

	Fountain of Hope Family Services Inc.		<b>Policy and Procedures</b>	
	Policy Type:-	General Program Standards	Policy# <b>GSP-208</b>	
	Subject:-	Promoting Non-violent Practices	Adopted:- <b>05/06/2014</b>	
	Section:-	(2-F)	Effective:- <b>06/11/2015</b>	
	Approval By:-	Michael Oladipo	Revised:- <b>08/15/2020</b>	

**□ POLICY**

**FOHFS Agency** promotes a safe and secure environment and does not tolerate aggressive or threatening behaviors. This policy covers how to deal with aggressive or threatening behavior on the part of Clients, people associated with Clients or the public. Staff, students and volunteers do not have to tolerate such behavior and should report it immediately. Zero tolerance of aggressive or threatening behavior extends to all **FOHFS Agency** locations, including offsite, home and community settings.

A series of steps can be taken to ensure a safe and secure work environment including:

- Physical precautions in the work setting to prevent or safeguard against aggressive or threatening behavior
- Safety precautions in advance of problems including minimum coverage and case review in advance of an interaction with a high-risk Client
- Limiting, refusing or withdrawing service in the face of aggressive or threatening behavior
- Using co-leadership for groups where there may be safety issues
- Implementing service alerts or email alerts for Clients who pose a safety concern
- Managing aggressive or threatening behavior.

Every effort will be made to ensure that Clients are not stigmatized by inaccurate information. However, in ambiguous situations the safety needs of staff, volunteers, students and other Clients must take precedence.

**□ DEFINITION**

Aggressive or threatening behavior can include:

- menacing, angry, loud and/or abusive language
- communicating a threat of bodily harm or injury to property, either verbally or through physical behavior
- brandishing any object as a weapon
- any threat, real or implied
- any behavior that makes a staff person, student or volunteer feel unsafe
- loss of control

The aggressive or threatening behavior may be exhibited by the Client or by someone associated with the Client (e.g., a partner, relative or friend).

## □ PROCEDURES

### **1. Precautions to take PRIOR to interacting with individuals or groups who pose a safety risk or concern**

1.1 Review Client files and determines which safety precautions to take, including:

- Using an alternative interview room rather than personal office
- Reviewing the Safety Alert System at your location and request panic button if required
- Speaking with the referral source in advance of the initial meeting with the Client
- Scheduling the appointment with the Client or group session at peak staffing level periods to ensure the availability of support and back-up
- Advising support staff and management of the time and location of the interview with the Client or group session concerned
- Preparing the room for safety (e.g., clear out objects that could be used as weapons, leave the door ajar)
- Arranging to have staff colleagues monitor the interview room
- Bringing a second staff member to assist in the interview.

1.2 Provide service, to the greatest extent possible, in a safe interview room that:

- Does not have objects that can be thrown or used as weapons
- Provides the option of leaving the door and/or window blinds open
- Allows staff to easily leave the room.

1.3 Ensure minimum staff coverage for any service provided to a Client who poses a safety risk (i.e., Service Alert on his/her file related to problematic behavior, concern based on Clinical experience): One other staff must be in close proximity to the interview location while the interview is underway and aware of the situation.

1.4 Develop a support plan with support staff, other staff and management, including alternate safety strategies such as call-in to manager or staff colleague at break and at the conclusion of the session.

### **2. Precautions to take DURING and AFTER an interaction with individual Client or group session**

- Staff should position themselves so that they may easily exit the room if required.
- Negotiate a contract with the Client regarding unwanted behaviors and resulting consequences.
- Escort Client out of the building and ensure that doors are locked, if possible.
- Request to be observed or accompanied when leaving.

