is to ensure the safety of all people on the premises, preserve life and protect property. FIM initiates recovery and aims to restore operations as quickly as possible.

9.6.2. The availability of critical incident debriefing is an essential component of the organisation's approach to emergency management. When required, supportive counselling is provided to consumers, staff, volunteers, students and board members who are affected by an emergency or critical incident within two hours of the event (for defusing and mobilisation) and then within 48 to 72 hours (for critical incident debriefing).

10. An Incident Occurs

10.1. **Within 24 Hours:** For the first 24 hours, people will learn of the incident and often remain in shock. During this period of time, it is important for FIM to provide a consistent message around what happened, and what support will be offered over the coming days.

10.2. **24 – 48 Hours Post-Incident:** Provide psychological first aid sessions to relevant employees. These sessions are aimed to be an education tool to help employees understand:

10.2.1. What has happened

10.2.2. Normalise the mix of feelings likely to be experienced (consistent with someone experiencing the grief cycle)

10.2.3. Provide psycho-education around how an individual can help themselves recover:

10.2.4. Healthy lifestyle habits

10.2.5. Maintaining a normal routine as much as possible

10.2.6. Adequate sleep and rest

10.3. **1-2 Weeks Post Incident:**

10.3.1. Provide ongoing support to those who seem particularly distressed/vulnerable.

10.3.2. Monitor all employees to ensure that symptoms are reducing and a normal routine is returning

10.3.3. Monitor all employees to ensure that symptoms are reducing and a normal routine is returning.

10.3.4. Ideally, 1 – 2 weeks post incident, whilst emotional reactions may still be present, the symptoms may be more controlled and a normal routine has returned. By responding in this manner early and with sensitivity, any risk of longer-term mental health issues being present in employees as a result of the

critical incident is likely to be mitigated. From an organisational perspective, responding in this manner also builds trust with the employees and strengthens management and peer support during a difficult period.

10.3.5. Staff, board members, volunteers, students and consumers who experience a critical incident related to their involvement with FIM should immediately inform where possible [Chief Inclusion Officer - Louise Larkin)]. If this is not possible they should immediately involve [Donna Abu-Elias, Legal Director]

10.4. **A Critical Incident Report:**

10.4.1. A critical incident report is to be completed by the staff member involved in the incident or notification of the incident and should contain as much information as possible and indicate the people directly involved in the incident. The staff member who receives the report will ensure that the person(s) identified in the critical incident receives all appropriate support. They are to contact emergency services where required and must contact [Chief Inclusion Officer] immediately.

(a) The [Chief Inclusion Officer] in conjunction with [Legal Director] will assess the Critical Incident and implement a plan of action to follow up the Critical Incident.

(b) Where required, a meeting will be organised to determine issues and responsibilities relating to: Assessing risks and response actions

(c) Liaison with emergency and other services

(d) Contact with the affected person's relatives and other supports

(e) Liaison with other organisations

(f) Counselling and supporting staff, board members, volunteers, students and consumers not directly involved in, but affected by, the incident.

(g) Media management (if required)

10.4.2. Where appropriate FIM may be required to provide support to the family in the form of:

(a) Hiring interpreters

(b) Making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation

(c) Obtaining a death certificate

(d) Assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues

10.4.3. IM will conduct a review of actions arising from the above meeting to ensure:

(a) Follow up such as de-briefing, counselling and prevention strategies have been completed.

(b) Relevant people have been informed of all outcomes from the incident

(c) A recommendation as to the response to the critical incident is documented and included in the quality improvement cycle

Further follow up required is documented and responsibilities allocated to appropriate staff.

11. Critical Indcident Debriefing (CID)

11.1.   Critical Incident Debriefing (CID) will occur within 48 - 72 hours after the incident

11.2.   Debriefing may include individual and group counselling, where the aim is to:

11.2.1. Decrease feelings of isolation

11.2.2. Provide people affected by the incident with a facilitated session to assist them to normalise their thoughts and feelings. Groups assist people to explore their differing perspectives of the incident and share their similar thoughts and feelings.

11.3.   There will usually be an initial counselling session, followed up with one or more debriefing sessions. Initial counselling will occur as soon as possible after the incident, preferably immediately or within a few hours. Depending on the type or severity of the critical incident, initial defusing may include:

11.3.1. A short factual statement about what is known about the incident, the possible effects on those involved, what is being done for them and what is going to happen in the future, eg: planned debriefing sessions.

11.3.2. Information on acute stress response (what is happening to people now) and how people can care for themselves.

11.3.3. An arrangement for a structured debriefing session within 48-72 hours.

11.3.4. The provision of different levels of service for those differently affected

11.3.5. Referrals to various resources including counsellors

11.4.   FIM will maintain confidentiality to ensure that:

11.4.1. Only a record of when and where a debriefing took place will be kept; and

11.4.2. No information will be released without the agreement of the individual or group.

12. Evacuation:

12.1.   **In the event of an alert to evacuate:** either verbal, automatic alarm or manual alarm – and the threat is not immediate, all consumers, staff, Board members, Committee members, students, volunteers and visitors:

12.1.1. Proceed along designated routes to the designated assembly area(s)

12.1.2. Ensure assistance is provided to people with disabilities and/or special needs

12.1.3. Collect visitor sign-in and staff attendance registers and direct people to assembly point

12.1.4. Check attendance at the assembly area against the attendance registers.

12.1.5. Remain at the assembly area until advised by staff and/or emergency personnel that it is safe to return to premises.

12.2. **In the event of an alert to evacuate:** either verbal, automatic alarm or manual alarm – and the threat is immediate, all consumers, staff, Board members, Committee members, students, volunteers and visitors:

12.2.1. Proceed along designated routes to the designated assembly area(s)

12.2.2. Ensure assistance is provided to people with disabilities and/or special needs

12.2.3. Collect visitor sign-in and staff attendance registers and direct people to the assembly point.

12.3. [insert position] to check attendance at the assembly area against the attendance registers.

12.4. Remain at the assembly area until advised by staff and/or emergency personnel that it is safe to return to premises.

August 2020