A Checklist for Writing Policies and Procedures
After taking into account external influences such as government regulations, legislation, accrediting body demands, industry guidelines/best practices, and funding source requirements, the actual process of developing or reviewing policies can begin. At a minimum, the following components should be included in an organization's policies and procedures relating to crisis intervention.

☑️ Policy Rationale and Philosophy

An introductory statement should be made to guide decision making and communicate the organization's values, philosophy, and intent to respect individuals and to provide the best Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security in all situations. This should be explained in detail to clearly communicate its application to service delivery. Technical terminology should also be defined.

☑️ Prevention of Assaultive Behavior

Watching for early warning signs is essential. Strategies for early intervention and de-escalation and interruption of escalating behaviors should be outlined. This may involve Individualized Education Plans, Individualized Care Plans, or Individualized Service Plans. Identify and explain all systems in place to prevent assaultive behavior.

☑️ Promoting the Well-Being of the Service User

There are inherent risks associated with the use of physical interventions. If they must be used as a last resort, considerations must be given to factors that make the process as safe as possible for everyone involved, particularly for the individual needing physical intervention.

- While safety is always the priority, preserving the dignity of the individual should also be considered.
- Nonphysical interventions are always preferred.
- Physical interventions are never used to punish or coerce.
- Physical interventions are intended to be pain-free.

- Physical interventions are never used as a convenience for staff.
- The least amount of restriction necessary should be used, and for the least amount of time necessary.

Physical intervention should be combined with other approaches that will help the individual learn more adaptive behavior (diminishing the need for physical intervention in the future).

☑️ The Use of Physical Interventions

Within each facility, issues must be addressed to promote the safest possible use of physical interventions. Again, this may involve Individualized Education Plans, Individualized Care Plans, or Individualized Service Plans. Identify and explain all systems in place to prevent assaultive behavior.

- Under what specific circumstances are physical interventions to be used?
- Exactly what methods are authorized to be used (as well as what CANNOT be used)?

It is recommended (if appropriate) that physical intervention policies clearly state:

- Staff members are not to use any physical intervention for which they have not been trained.
- The use of physical interventions not specifically authorized by the organization will be grounds for disciplinary action.
- Physical interventions that compromise safety or impair the individual’s ability to breathe should not be used.
- During the use of physical interventions, staff must closely monitor the well-being of the individual.
- Following the use of physical intervention, the individual should be assessed for injury or psychological distress and monitored for 24 hours following the incident.
A Team Approach

This section of an organization’s policy should address the protocol of using a team approach to prevent and intervene in crisis situations. This is the best method of ensuring Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security℠ for everyone involved.

- Who will respond to requests for help when a situation is escalating?
- How will the team leader be determined and identified?
- Under what circumstances should security personnel be contacted?
- Under what circumstances should law enforcement be contacted?

Crisis Intervention Training

It is imperative that staff members responsible for preventing and intervening in crisis situations are well trained. Training should emphasize proactive and early intervention strategies and skills so that the use of physical intervention is truly minimal. Training standards should be set identifying the specific program and skills that are to be learned, practiced, and implemented.

- How many hours of training should staff receive? When?
- How frequently (and for how long) should staff review and practice program content and skills?
- What provisions are in place for team members to conduct drills and rehearsals?
- How will the quality of training be met, monitored, and assessed?

Procedure for Documenting Critical Incidents

It may be necessary to clearly define the term “critical incident,” so that staff understand what types of situations/ interventions should be documented. At a minimum, all situations requiring physical interventions should be documented, as well as any that resulted in injury to any party involved. A sample of the organization’s Critical Incident Report Form should be included in policies and procedures to show what information is recorded. Guidelines for completion of the form should also be included, outlining:

- Who writes Critical Incident Reports?
- What is the time frame for getting statements as well as completing and submitting the report?
- To whom is the report submitted and what is the usual course of action for follow-up?
- Timeline for parent/guardian notification of incident.

Crisis Intervention Follow-Up and Accountability

The time following any intervention is an opportunity for everyone to learn from the situation. A process should be outlined for follow-up that provides a learning experience for all parties involved.

- The individual should be provided Therapeutic Rapport. This is a time for re-establishing communication and identifying alternative behaviors for the future. Individualized Education Plans, Individualized Care Plans, or Individualized Service Plans may be reviewed and revised with input from the individual. Therapeutic Rapport is a means of giving responsibility back to the individual in a way that communicates continued support and respect.
- Staff members must debrief. Debriefing involves exploring options for earlier detection and earlier intervention, as well as identifying effective and ineffective patterns of intervention. It is an
opportunity to plan and prepare for the future—to become even more skilled at providing the best Care, Welfare, Safety, and SecuritySM. It may involve reviewing and reassessing policies and procedures, the use of a team approach, training needs, etc.

- Bystanders to the incident also need closure. Witnessing an incident can cause anxiety. It is important to have a system in place for determining who will follow up with bystanders so this important aspect of Postvention is not overlooked.

**Reviewing Policies and Procedures**

It is strongly recommended that each facility has an interdepartmental committee to review policies and procedures regularly. The committee members must closely monitor changes to governmental legislation as well as licensing standards. As regulations and standards change, so must policies and procedures.

In addition, committee members must monitor the execution of policies and procedures. This can be done by observing staff performance and reviewing all Critical Incident Report Forms. The following questions should be raised following all crises:

- Were policies and procedures followed? If not, why not?
- If the procedures were followed, were they effective in maximizing safety? If not, why not?

Frequently, when procedures are not being used or they seem ineffective, additional training and practice for staff may be necessary. Consider these facts:

- Staff can follow policies and procedures only when they know what they are. How will you communicate changes and updates to policies and procedures?
- Staff are more inclined to follow policies and procedures when they understand it is their professional responsibility.

- Staff must be trained to apply the theory of written policies and procedures to real-life circumstances. It must be demonstrated and role modeled.
- Staff need considerable practice applying policies and procedures in a safe learning environment. This will improve their understanding, skills, and confidence.

**Conclusion**

To be successful in achieving and maintaining a culture of Care, Welfare, Safety, and SecuritySM within an organization, training must be an ongoing process. The process must be supported by well-written policies and procedures providing structure and guidance congruent with what staff are learning in training. These policies and procedures, when reviewed regularly, build teamwork, increase confidence, and reduce liability. They are essential for supporting staff and maximizing safety.

**Need Additional Help?**

CPI’s online Policy Development Series can help you and your organization write or update policies that clarify expectations and help protect against litigation. This free resource features:

- Brief video modules addressing key components of successful policies.
- Sample policies from organizations using CPI training programs.
- Printable notes to share with your leadership or policy-writing team.

Visit crisisprevention.com/policy to take advantage of this valuable resource.