6.3.6 CLIENT HOMES – MAIN HAZARDS/RISKS

Initial WH&S check of client homes and subsequent worker identification of hazards underpin the identification of any hazards/risks and where necessary recommendations will be made regarding modification of hazard areas and/or identification of safe techniques for managing tasks.

Where any of the situations listed below create a hazard or a potential risk, support workers are to notify a coordinator and a Hazard & Incident Report (6.1.4A) is to be completed (also see Hazards & Incidents policy 6.1.4).

Injuries to skin

Main risks:
- Needles
- Knives
- Edges of equipment
- Scalds and burns
  - Carrying hot water
  - Turning on hot water tap first
  - Some hot water systems
  - Cooking
  - Stoking fires
  - Heaters

Risk minimisation:
- CBS staff are not to give injections to clients, however, needles may be in homes where clients/nurses use them. These needles must be disposed of in an approved sharps container.
- Any rough edged or broken equipment to be repaired or replaced as soon as possible.
- Strong plastic buckets with adequate handle used when carrying hot water
- Ensure any heaters or other equipment that gets hot is out of reach, e.g. wall mounted heaters in bathrooms
- Turn irons off when not in immediate use
- Use oven gloves while cooking and ensures saucepan handles are turned away from heat and towards wall
Repetitive/Awkward Actions

Main risk:

- Any task requiring repetition of same action. A task that may be safe if only undertaken once weekly can cause a strain if done many times a day as muscles may not have time to recover between stresses and become painful or injured.
- An awkward position required to undertake a task.

Risk minimisation:

- Staff required to undertake Back Care & Manual Handling training (see Lifting Policy - No Lift Policy 6.3.1)
- Staff must take time to position themselves properly, and minimise awkward movement.
- Support workers must seek procedures with clients that minimise awkward stretching. For instance, ask the client to use a grab-rail when dressing so that the worker can help safely.
- When assessing tasks, coordinators are required to vary workload/tasks as much as possible
- Support workers to be encouraged to develop a pattern in their work heavy/light/heavy/light
- Support workers to be encouraged to take short breaks between tasks
- Support workers to be encouraged to exercise back and joints
- Assess alternative techniques for undertaking the task
- All new support staff are given a copy of “Work Cover Tasmania – Guide to Preventing Body Strain” on commencement of employment with CBS and for existing staff a copy is made available at the annual Performance Appraisals.

Electrical equipment

Main areas of risk:

- Using electrical equipment near water
- Overloaded power points
- Faulty equipment e.g. frayed cords, smoking wires or the smell of smoke

Risk minimisation:

- Power boards with individual switches to be used instead of double adapters
- Coordinator may be able to organise installation of extra power points with safety switches incorporated.
If possible, earth-leakage circuit breakers to be installed
All bathroom heaters should be located on the wall above head height
Electrical leads not to cross floors

Climbing

Some domestic tasks such as changing light bulbs, accessing high shelves and high dusting may require climbing. Where support workers are asked to undertake these tasks, a coordinator is to be informed so appropriate follow up can be organised. Appropriate action may be to organise an assistive device to assist with the task, organise a spring clean service or provide CBS’ maintenance service.

CBS recommends only suitable and stable surfaces be used for climbing, this will usually be a ladder that meets Australian standards. In these circumstances staff should only climb up to three steps from the top of the ladder and the ladder must be able to be placed in such a position that the task can be completed without staff having to reach sideways.

Animals

CBS acknowledges the right of clients to keep animals as pets, animals can however sometimes pose health and safety risks to support workers.

Cats, dogs and other animals frequently carry a range of diseases and/or parasites that can endanger human or other animal health. Not all diseases are readily apparent, nor does the care given to either the animal or the general cleanliness of the environment eliminate risk. In particular, support workers are not to clean up animal soil or wash/bath animals. This is particularly important in regard to cat faeces as women of childbearing age can contract toxoplasmosis from cat faeces (affecting pregnancy).

In addition to possible disease, an animal could trip a support worker and/or client.

To alleviate these risks, clients may be asked to place animals outside or in a closed room while the support worker is providing service.

Transfer of bacteria and disease between clients

Transfer of bacteria and disease between clients can be minimised by:

- Using gloves when assisting with personal cleanliness/toileting
- Support workers washing their hands before leaving the client’s house.
- Support workers using anti-bacterial hand-wash before entering the home of a client.

See Policy Numbers 6.3.4 and 6.3.5 for other details relating to universal precautions.