



# Working in Isolation Policy

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to mitigate workplace risks and reduce incidents and injuries for workers performing duties in isolation. It outlines the minimum safety and security standards required across the WA Country Health Service (WACHS) and supports compliance with the [Work Health Safety Act 2020](#) and associated legislation.

This policy reflects WACHS's commitment to providing, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe working environment and a consistent, risk-based approach to managing isolated work.

## 2. Policy

WACHS acknowledges that working in isolation presents increased risks, especially within rural and remote settings due to geographic distance, limited infrastructure, variable communication coverage, and workforce constraints that may delay assistance or emergency response.

WACHS is committed to implementing all reasonably practicable systems and controls that address these challenges through structured risk management, risk assessment, clear escalation procedures, and effective communication arrangements. This approach ensures safe service delivery and supports the health, safety, and wellbeing of all workers working in isolation.

WACHS acknowledges that, due to geographic, workforce, and infrastructure constraints, certain safety controls may not always be available in all settings. This policy establishes minimum expectations for risk-based decision-making and escalation, rather than guaranteeing access to specific resources or technologies. Where identified risks cannot be adequately controlled, work must be deferred or declined, and the decision documented and escalated in accordance with local processes.

### 2.1 Scope

This policy applies to all WACHS workers working in isolation within WACHS buildings, in the community, other establishments, or client homes where they are not visible or able to be heard by other workers. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Community nurses and midwives
- Mental health clinicians
- Aboriginal health workers
- Allied health professionals providing outreach / community services
- Clinical workers on after-hours / on-call rosters
- Hospital in the Home (HITH)
- Workers travelling between sites
- Workers working in remote clinics / nursing posts at higher risk due to locality
- Security, maintenance, and support workers working alone
- Contractors, agency workers, and volunteers engaged in isolated duties

All workers must operate within their scope of practice and ensure:

- Service delivery is guided by situational awareness, safety considerations, and a risk-based approach.
- A documented risk assessment is completed and approved by a manager or delegated authority when initiating new work in isolation, when significant changes to existing risks occur, or when high risks are identified.
- Where a risk assessment identifies a high risk, the worker must consult with their manager to confirm that suitable controls are in place before proceeding.
- For unplanned service delivery assessed as a high risk, the decision to proceed must be discussed with the manager in accordance with local escalation processes.
- Where reasonably practicable, a second worker should accompany the worker for after-hours, unscheduled, or high-risk callouts. If this is not possible, an agreed safety strategy, including communication and escalation plans, must be implemented.
- All risk control measures must be monitored and reviewed at least annually to ensure they remain effective and fit for purpose.

All hazards and incidents must be reported using the WACHS [Safety Risk Report Form](#).

## 2.2 Hazard and Risk Identification

Working in isolation increases the risk of unsafe situations due to limited support. A documented risk assessment must be completed before working in isolation commences. Workers must escalate concerns and document decisions, including when the service is deferred following consultation.

When identifying and assessing risk, use local approved forms or checklists to consider the following:

### a) Client and behavioural factors

- History of aggression, unpredictable behaviour, or violence
- Known weapons or other potential safety risks
- Substance use by client or others present
- Suitability for transport in a government vehicle and need for an escort
- The presence of other people at the premises
- Client is unknown to the service

### b) Task and worker factors

- Nature, type, and duration of the task
- Existing hazards associated with the activity
- The worker's level of experience, health status or fatigue
- Psychosocial hazards

### c) Location and environmental factors

- Remoteness, accessibility, and visibility of the work area
- Weather, lighting, air quality (e.g. smoke), or other environmental hazards
- Road and access conditions, including uneven surfaces and home entry safety

**d) Equipment, Emergency, and Organisational Support**

- Functionality and reliability of GPS, duress alarms, radios, and transport
- Communication systems and check-in arrangements
- Exit routes and workers movement monitoring and planning
- Escalation procedures, supervision, and training

**e) Animals and Access Considerations**

- Presence of aggressive or unrestrained animals (pets, livestock, vermin)
- Requirement for animals to be secured prior to entry
- Safe navigation route, terrain conditions, and communication signal coverage

**ATTENTION**

Workers must never put their own safety at risk to provide care.

In the event of personal threat to self or other workers you should:

- Remain calm. Avoid showing signs of fear or panic.
- Attempt to de-escalate the situation by using the **LASSIE technique** (Listen, Acknowledge, Separate, Sit, Indicate options, Encourage).
- Withdraw to a safe place and call for assistance.
- Activate your Personal Duress Alarm.

