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Service Stream	Families and Young People Services	Category	Residential Care and Transition Services
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Purpose

Mercy Community (MC) provides programs that respond to the complex and, at times, extreme needs of the children and young people who are referred to our Residential Care and Transition Services (RCaTS) programs by the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (the Department). In doing so, MC commits to ensuring service provision occurs in an environment and location that is conducive to children and young people feeling safe, secure, and cared for. MC strives to offer placements that afford children the same opportunity as their peers by identifying and procuring property that children and young people would be proud to call their home.

MC acknowledges that from time to time, disruption can occur to neighbouring properties/residents as a result of complex behavioural presentations by children and young people placed within its services. Therefore, MC commits to proactively working in partnership with key stakeholders and local community members, including but not limited to, the Department, Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Local Members of Parliament, Local Councils, local businesses and shops, and local residents – specifically, direct neighbours to the property.

The purpose of this information paper is to provide guidance and, where possible, consistent strategies to proactively engage with stakeholders/neighbours and prevent complaints to third parties. This is done by developing strong, local level relationships and opportunities for key stakeholders and neighbours to raise worries and concerns, and for these to be resolved in a timely manner at a local level.

Roles and responsibilities

It is acknowledged that all workers within RCaTS programs are responsible for proactive and positive engagement with key stakeholders and community members. However, when challenges/concerns do arise, it is important for all team members to understand where their responsibility ends and when they need to escalate to their line manager.

It is critical to note that, in the midst of an incident that may result or has resulted in the attention of neighbours and local residents, direct care workers (i.e., Residential Care Workers (RCWs), Senior Residential Care Workers (SRCWs), SILP Support Workers (SWs) and SILP Caseworkers (CWs)) remain focused on supporting and responding to the children and young people within their care. This can be very challenging when neighbours wish to talk to direct care workers about what is happening, however, it is vital that the focus of our direct care workers remains on managing the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people (scripted response examples are provided within this information paper below).

MC expects that all workers role model to children and young people respectful, neighbourly behaviour whilst executing their responsibilities. This includes saying “hello” to neighbours when coming/going from the program/property if they are outside and waving as passing in the street. It is acceptable to engage in conversation with neighbours and for RCWs, SRCWs, SWs and CWs

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to identify who they are with neighbours, however, talking to neighbours or other members of the community/public about the specifics of the program/placement and/or children and young people is not acceptable and is in breach of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and *Child Protection Act 1999* (QLD).

Children and young people deserve the opportunity and have the right to be active participants in the community in which they live. MC supports, where appropriate, proactive engagement in activities for children and young people with neighbours in the street and/or local community where this is assessed as being safe and appropriate for both the child/young person and the respective neighbour/community member (i.e., BBQ with neighbours and/or playing with other children/young people from within the street). Normal assessment and consent need to be considered and conducted by the respective Care Team Leader (CTL)/Clinician/Transition Services Team Manager (TM)/Senior Program Manager (SPM).

The below table outlines roles and responsibilities (NB – this is not an exhaustive list and is a guide only. Responsibilities may be delegated to another party at the discretion of the Regional Director (RD) and/or SPM).

Role	Responsibility/task/expectation	Frequency
Residential Care Worker/ SILP Support Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respectful communication and acknowledgment of neighbours (waving; saying hello). Escalating any worries to AC/Transitions Team Manager and SPM 	Daily; when passing/entering/exiting property.
Senior Residential Care Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily contact person at program, for any low-level issues (e.g., bin left on curb too long; employees parking on neighbour's footpath; lights left on). Driving positive engagement with neighbours at an employee level. Ensuring every employee working within placement has been inducted and briefed in house neighbourhood management plan. Complete the <i>FS FORM RCaTS Neighbourhood Management House Plan</i> bi-annually, as a minimum, and send to AC for review and endorsement. 	<p>Per contact from neighbour.</p> <p>The <i>FS FORM RCaTS Neighbourhood Management House Plan</i> to be completed bi-annually and reviewed at entry of new client, incident involving neighbours or when a complaint is received.</p>
SILP Caseworker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily contact person for any low-level issues (e.g., bin left on curb too long; employees parking on neighbour's footpath; lights left on); Driving positive engagement with neighbours at an employee level; and 	Per contact from neighbour and within goal/benchmark plan for each young person and/or in-house meetings at minimum monthly.

