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***Working Alone or In Isolation: A
Safer Workplace for Community-
Based Healthcare Professionals***

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Eastern Health & Community Programs

- Largest integrated health authority in Newfoundland and Labrador
- Provide the full continuum of health and community services, including public health, long-term care, community services and hospital care
 - Employ 13,000 employees
 - 500-800 employees providing services in the community



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What led us moving in this direction

- Our organization is committed to health and safety of our employees with strategic direction from our board and executive team
- Healthcare professionals providing community-based services are exposed to some of the highest level and most diverse types of risks in relation to working alone.
- OH&S legislative requirements amended in September 2009 which prescribed requirements for employers within the province to implement controls which eliminate or minimize risks with respect to working alone.
- Policy has been signed off with effective date of implementation in near future.



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Policy and Program Development

- Establish health and safety standards and procedures for individuals to work alone or in isolation
- Raise awareness of the hazards / potential hazards and associated risks
- Minimize risks associated within a diverse range of environments within the community
- Communicate responsibilities for health and safety of staff working alone or in isolation
- Ensure the exercise of due diligence



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Our Focus



- Developing a means for staff to assess activities/sites/clients for risk.
- Effectively communicating to relevant staff high risk activities/sites/clients.
- Effective check in/on procedures to be employed at time intervals appropriate to the risk associated with the activities/sites/clients.
- Emergency procedures to be followed should contact not be made by/with a worker working alone.



Check in / Check on Requirements

- Put in place a lone worker monitoring and communication system / devices to ensure effective, efficient, and reliable check in/on and emergency response protocol
- Provision of communication device (i.e. cell phone) provided to staff in these programs.
- Employees are expected to check-in before each home / site visit on a regular basis. Check-in intervals are required based on the level of risk.
- Currently doing check in / on at the beginning and end of day while resolving operational issues
 - Have explored electronic lone worker monitoring system which analysis shows more cost effective, reliable and responsive



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Changing the Mindset

- Services will only be provided if doing so does not present a risk to their safety
- Services may be delayed until the identified risk situation is resolved or withdrawn if an unsafe situation cannot or will not be corrective by the client / family/ occupant of the home / site.
- When delaying service is not an option, controls such as buddy system, security escort, police escort, must be implemented
- Risk control procedures must be adhered to
- All activities deemed high or extreme risk shall not be performed alone, and require, at a minimum, check in/on to be performed immediately before and after such activities. May require more frequent check-in.
- First-time visits to unknown clients / families deemed to have a propensity for aggression / violence shall not be performed alone.



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Lessons Worth Sharing

- Keep it simple but effective
- Tailor programming to meet the needs of the programs
- Face-to-face discussion with managers was very effective from a buy-in perspective, especially when the culture of safety wasn't established in community programs.
- Internally promoting the Eastern Health safety culture to engage referral sources internally to support the program concepts and help minimize risks of community health workers
- Need to efficiently and collectively operationalize check in / check on throughout organization



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Things Working On

- Electronic lone worker monitoring system tender
- Sharing of information
 - Balancing right to know / duty to warn and duty to protect privacy
- Police Liaison Committee
- Emergency Response Protocol
- Externally promoting the Eastern Health safety culture to members of the public (including clients)



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Thank-you



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