

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 at both hospitals by the Patient and Family Engagement Team.

CHANGE SUMMARY

- Broken hyperlinks have been updated
- Additional information about the SCH Carer Wellness program has been added

READ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

This document reflects what is currently regarded as safe practice. However, as in any clinical situation, there may be factors which cannot be covered by a single set of guidelines. This document does not replace the need for the application of clinical judgement to each individual presentation.

Approved by:	SCHN Policy, Procedure & Guideline Committee	Original endorsed by SMG July 2007
Date Effective:	1 st December 2019	Review Period: 3 years
Team Leader:	Carer Support Program Coordinator	Area/Dept: CHW Clinical Governance Unit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Support for Staff who are Carers	3
1.1	Abbreviations	3
1.2	Background	3
1.3	Definition of a Carer.....	3
1.4	Supporting Staff who are Carers	4
1.5	Employee Assistance Program (EAP).....	4
2	Staying Healthy.....	5
3	Promote Awareness of the Legislation	5
4	Expected Benefits	6
	Additional Information	6

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 of a family member 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.

1.4 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.

Like other organisations, many SCHN employees have dual roles, caring for a family member and working. Caring responsibilities may range from short-term unofficial arrangements to more formal long-term arrangements.

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](#) (2015) 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.

There are a variety of ways in which you can balance work and caring responsibilities, which are outlined in more detail in the SCHN Flexible Work Practices Policy.

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. Flexible Work Practices are negotiated agreements that work for organisation and the employee.

The NSW Health Policy Directive [Leave Matters for the NSW Health Service](#) (2019) also offers suggestions to balance caring and work responsibilities.

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.

1.5 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

SCHN provides staff with access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which is a work-based support service designed to assist in resolving personal and workplace issues which may impact the staff member's health, mental and emotional wellbeing and job performance. This service is free and is available to all staff members, regardless of whether or not they are carers.

Core activities provided by the Network EAP providers includes professional counselling services to assist the employee in managing any life issues that may range from managing budget, family responsibilities and relationships or setting personal goals through to dealing with conflict in the workplace. Expert consultation and coaching are available to assist with the identification and resolution of issues and may include referral to appropriate medical or community resources.

Further detail on the EAP is provided in the [SCHN Employee Assistance Program Policy](#) (available on SCHN intranet only).

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

2 Staying Healthy

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/>

The Carer Wellness Program (CHW)

The Children's Hospital Westmead offers a range of activities such as massage, yoga 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/>

The Carer Wellness Program (SCH)

Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick, offers a number of activities including massages, manicures, yoga and a regular knitting circle for staff that identify as carers. For further information please visit:

<https://intranet.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/clinical-governance-unit/patient-and-family-engagement>

3 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.

4 Expected Benefits

- 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.

Additional Information

- NSW Carer (Recognition) Act 2010
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2010A00123>
- NSW Carers Strategy
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/inclusion/carers/nsw-carers-strategy>
- NSW Health Employee Assistance Program (EAP) policy
https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2016_045.pdf
- SCHN Flexible Work Practices Policy (2015)
<http://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/pdf/2015-9056.pdf>
- NSW Health Policy Directive Leave Matters for the NSW Health Service (2019)
https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2019_010.pdf
- NSW Health resources:
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/carers/Pages/default.aspx>

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