

Boundaries in Support work...

In last month's WTF I wrote about the special nature of what we do – that participants grant us the privilege of letting us into their lives and share that life with us and that not too many other jobs carry that distinction, or that level of responsibility. One of those responsibilities is always to work within boundaries.

When we are involved in people's lives as closely as we are, the line between providing support in a warm, friendly, empathic, and professional way, and becoming an affectionate friend is not always easy to spot. Crossing that line brings complications. While we want to avoid the fake-friendly "have a nice day", and instead encourage authentic, and empathic friendliness, entangling our participants in our private lives or treating them as close intimate friends is not professional or 'healthy'. As employees of FOCAS we need to remember that our role is paid, that our relationship with participants is not 'freely-given' and that one of the key responsibilities of our role is to, wherever possible, encourage freely-given relationships between the participant and other people. Getting the balance right is important. It is also difficult. Being both professional and warm, close but not intimate, friendly but not too friendly is hard to achieve.



Things to look out for are sharing details of our personal relationships, giving advice outside our area of expertise (even if it seems harmless), making purchases for a participant, communicating with a participant via social media, regular displays of affection, and use of affectionate language such as "darling" and "love" that could be misinterpreted. Occasionally using these sorts of terms is fine when a special moment calls for it, but as a rule, it's the participant's name we should be using. Also, social distancing as a result of COVID 19 renders displays of affection with others as potentially dangerous and this is something we should always be role modelling to participants.



Getting social...

Unlike some other organizations, because of our preference for individualized support, FOCAS doesn't have a place where staff congregate on a regular basis. While individual support is an important feature of FOCAS, and one that will not change, it does not offer many opportunities for staff to get together. I have recently received some feedback from staff suggesting that a staff social event would be a great idea. I agree that getting together every now and then would be very worthwhile, not to mention fun :) What do you think? If you are keen for a low-key social event for FOCAS staff please let me know by text or email and I can begin to look at possibilities.

Kath's Comm's

Due to the nature of our 'business' and my role (and Marg's before me), I'm very likely to send emails and texts to you outside of regular business hours at some time or another. As you're aware FOCAS is a service that operates at all hours, 7 days a week so it makes sense that our communication is not limited to business hours. I will always try to contact you within 'regular' hours and ask that you do the same, but this is not always possible. If I do make contact with you outside of regular business hours, I don't expect you to respond at that time unless I indicate that it's necessary eg. in the case of replacing a support.



Procedure reminders: Documenting short notice cancellations and COVID 19 protocols

I recently sent emails outlining the following information regarding your responsibilities for documenting short notice cancellations of support shifts and COVID 19 protocols. As a 'backup' here is the information again.

Short notice cancellations

In the case of a cancellation at short notice* you must document in the participant's history notes;

- The time and date the support was cancelled.
- Who contacted you to cancel the support (usually this is the participant or their representative but it could also be me, Marg or Leah).
- How you were contacted - text, phone call, email.
- Why the support was cancelled. eg. illness. If you were not given a reason for the cancellation, please state that no reason was provided.

- Any other information that you think is relevant pls include it.

Type this information under the first 'question' on the history note template and for the remaining two questions you can type 'see above'

**A short notice cancellation is when the support shift is cancelled AFTER 3pm the day before the support was scheduled to go ahead. When this occurs the participant is charged 90% of the agreed price for the cancelled support shift, charged at the appropriate rate*

COVID 19

It is no longer necessary to document that you have followed COVID 19 procedures or describe these procedures in history notes. But this is not because we don't have to implement them any more...quite the opposite in fact! The standard COVID 19 procedures - hand hygiene, social distancing and stay home if unwell and get tested - are now a routine part of all aspects of our lives, including what we do at work. In other words - it's a given that we carry out these procedures every day at every required opportunity, without question. They are an essential responsibility of all our roles. Having said that, if learning to complete COVID 19 procedures is an action/skill that a participant is still developing, then it is important to comment on this in history notes, just as it is for all areas relevant to a participants skill development. Also...Please remember to drop into the office to restock your 'Covid 19 pack' when necessary.

New Support Staff

A warm welcome to some new members of our support team - Donna Christie, Dave Reid, Brontie Bell and Linda Fawcett. It's great to have you on board at FOCAS and I hope you find your experience with us valuable and fulfilling.

History Notes: a self-check

We are all very aware of the importance of completing History Notes accurately and professionally. This issue has been covered in previous editions of WTF as well as being a main feature in the recent Community Facilitator orientation document that was sent to you this month. A simple and concise way of reminding ourselves about what to do when it comes to completing History notes is to apply these 3 questions. When completing history notes ask yourself;

Is what I have written factual and free from unsupported opinions?

Have I detailed the participants' progress, incorporating support strategies, in the middle section of the history note (and not just typed the activities undertaken)?

Have I included a balance of positive and negative (where relevant) information?



Admin Notice board *with Zali*

1. Participant Support Plans

As some of you may be aware, we've been working hard in the office to update the formatting and information for each participant's support plan (PSP). Firstly, a huge thank you to you all as community facilitators for your help in gathering participant information to complete their updated PSPs. Whilst they are not complete for each participant, it is definitely a work in progress and a goal we are consistently working towards.

To access the new PSPs, login to the secure area of the FOCAS website and click on the relevant individual profile. If you scroll down below the photo and video section, there should be a link to download the PDF file of the PSP. If you are having any issues with accessing this, or have questions in general regarding PSPs, please do not hesitate in reaching out.

2. Staff admin docs

I know I am constantly in everyone's inbox chasing staff admin docs, including first aid, police checks and car insurance, however I'm still finding they are still not being updated on time or being sent in once obtained. Just a friendly reminder to send through your documents if they've been updated, and look out for the google calendar reminder- which will arrive a month in advance to the document expiry to remind you to get onto it.

*Thanks everyone,
Zali*