**2.3 Minimum Standards for Safety and Security**

The following minimum standards must be met before any work in isolation is undertaken, whether planned or unplanned:

**a) Risk assessment and Planning**

- A documented risk assessment must be completed and approved by the manager or delegated authority before commencing any planned or unplanned work in isolation and where new tasks, significant changes, or high-risk factors are identified.
- If a risk assessment determines that the service should not proceed, this decision must be documented and escalated in accordance with local processes. Worker safety is the priority.

**b) Training and Competency**

- All workers are required to complete all relevant mandatory training in accordance with the [Mandatory Training Policy](#). All mandatory training modules must be completed within the prescribed timeframes.
- Training on specific risks or task requirement for working in isolation is to be facilitated on based on risk.

**c) Safety Equipment and Controls**

- The manager must consider and, implement appropriate control measures for workers working in isolation. These may include the use of Safety Equipment (e.g. personal duress alarms (PDA), communication devices, satellite phones or GPS tracking devices), where such equipment is available and suitable for the assessed risk.
- Workers are responsible for inspecting and confirming that all [Safety Equipment](#) they have been provided is working correctly before working in isolation and reporting any faults immediately to their manager.
- Where safety monitoring or communication tools are used, they must comply with patient confidentiality and data security standards.

#### **d) Communication, Monitoring, and Records**

- An agreed communication and check-in process must be established between the worker working in isolation and their manager, or a nominated person. This must include clear arrangements for follow-up and escalation if contact is not maintained.
- A site-specific emergency communication process must be clearly defined and explained to workers. This may include internal emergency codes, direct contact with emergency services, or use of satellite phones in areas with limited coverage. All available options must be outlined during worker orientation.
- A documented escalation process must be readily accessible and communicated to workers, detailing the steps to follow when risks to their safety or the safety of others are identified.
- Where working in isolation involves entering a client's home or alternate community site, a record of planned visits must be documented and shared before work begins. This record should include, at a minimum, the client's name, address, and expected arrival and departure times. This information may be recorded using a shared calendar, whiteboard or a client list.
- Significant changes to plans must be communicated promptly.

#### **e) Authorisation and Staffing**

- Where practicable, the worker should discuss the planned work with their manager to ensure both are confident that suitable safety measures and controls are in place.
- A second worker should be engaged where the work has been assessed as high risk, particularly for after-hours, unscheduled, or high-risk callouts.

#### **f) Travel Safety**

- Adhere to the [Safe Driving Policy](#) and [Guideline](#) in relation to working in isolation that involves travel.

### **Planned home visits / provision of services away from a health facility**

Workers undertaking planned home visits or services away from a WACHS facility must:

- Comply with all minimum standards of safety and security outlined in this policy.
- Complete a Home Visiting - Safety Risk Assessment (or approved regional equivalent) before visiting a new client, when circumstances change, or where no prior assessment exists.
- Provide the manager with a record of planned visits before departure, including the client's name, address, and expected arrival and departure times.
- Conduct the first visit to a new or unknown risk client with a second person, where it is reasonably practicable. If this is not possible, an alternative control strategy must be discussed and agreed with the manager.
- The worker must consult with their manager to ensure they are both confident that the appropriate controls and [Safety Equipment](#) are in place before proceeding.
- Report all hazards, incidents and risks using the WACHS [Safety Risk Report Form](#).

### **After hours / unplanned home visit / provision away from the health care facility / or return to the health care facility**

Unplanned home visits should be avoided where possible but may be required in critical clinical situations. Workers undertaking unplanned home visits or services away from a WACHS facility must:

- Comply with all minimum standards of safety and security outlined in this policy.

- Complete a [MR0.0 WACHS Risk assessment for Provision of Unplanned Solo Services](#) (or approved regional equivalent) prior to undertaking the visit as part of the assessment and decision-making process.
- The worker must consult with their manager to ensure they are both confident that the appropriate controls and [Safety Equipment](#) are in place before proceeding.
- Where there is a reasonable risk of violence or aggression, the service may be declined, and this decision must be documented and escalated immediately in accordance with local procedures.
- A second responder should accompany the worker, when it is reasonably practicable. If unavailable, an authorized alternative risk control strategy must be agreed with the manager before proceeding.
- When workers are called in after hours to a nursing post or remote area clinic, they must follow established local after-hours response processes and, where available, contact the [Virtual Security Centre](#) before arriving on site to assist them with monitoring the environment and to obtain safety overwatch and support while attending the facility.
- Report all hazards, incidents and risks using the WACHS [Safety Risk Report Form](#).

