

SUPPORT FOR STAFF WHO ARE CARERS POLICY®

DOCUMENT SUMMARY/KEY POINTS

A carer is someone who provides care and assistance to another person, often in a regular and sustained manner, without payment other than, in some cases, a benefit or pension. A working carer is someone who undertakes this role, whilst maintaining paid employment.

The Network strategy to support staff who are Carers incorporates the following:

1. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all staff members and provides early intervention to assist employees resolve issues that impact their life.
2. Raising awareness of the NSW Carer (Recognition) Act 2010 to staff through a range of different communications.
3. Carer Wellness activities that are coordinated locally. For example, at CHW the Carer Wellness Program provides activities such as reflexology, massage, and meditation. Volunteers who are qualified teachers in yoga, reflexology and massage provide these activities free of charge. Carer activities are under development at SCH.

Approved by:	SCHN Policy, Procedure & Guideline Committee	
Date Effective:	1 st August 2023	Review Period: 3 years
Team Leader:	SCHN Consumer Experience Manager	Area/Dept: Clinical Governance Unit

CHANGE SUMMARY

- This policy has been updated as a result of changes within the Network.

READ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- Managers should read and acknowledge this document. All other staff should be aware of this policy.

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1 Support for Staff who are Carers

1.1 Abbreviations

CHW The Children's Hospital at Westmead

CSP Carer Support Program

SCH Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick

SCHN Sydney Children's Hospitals Network

1.2 Background

The national [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#) came into effect on 18 November 2010. The aim of the Act is to increase recognition and awareness of carers and to acknowledge the valuable contribution they make to Australian society.

The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN) recognises the important role a working carer plays in the care giving role and the extra responsibilities this may require. Our aim is to ensure you can do both.

1.3 Definition of a Carer

Both the Commonwealth and [NSW Carer \(Recognition\) Acts](#) have adopted the same definition of a carer which is:

'An individual who provides personal care, support and assistance to another individual who needs it because that other individual:

- Has a disability; or
- Has a medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness) or
- Has a mental illness; or
- Is frail and/or aged.

An individual is not a carer merely because he or she:

- Is a spouse, de factor partner, parent, child or other relative of an individual, or is the guardian of an individual;
- or lives with an individual who requires care.

A Carer of a child provides more assistance/support to the child than an average child their age would need.

A working carer is a person who is in paid employment and who cares for a relative or friend who is ill, frail, has a disability or is ageing. They may work full-time, part-time, casually or have a business of their own.

For more information on working carers please visit [Working while caring | Carer Gateway](#)

2 Supporting Staff who are Carers

Working carers can experience increased stress and time pressures. In some cases, this can lead to increased absenteeism, reduced productivity or focus whilst on duty. This could lead to staff feeling the need to reduce their work hours or resign to keep up with the demands of caring for someone

Trying to maintain both paid work and an unpaid caring role can be incredibly stressful. Many carers describe it as like trying to hold down two full-time jobs. There are many reasons carers combine work while providing unpaid care, including; maintaining career aspirations, financial necessity or to simply participate in society and gain social interaction with peers. Whatever the reason, chances are there may be times when balancing these two roles proves challenging.

SCHN understands the differing needs of a working carer and through the [SCHN Flexible Work Practices Policy](#) provides an opportunity to better manage these dual responsibilities.

The [SCHN Flexible Work Practices Policy](#) states:

The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN) recognises the importance of supporting employees to balance work, family and other aspects of their lives and, SCHN is committed to supporting employee work life balance through the provision of Flexible Work Practices.

Many of the flexible work practices outlined in the SCHN Flexible Work Practices Policy may provide opportunities for staff members who are also carers to better balance the responsibilities of these two roles.

The requested Flexible Work Practices must be considered in respect of SCHN service goals, including quality, safety, productivity and cost effectiveness and services to patients, families, internal and external clients.

The NSW Health [Code of Conduct](#) (2012) outlines in section 4.1.3 that staff must not discriminate against other staff based on carers' responsibilities.

2.1 Fatigue Management

A carer role may constitute "additional family needs and commitments" and/or "other employment outside the primary workplace", both of which could be a "non-work cause of fatigue" (as per Fatigue management in NSW Health Workplaces policy https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/Pages/doc.aspx?dn=GL2023_012).

The [Individual Fatigue Self Reporting Checklist and Workplace Management Tool](#) provides suggested controls that can be implemented to manage one's fatigue.