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Role	Responsibility/task/expectation	Frequency
	<p>Ensuring every employee working within placement has been inducted and briefed in house neighbourhood management plan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving positive engagement with neighbours helping young people build understanding and sense of community and contributing to their local placement community; • Follow up with QPS and key stakeholders for children/young people where there is an increase in QPS contact in partnership with the TM. • Ensuring every employee working within placement has been inducted and briefed in house neighbourhood management plan. • Complete the biannually, as a minimum, <i>FS FORM RCaTS Neighbourhood Management House Plan</i> and send to AC for review and endorsement. 	
Area Coordinator/Transitions Team Manager	<p>Monitor, review and endorse the <i>FS FORM RCaTS Neighbourhood Management House Plan</i> that SRCW/SILP Case Worker creates. Support SPM with door knocks and flyer drop biannual and as required.</p>	Bi-annually or when required.
Care Team Leader/Clinician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving positive engagement with neighbours helping children and young people build understanding and sense of community and contributing to their local placement community; and • Follow up with QPS and key stakeholders for children/young people where there is an increase in QPS contact in partnership with SPM. • Ensuring relevant scripting and interventions relating to specific young people behaviours and interactions with neighbour and community are documented in <i>FS FORM RCaTS Positive Behaviour</i> 	<p>Within goal for each child/young person and/or in-house meetings at minimum monthly.</p> <p>Positive Behaviour Support plans and Safety plans are reviewed monthly or prior to this if required.</p>

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Role	Responsibility/task/expectation	Frequency
	<i>Support Plan and FS FORM RCaTS Safety Plan.</i>	
Transition Services Team Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formally respond to higher level complaints from neighbours/stakeholders; Facilitate regular contact and meetings with local neighbours to build relationships and proactively manage any issues; Formally respond to the Department as a result of neighbourhood issues/ concerns received by them; Send information regarding complaints and any relevant communique/updated plans to the compliments and complaint email to be included in the feedback and complaints register; and Ensure there is an identified QPS point of contact for each residential within portfolio. 	<p>As received.</p> <p>Send all information regarding complaints to the Compliments and Complaints Mailbox – feedback@mercycs.org.au</p>
Senior Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend meetings with QPS, Local Council and/or MP office with RD, including community meetings as required. <p>Residential Care only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure biannual door knock and flyer drop occurs. Formally respond to higher level complaints from neighbours/stakeholders; Facilitate regular contact and meetings with local neighbours to build relationships and proactively manage any issues; Formally respond to the Department as a result of neighbourhood issues/ concerns received by them; Send information regarding complaints and any relevant communique/updated plans to the compliments and complaint email to be included in the Feedback and Complaints Register; and Ensure there is an identified QPS point of contact for each residential within portfolio. 	<p>As received.</p> <p>Complete a biannual doorknock and flyer drop in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>Send all information regarding complaints to the Compliments and Complaints Mailbox – feedback@mercycs.org.au</p>

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Role	Responsibility/task/expectation	Frequency
Operational Lead/ Regional Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formally respond to the Department in relation to complaints, including Ministerial, Members of Parliament, Local Council, etc.; Proactively engage and connect with local Councillors and Members of Parliament through regular meetings (regardless of issues or not); and Attend Community Meetings, where required. 	<p>As received.</p> <p>As agreed with local MP and Council.</p>
Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend formal meetings with Executive members of the Department, Minister and/or other Members of Parliament as a result of community complaints, where required. 	