Worker safety remains the priority. If the risk assessment determines that the visit should not proceed, this decision must be documented and escalated.

### Remote Area Clinics and Nursing Posts

All remote area clinics and nursing posts must complete a [Security Assessment Checklist](#) on an annual basis. The checklist must be reviewed if significant changes occur to the facility, service delivery model, local risk environment or the worker profile.

The purpose of the [Security Assessment Checklist](#) is to ensure that workers operating in isolation are supported by appropriate infrastructure, safety measures and emergency procedures. The following minimum requirements must be implemented and maintained:

- All external entry points to the work area must be secured and regularly checked to prevent unauthorized access. Locks, doors, gates, and security systems must be functional and maintained.
- Escape routes must be clearly identified and communicated to workers before working in isolation. Where available, a designated safe area must be identified, equipped with a means of communication (e.g. landline, duress button, or satellite phone) and a first-aid kit.
- All workers are responsible for understanding local risks and emergency procedures, including how to respond appropriately to security breaches, aggressive behavior, or other incidents while working in isolation.
- Outcomes of the security risk assessment, including identified risks and control measures, must be recorded, communicated to relevant workers, actions tracked with annual reviews.

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

**WACHS Executive** is accountable for:

- Exercising due diligence to support compliance with this policy.
- Ensuring that appropriate systems and resources are in place for the promotion of safe working in isolation in all its operations and for systematic implementation and monitoring of procedures.

**Directors / Senior Managers** are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture of safety through leadership and commitment to systematic hazard identification and risk management for isolated work.
- Ensuring operational systems for managing isolated work are effectively implemented and resourced.
- Allocating appropriate human and financial resources to support safe work practices.
- Where practicable, ensuring a pool of suitable second responders is available to support after-hours or unscheduled callouts.
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of risk controls and safety strategies.
- Ensuring managers have the capability to identify and manage risks associated with working in isolation.

**Managers (or equivalents)** are responsible for:

- Ensuring a safe working environment for all workers.
- Providing clear information, instruction, training, and supervision on:
  - Role expectations and known risks
  - Required forms and documentation
  - Communication and check-in procedures
  - Use of safety equipment
  - Fatigue management, safe driving, and post-incident support
- Identifying workers who work in isolation and applying appropriate controls.
- Ensuring risk assessments and workers movement records are completed and approved for all visits.
- Reviewing risk assessments periodically.
- Ensuring workers use safety equipment (e.g. personal duress alarms, satellite phones) as required.
- Planning for second responders and avoid directing workers to attend after-hours or unscheduled callouts alone unless agreed controls are in place.
- Monitoring all visits and escalate if a worker fails to check in or cannot be contacted.
- Regularly reviewing isolation risk management processes and communication systems.
- Investigating all reported incidents and implement corrective actions.
- Supporting workers to access Employee Assistance Programs when needed.

**Work Health Safety and Security Department** is responsible for:

- Supporting managers in implementing this policy and applying risk-based approaches to isolated work.
- Providing advice and guidance on hazard identification, control measures, and incident management.

**All workers working in isolation** are responsible for:

- Taking responsibility for their own health, safety, and wellbeing.
- Ensuring their actions do not compromise the safety of others.
- Following WACHS policies and procedures, including hazard identification and risk control.
- Completing a risk assessment (including client contact) and have it approved by their manager.
- Maintaining accurate records of visits and ensuring their movements are monitored.
- Using safety equipment (e.g. personal duress alarms, satellite phones) as directed.
- Complying with this policy when responding to after-hours or unscheduled callouts.
- Reporting incidents, unsafe conditions, or serious risks to their manager and document them appropriately.
- Taking steps to eliminate or control hazards where reasonably practicable.

**All staff** are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures as per their roles and responsibilities. Guidelines are the recommended course of action for WACHS, and staff are expected to use this information to guide practice. If staff are unsure which policies, procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, and/or are unsure of the application of directions they should consult their manager in the first instance.

#### 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of this policy will be undertaken by the WACHS WHSS Department, with escalation to the relevant executive, as necessary.

Monitoring activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Review, investigation and analysis of each incident by line manager in conjunction with WHS teams.
- Feedback from stakeholders.
- Audits of compliance with relevant legislative, policy and procedure requirements.

