Home Care – Emergency Situation Procedures

Care Workers have a duty of care to provide assistance to clients in an emergency situation within Home Care guidelines and their own level of expertise. With this in mind, the following information provides guidance on Home Care procedures when confronted with an emergency situation in a client’s home. At the end of this fact sheet there are some important steps to take when contacting an ambulance by dialling 000. Please keep this information with you at all times.

1. If you arrive at a client’s home and the client does not answer the door:
   - Refer to the client care plan to check if the client has an individualised action plan outlining their preferred response if they do not answer the door to a planned visit.
   - If the client does not have an individualised action plan:
     - Attempt to contact the client by trying the doors, windows and/or phoning the client.
     - Check with neighbours
     - If unsuccessful, contact the service coordinator/branch for further instruction. The service coordinator will attempt to phone the client and/or call the emergency contact person.
     - If the circumstances appear unusual or out of character, or of concern, the service coordinator should contact the police. If out of hours, care workers should contact the police.

2. If a client becomes ill:
   - The client/carer or care worker should seek medical advice and/or assistance immediately
   - Assess the client’s well being and if they are very ill or not responding Dial 000.
   - Determine whether the client is injured or ill. Ask them how they are? Are they able to move their limbs, do they have any pain or breathing difficulties?
   - In the meantime reassure the client and make them comfortable by placing a pillow or towel under their head and cover with a blanket if they are cold. Do not give them fluid or food. If the client is having breathing difficulty assist the client to a half sitting position using a pillow for support if the care worker has competence in first aid.
   - The care worker should notify the service coordinator/branch and may contact the family, carer or doctor.
   - The care worker should remain with the client until the required assistance arrives.
3. If a client has fallen:
   - The client/carer or care worker should seek medical advice and/or assistance immediately.
   - Determine whether the client is injured. Reassure the client. Ask them how they are? Are they able to move their limbs, do they have any breathing difficulties?
   - If someone falls on the floor, under no circumstances should the care worker attempt to lift the client from the floor.
   - If the client is unconscious or seriously injured and requiring emergency care Dial 000 for an ambulance.
   - If the client appears uninjured but is unable to get themselves off the floor Dial 000 for an ambulance.
   - The care worker should remain with the client until the required assistance arrives.
   - If there is no apparent injury and the person is able to help themselves to get themselves off the floor with verbal instruction or with minimal assistance e.g. positioning a chair for support, ensure you notify your service coordinator.

4. Out of hours
   - If any of the above situations occur out of hours the care worker will not be able to access the service coordinator.
   - The care worker should contact the ambulance as above or an out of hours contact carer if known.
   - The care worker should advise the service coordinator the next available business hours.

If you are in any doubt about the severity of a client’s illness or injury emergency services should be contacted immediately on 000.

If any emergency occurs always inform your service coordinator/branch as soon as possible.

In the event of an emergency the first response should always be to contact emergency services. However for non emergency situations it may be appropriate to contact the government Healthdirect service for advice. Healthdirect is a 24 hour telephone line staffed by registered nurses and doctors, and can be contacted on 1800 022 222.
Calling an Ambulance

The following information outlines what to expect and what questions you will be asked when you Dial 000 in an emergency. This information will assist the ambulance being dispatched without delay.

1. The emergency response starts as soon as you call 000.
   - The emergency number in Australia is 000. This is a free call from any phone including mobile and public phones.
   - When dialling 000 an operator will ask which services you require – Police, Fire or Ambulance. Ask for the Ambulance Service.
   - You will be asked a standard set of questions by the call taker to help them get an ambulance to you as soon as possible.
   - Stay calm and speak slowly.

2. Information asked by the 000 call takers
   - What is the exact address of the emergency? NB. Also provide the nearest cross street if you are aware of those details.
   - What is the phone number you are calling from?
   - What is the problem, tell me exactly what happened?
   - How old is he/she?
   - Is he/she conscious?
   - Is he/she breathing?

3. What happens next
   Once you have answered these questions the first available ambulance will be dispatched. Additional questions will then be asked by the call taker who will also provide further assistance or instructions depending on the situation.
   
   Remain calm, do not hang up until the call taker has obtained the required information and always provide accurate information to help an ambulance get to you quickly.

NB: These guidelines are in accordance with the Home Care Service Personal Care Manual and the Ambulance Service of NSW fact sheet.