### **3. WHEN the Client is aggressive or threatening**

- If staff, students or volunteers feels they are not safe at any point in providing service, follow the principle of safety first. Do not minimize a situation that may be getting out of control. Trust your gut feelings.
- Terminate the interview and ask the individual to leave the office.
- If the person is willing to do so, escort him/her out of the building and ensure that the doors are locked (if possible).
- If the person is unwilling to leave, becomes volatile, disruptive or unpredictable, leave the room immediately (if possible).
- Activate the safety alert system to summon help from other staff.
- If needed, create noise and disturbance to attract the attention of other staff.

#### **4. ONCE the Safety Alert System has been activated**

**4.1** Staff directly involved in the incident must advise the program manager of the situation. If the program manager is not available, assume the role of crisis manager or find another staff person to do so.

**4.2** Upon hearing the safety alert system:

- Staff who are not directly involved in the incident should follow the safety alert system for their location (e.g., stay in office or leave their office and proceed to the predefined area).
- Staff at reception will follow the safety alert system for their location (e.g., leave one person to ensure the safety of reception Clients or visitors while another staff leaves to find out what is happening and returns with more information).

**4.3** The person acting as crisis manager determines the location of the disruption and whether any contact has been made with the staff that activated the safety alert system.

**4.4** If no contact has been made, the crisis manager:

- Opens a line into the office where the incident is occurring
- Listens to what is happening in the office to determine what to do
- If possible and it makes sense, speaks to the people involved.

**4.5** Once contact has been made, the crisis manager will determine the best course of action, organize first aid and arrange to call **911** as needed.

**4.6** If the safety alert system has been activated in error, the staff member must call reception immediately to advise them.

#### **5. Call 911**

- Dial **911** and request police, fire, ambulance or a combination.
- Inform the **911** operator if there is an immediate threat of harm. Such calls are higher priority and receive a fast police response.
- Identify yourself, the office location and the room location where the incident is occurring.
- Get a report number from the 911 operator to follow-up if needed.
- Advise management staff at the first available opportunity.

## 6. AFTER the aggressive or threatening behavior

**6.1** Staff involved should document the behavior in the Client file and determine whether a service alert, organization-wide alert or trespass notice is required.

**6.2** The aggressive or threatening incident should be reported within the “Attention” button in the electronic record. The Manager of the Service Access Unit should also be informed.

**6.3** If there is reason to believe the aggressive or threatening behavior will continue, an organization-wide alert should be issued by email.

**6.4** Debrief on the situation with the manager, the crisis manager and witnesses. Determine whether follow-up or support is required (e.g., **FOHFS** debriefing services, transportation for staff involved in any traumatic incident).

**6.5** If required, obtain additional supports for staff, volunteers, students and/or Clients involved in the aggressive or threatening incident (e.g., **FOHFS** debriefing, outside counseling, legal assistance, financial reimbursement or time off).

**6.6** Complete an Incident report once the situation has abated.

**6.7** Determine if service to the Client should be limited or withdrawn.

## 7. Laying criminal charges

**7.1** In cases of aggressive and/or threatening behavior, the police may decide to lay charges against the Client. In such cases, staffs are expected to cooperate fully. If staff members wish, they may discuss ethical issues with their supervisor.

**7.2** Affected managers and staff may ask their program director for approval to seek legal counsel through the organization’s solicitors.

**7.3** If the police consider the evidence insufficient to lay a charge, **FOHFS Agency** may support the presentation of evidence to a Justice of the Peace. The legal consultation process to make this decision will involve the **Executive Director**, director, program manager and involved staff. **FOHFS Agency** will provide legal services as part of this process. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

## Seclusion and Restraint

### Policy

The **FOHFS Agency** does not utilize any type of seclusion and/or restraint in any of its programs in response to assault or aggression in the provision of services. In addition, intrusive procedures such as strip searches and/or pat downs are not utilized in any program.

Restraint- defined as the use of physical, mechanical, or other means to temporarily subdue an individual or otherwise limit the individual’s freedom of movement. Seclusion- defined as the separation of an individual from normal program participation in an involuntary manner. The individual is in seclusion if

freedom to leave the segregated room or area is denied. Voluntary time-out is **NOT** considered seclusion