This policy will be reviewed as required to determine effectiveness, relevance and currency. At a minimum it will be reviewed every two years by the Director Work Health Safety and Wellbeing.

#### 5. References

[Work Health and Safety Act 2020](#)

[Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022](#)

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)

## 6. Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Hazard</b>	A situation or item that has the potential to cause harm to people, property or the environment.
<b>Hazard Identification</b>	The process of examining each work area and work task to identify what could cause harm.
<b>Manager / Supervisor</b>	A person who has responsibility for management and supervision of workers.
<b>After- hours callout</b>	Request of attendance of a worker between 5:00pm and 8:00am or anytime on a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday.
<b>Remote area</b>	A site that has a maximum of 2 workers rostered overnight or during the day.
<b>Risk</b>	The possibility of an unwanted event occurring measured in terms of the possible consequences and likelihood of the event occurring.
<b>Risk assessment</b>	A systematic process of evaluating the potential risks that may be involved in a task or piece of equipment and the likelihood of a hazard causing harm to a person.
<b>Unplanned callout</b>	Request for the attendance of a health practitioner within 24 hours of the request.
<b>Worker</b>	Anyone who performs paid or unpaid work in any capacity for a person conducting a business or undertaking an employer, business or organisation is considered a worker. Workers include employees, trainees, apprentices, work experience students, volunteers, outworkers, contractors or sub-contractors, employees of a contractor or sub-contractor and employees of a labour hire company.
<b>Working in isolation</b>	Work that is undertaken without the possibility of assistance of other persons because of the time or nature of the work.

## 7. Document Summary

<b>Coverage</b>	WACHS-wide
<b>Audience</b>	All workers
<b>Records Management</b>	<a href="#">Records Management Policy</a>
<b>Related Legislation</b>	<a href="#">Work Health and Safety Act 2020</a> <a href="#">Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022</a> <a href="#">Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (WA) Act 2010</a> <a href="#">Mental Health Act 2014</a>
<b>Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks</b>	<a href="#">Work Health and Safety Framework</a> <a href="#">MP 0180/23 Work Health and Safety Management Policy</a> <a href="#">MP 0095/18 Clinical Handover Policy</a> <a href="#">MP 0122/19 Clinical Incident Management Policy</a>
<b>Related WACHS Policy Documents</b>	WACHS <a href="#">Prevention and Management of Workplace Violence and Aggression (WVA) Policy</a> WACHS <a href="#">Work Health and Safety Policy</a> WACHS <a href="#">Workforce Learning and Development Policy</a> WACHS <a href="#">Video Surveillance Policy</a> WACHS <a href="#">Duress Alarm Procedure</a> WACHS <a href="#">SPOT GPS Tracker Activation Procedure</a> WACHS <a href="#">Safe Driving Policy</a> WACHS <a href="#">Safe Driving Guideline</a> WACHS <a href="#">Hazard-Incident Management Procedure</a> WACHS <a href="#">Emergency Escalation and Support for Remote Area Clinics Procedure</a>
<b>Other Related Documents</b>	<a href="#">Safety Risk Report Form</a> <a href="#">WACHS Security Assessment Checklist</a> <a href="#">Hazard and Risk Identification Checklist</a>
<b>Related Forms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MR0.0 WACHS <a href="#">Risk assessment for Provision of Unplanned Solo Services</a></li> </ul>
<b>Related Training Packages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk assessment for Working in Isolation (RAWI EL1) 2022</li> <li>Aggression Prevention Management: Module 01 (MA1 E01)</li> </ul>
<b>Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)</b>	ISD Record ID: 4704
<b>National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards</b>	1.30 a, 1.30 b
<b>Aged Care Quality Standards</b>	N/A
<b>National Standards for Mental Health Services</b>	1.8.1, 1.8.3, 1.10.5, 1.14.1

## 8. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
5.00	09 March 2025	09 March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change of title from Working in Isolation - Minimum Safety and Security Standards for all Staff Policy.</li> <li>Updates to reflect legislative changes.</li> <li>Stipulated requirement to conduct risk assessment.</li> <li>New content, sections and subheadings.</li> </ul>
5.01	11 March 2026	09 March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added LASSIE technique description</li> </ul>

## 9. Approval

<b>Policy Owner</b>	Executive Director People Capability Culture
<b>Co-approver</b>	Director Work Health Safety Security
<b>Contact</b>	Manager Work Health Safety
<b>Business Unit</b>	Work Health Safety
<b>EDRMS #</b>	ED-CO-16-56223

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