Healthy relationships for adults at risk

Engaging with children, adults, families and communities

STANDARD 2

CHILDREN AND ADULTS ARE SAFE, INFORMED AND PARTICIPATE

Criteria 2.3

The importance of relationships and social connections for adults at risk is recognised and encouraged, helping them to feel safe and less isolated.

Indicators

2.3.1   Adults at risk (or their carers where appropriate), are provided with information about safe and respectful relationships.

> *"Connections matter. Strong ties with family, friends and the community provide us with happiness, security, support and a sense of purpose. Being connected to others is important for our mental and physical wellbeing".* **(Beyond Blue)**

There are three key components to addressing this indictor:
- recognising that healthy relationships are a protective factor;
- entities have a role to support adults at risk to build healthy relationships; and
- providing education and awareness about healthy relationships is vital.

Healthy relationships are a protective factor

Adults at risk often have multiple risk factors that place them in a vulnerable position where their safety can be compromised and they can be exploited. Social connections and having healthy relationships are protective factors for adults at risk. Healthy relationships are critical to assist with fostering positive mental and physical wellbeing, which assist adults at risk to protect themselves. Adults at risk with healthy social connections are more likely to feel supported and confident in raising concerns, along with speaking out about issues that worry them. Supporting and assisting adults at risk to develop healthy relationships plays a vital role in the safeguarding practices of an entity and creates a culture where adults feel safe.

Supporting adults at risk to build healthy relationships

Entities have a responsibility to collaborate with adults at risk (and their guardians where appropriate), to educate and empower them to make and maintain positive social connections, and build healthy relationships where they feel safe, valued and respected.

A healthy relationship is one of:

- mutual respect
- trust
- good communication
- understanding and
- honesty.

Education and Awareness about Healthy Relationships

Being in a relationship should be a positive experience for both people. Educating adults at risk about positive social connections is a powerful tool in enabling them to keep themselves safe, have fulfilling relationships and self-identify risk factors. Entities need to support adults to recognise the factors involved in a healthy relationship whilst providing education about what to look for in a harmful connection and how to address matters of concern.

Entities can support this process by developing and implementing activities such as:

- discussion groups identifying traits of positive and negative relationships
- regular social outings/group activities
- ongoing buddy and mentoring system
- opportunities to engage in online social activities
- provision of social support services information
- regular visits/check in times

Information must be provided to adults at risk (and their carers where appropriate), in formats suitable to their capacity and ability to understand how to prioritise their own safety and wellbeing.

External Resources to Assist:

- https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/building-and-maintaining-healthy-relationships
- https://bodytalk.org.au/relationships/
- https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Strong-relationships-strong-health#health-benefits-of-strong-relationships
- https://www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/408362_0318_bl1366_hrnt.pdf