Implementation of key activities and localised strategies

MC acknowledges that each community is unique and what is appropriate and acceptable for one location and community, may not be acceptable in another. MC therefore commits to being as flexible and responsive as possible to all neighbours and stakeholders, noting that there will be times where MC is unable to meet some requests and expectations and MC reserves the right to decline and/or refuse to accept a request or recommendation. MC first and foremost remains committed to the safety and wellbeing of the children, young people and workers within our services, and will always advocate for the best interest of our clients.

This being said, MC commits to bottom-line expectations for all programs with the intent to build strong relationships and proactively prevent unnecessary escalation of matters through more formal pathways. These are outlined below:

- Six (6) monthly meeting and/or face to face contact with neighbours by the TM/AC/SPM (regardless of whether there are concerns or not);
- Six (6) monthly meeting with Local Member of Parliament and Local Councillor by RD regardless of issues or not (this is dependent upon MP/Councillor accepting this frequency);
- Follow up/contact with immediate neighbours following an incident which may result in a disturbance to immediate neighbours (i.e. increase in QAS/QPS presence; verbal altercation outside of residential and in view of neighbours) by the AC/SPM or, for Transition Services, the CW or TM (this needs to be sensitively managed so as not to over inflame a situation and to uphold the privacy and rights of the child/young person); and
- Induction of all RCWs and SWs in house neighbourhood management strategy for each service the RCW or SW works within by the Senior RCW and/or CTL/Clinician or, for Transition Services, the CW and/or TM.

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Joint Agency Protocol Implementation and considerations

Children and young people in Residential Care have a higher likelihood of contact with QPS than those in other types of care and the general community. As such, the Joint Agency Protocol was developed as a commitment to diverting children and young people in Residential Care from unnecessary contact with police for actions that would be managed without police involvement in a family home. When police are called to respond to an incident, they attend whether their involvement is warranted or not. This police presence means that the actions of children living in residential care are highly visible to the wider community, increasing the likelihood of negative community perceptions and further stigmatisation.

MC is committed to working in partnership with other key stakeholders and to upholding its organisational responsibilities in fulfilling the Joint Agency Protocol to Reduce Preventable Police Call-outs to Residential Care Services. The Joint Protocol is now included in the MC RCaTS induction training package for all new employees. MC therefore commits to the below expectations for each residential program:

- Establishment of positive partnerships with police through confirmation of a local Police Liaison officer for each program and active engagement to build positive relationships between police and the children/young people within our services;
- Clear guidance for workers with regards to interacting with police, including incident management, reporting, and debriefing;
- Casework follow-up with police after every incident that required their attendance to discuss alternative strategies and interventions to reduce police presence/need;
- Regular exchange of information (as appropriate) with QPS regarding call outs including discussion of monthly statistics (i.e., number of call outs to the residential and strategies to reduce); and
- MC to follow up any inappropriate calls for service and provide additional staff training when needed.

MC will respond to incidents in line with the Model of Practice, and current policy and procedures, to promote resolution without the formal involvement of police. This will include:

- Police will be contacted to respond to incidents where there is an imminent serious safety risk which cannot be resolved through positive behaviour support strategies or if it is assessed that a child/young person is to be reported as a missing person; and
- Where possible, incidents will be resolved through following positive behaviour intervention support plans (including absence from placement plans) and implementing Therapeutic Crisis Intervention strategies.

Whilst MC has operated in a number of locations for many years and services are well established, it is critical for new services to be set up well from the beginning. MC commits to the below activities in the establishment of any new residential program:

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New service set up

Activity	Who is responsible/involved	Particulars
MC communicates with the Department, and other service providers as appropriate, about the intended location of the property.	SPM/RD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek clarification of where the Department would like the service located. Seek updated list of service provider residential service locations in the region.
Assessment of property fit for purpose of provision of residential care. (i.e. proximity of neighbours to house; street accessibility; parking provision for workers).	Property Manager/team RD/OL/SPM and Property Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying potential property. Physical sighting/ inspection of potential property.
MC communicates with the Department re the address of intended property and seeks endorsement to proceed.	SPM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify address of property. Identify intended service to be provided from the property.
MC intention to move into the property – contact with immediate neighbours.	AC/TM/ SPM/RD Where appropriate SRCW can support this also.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door knock immediate neighbours (next door; across street and behind property). Provide <i>FS DOC RCaTS Neighbourhood Information Flyer</i> or <i>FS DOC RCaTS SILP Neighbourhood Information Flyer</i>. Letter box drop if unavailable (note: contact details are provided on flyer). <p>NOTE: <i>only immediate neighbours are to receive information (directly next door, across street and behind property).</i></p>
Meeting with Local MP and/or Local Councillor; QPS.	SPM/OL/RD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face to face meeting re: intention to establish residential service within geographical catchment – share community engagement strategy and discuss/agree upon communication strategy and ongoing six-monthly meetings and/or more frequently as required. Confirmation of contact details; provide copy of letter

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Activity	Who is responsible/involved	Particulars
		<p>provided to neighbours for MP/Councillor records.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If this cannot proceed due to time restraints, proceed to the next step.
MC intention of use of leased property confirmed with Real Estate Agency and Landlord.	Property Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of intent provided to Landlord and Real Estate.
Notice of property works and impact on neighbours where required.	<p>AC/TM/SPM and Property Manager</p> <p>NB – SPM may proceed with this step in regional locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice of any works that may require access on neighbour's property and seek approval from neighbour. Negotiate any works as required (e.g., adjoining fencing). Confirm increased vehicles to property and timeframe this will occur within.
Confirmation of MC use of property (once property settled and/or lease signed).	AC/TM/SPM/OL/RD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face to face contact via door knock to confirm MC will be moving in and utilising property. Confirm key contact details and invitation to potential property viewing prior to service commencement (if and where appropriate) otherwise, confirmation of face-to-face meeting to discuss/establish communication/complaints strategy with neighbours.
Invitation to view property extended to local Elders, professional stakeholders relevant to the young people, internal stakeholders, local Member of Parliament, and key QPS personnel.	RD/OL/SPM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If face to face site visit unable to occur – letter to be sent confirming location address; commencement date of service and confirmation of next face to face meeting as originally discussed.

Evaluation and monitoring

The *FS FORM RCaTS Neighbourhood Management House Plan* is to be reviewed at a minimum of every six (6) months where there are no active complaints or concerns. Where there are current active concerns, the *Neighbourhood Management House Plan* is to be reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis and/or as per agreement with local neighbours/stakeholders to ensure agreed

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actions/strategies are well documented and communicated to all staff for the respective program. Other matters such as neighbours' involvement in critical incident and/or complaints received would trigger a review of the *Neighbourhood Management House Plan*

Records management

All complaints and/or compliments **MUST** be recorded in the MC Feedback and Complaints Register (refer to *GOV SOP Feedback and Complaints Management*). All correspondence regarding complaints and compliments must be saved in the complaints and compliments folder for the respective service/program. A complaints log is to be maintained for all matters to ensure there are ongoing records noting discussions and agreed actions.

SPM to ensure that all complaints and compliments received by neighbours; including correspondence and action plans are sent to the Compliments and Complaints Mailbox – feedback@mercycs.org.au. SPM to confirm closure of the complaint with the Feedback and Complaints Officer through the Compliments and Complaints Mailbox.

SPM to ensure all neighbourhood contact is recorded in the Neighbourhood Contact log, located in the RCaTS PLT Teams Hub.

References

Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)
GOV SOP Feedback and Complaints Management
Joint Agency Protocol to Reduce Preventable Police Callouts to Residential Care Services
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Related Documents

Feedback and Complaints Register
FS DOC RCaTS Neighbourhood Information Flyer
FS DOC RCaTS SILP Neighbourhood Information Flyer
FS FORM RCaTS Neighbourhood Management House Plan

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