3 Available supports

3.1 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

SCHN also provides staff with access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP is a work-based support service intended to assist staff with difficulties that they may be experiencing either in the work environment or outside of work, in their personal lives. This service is free, available 24/7 and is available to all staff members, regardless of whether or not they are carers. Carers may make particular use of this service due to the additional challenges that they experience balancing their work and carer roles.

Core activities provided by the Network EAP providers includes professional counselling services to assist the employee in managing any psychological issues, expert consultation and training in the identification and resolution of job performance issues related to employee personal concerns and diagnosis, treatment or referral to appropriate community resources.

Further detail on the EAP is provided in the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) | The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) (available on SCHN intranet only).

Please refer to the Intranet for contact details of SCHN EAP providers.

3.2 Get Healthy NSW

Get Healthy NSW is a free service provided by NSW Health. The website provides information on healthy diet and exercise and anyone can access personal telephone health coaching to identify your health goals and encourage you to keep on track. You can access the site here <http://www.gethealthynsw.com.au/>

3.3 The Carer Wellness Program (CHW)

The Children's Hospital Westmead (CHW) offers a range of activities such as massage, Meditation and reflexology for staff that identify as carers through The Parent and Carer Resource Centre.

For further information on the programs offered at CHW and The Parent and Carer Resource Centre please visit <http://chw.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/o/groups/csp/> . This website includes information such as fact sheets, newsletters and resource lists which may be helpful for staff members at both hospital sites.

3.4 The Carer Wellness Program (SCH)

The Carer Wellness program offers online meditation for staff that identify as carers. For further information please visit: [Carer support | Sydney Children's Hospitals Network \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) This website includes a list of Mental Health support services which may be helpful for staff members who are carers at both hospital sites.

4 Promote Awareness of the Legislation

The passing of the Commonwealth [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#) has formalised and mandated certain principles in how Carers should be treated, that requires compliance by all government agencies.

The Act states that:

A public sector agency must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the members of staff and agents of the agency have an awareness and understanding of the NSW Carers Charter.

A human service agency must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the agency, and the members of staff and agents of the agency, take action to reflect the principles of the NSW Carers Charter.

[Further information and resources](#) about the implementation of the Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 are available from NSW Health.

5 Supporting Aboriginal Staff who are Carers

Research suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are up to twice as likely as other Australians to be carers. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) 2014-15 found that approximately one in four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in NSW provided unpaid care to a person with disability, a long-term health condition or old age.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers experience many of the same challenges as other carers, however, the care they provide is influenced by a range of unique historical, cultural, spiritual and socio-economic factors. Research also suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers are more likely to have intensive caring roles and to experience poor wellbeing and social isolation.

5.1 Available supports for Aboriginal staff who are Carers

- **SCHN Aboriginal Staff Support Network**

The Aboriginal Staff Support Network is an initiative to bring all of our Aboriginal health staff together. The aim of the group is to provide peer support and promote the recruitment, retention and professional development of Aboriginal staff within the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network.

No matter what your role or where you are located, you are invited and encouraged to get involved. The Aboriginal Staff Support Network meets once a month to provide culture support and share work information and good news stories.

- **AbSec Aboriginal Carer Support Service** - <https://absec.org.au/help-for-carers/>
- **13YARN** - [Call 13 92 76 | 24 /7 Crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders](#)

6 Expected Benefits of supporting staff who are Carers

- Compliance with the NSW Carer Recognition Act and Implementation Plan
- Increase support for staff who are carers
- Increase information for carers in navigating the system and accessing resources and support to assist them with their caring responsibilities
- Practicing healthy work life balance should have a positive influence on how staff relate to parents who are carers
- Enhance the motivation of staff and increased productivity
- Staff will feel valued
- Improved morale across the Network
- Reduce the costs associated with staff turnover, sick leave, stress leave and/ or absenteeism.

7 Additional Information

- NSW Carer (Recognition) Act 2010
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2010A00123>
- NSW Carers Strategy 2014-2019
<https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/carers/nsw-carers-strategy.html>
- Carer Gateway
www.carergateway.gov.au
- NSW Health Employee Assistance Program (EAP) policy
[Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) | The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://www.nsw.gov.au/Employee-Assistance-Program-(EAP)-The-Sydney-Childrens-Hospitals-Network)
- SCHN Flexible Work Practices Policy
<http://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/pdf/2015-9056.pdf>
- NSW Health resources for employees:
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/carers/Pages/default.aspx>

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