



WORKING ALONE IN OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy Number:		Version:	1
Drafted by:	HR Manager	Board approval on:	April 2024
Responsible Person:	Strategic Finance Executive	Scheduled Review Date:	June 2025

INTRODUCTION

Big Yellow Umbrella is a small not-for-profit organisation, with no more than 15 part-time employees, and a similar number of volunteers and students. Big Yellow Umbrella delivers a busy calendar of programs all year round from different venues across the Macarthur region, leaving the head office sites with a small team of administration staff. Changes in program needs, annual leave, and sickness can mean that employees are required to work alone at times. Community workers also need to deliver workshops and activities on and off-site alone. Big Yellow Umbrella acknowledges the risks involved. This policy outlines the guidelines for working alone, which would also apply outside of standard operating hours.

PURPOSE:

The safety and security of our employees, students, and volunteers are paramount at Big Yellow Umbrella. Big Yellow Umbrella also needs to provide an accurate, quality service to its clients. This policy outlines the necessary precautions and procedures for employees, students, and volunteers who may need to work alone in the office, inside and outside of standard operating hours.

Scope:

“Working alone” is working anywhere a person is unable to get immediate assistance from colleagues or other people. Common examples include:

- Workers undertaking outreach services in the community.
- Workers in case management rooms or offices.
- Workers accompanying clients to appointments.

This policy applies to all employees, students, and volunteers of Big Yellow Umbrella who might find themselves working alone in any office location, during opening hours, early mornings, late evenings, or weekends.

To ensure the safety and quality of our services, only employees of Big Yellow Umbrella are authorised to work solo in the office. Students and volunteers may not be present on the premises without the accompaniment of an employee unless specific conditions are met as outlined in the section “Students and Volunteers.” Compliance with all established procedures is mandatory. The term “on-site” encompasses both the hall and the activity area.

POLICIES

The following policies will come into effect from the date this document is approved.

This Working Alone Policy is part of Big Yellow Umbrella’s risk management, to protect employees, volunteers, students, program participants, and members of the community.

This policy aims to:

- maintain a safe working environment when employees are alone.
- ensure a quality service is being delivered at all times by having trained, qualified staff members on-site with students and volunteers.
- ensure a staff communication procedure exists that identifies when staff are working alone.
- establish security measures both on and off-site to protect staff that are working alone.
- ensure staff have easy access to emergency contacts in case the need arises.
- ensure all staff are trained to work alone.

<https://hrfocus1.sharepoint.com/sites/SUPPORT/Shared Documents/CLIENT WIP/Big Yellow Umbrella/Our Culture/Updates/13052024 Update/Working Alone Policy.docx>

Risk management is a key part of Big Yellow Umbrella's commitment to continuous improvement, where risk identification and risk evaluation are linked to practical and cost-effective risk control measures.

Risk management activities are incorporated into Big Yellow Umbrella's planning operations and have informed the safety requirements outlined in this policy. The Working Alone Policy is part of our risk management standards for general business and employees receive regular training to implement these procedures. Also see [Working Alone Risk Assessment Checklist](#).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Operations Manager and the Strategic Finance Executive (Leadership Team) are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of all aspects of this Policy and Procedures. The Leadership Team is responsible for providing the staff, volunteers, and students with the skills and resources to conduct risk assessments

All staff, students, and volunteers are responsible for ensuring they fully comply with this Policy and Procedures. Staff are also responsible for risk assessments of their programs and offices at all times and must inform the Leadership Team if they become aware of any risk not covered by existing procedures.

PROCEDURES

All employees, students, and volunteers are to comply with the following procedures in relation to working alone on and off-site, during office hours, and outside these standard times.

Big Yellow Umbrella's Working Hours and Notification Requirements:

- The standard head office hours for Big Yellow Umbrella are 8.30 am to 4.30 pm Monday to Friday. Employees must notify their direct supervisor and the team if:
 - Their movements change, and they are no longer in the office.
 - They need to take unexpected leave.
 - They will be in the office before 8.30 am or after 4.30 pm Monday to Friday.
 - They intend to be in the office at the weekend or during public holidays.

Messenger is to be used to keep the team informed of the above movements so that decisions can be made about manning the office and whether students and volunteers can be on site.

- The Sign-in Sheet for all staff, students, volunteers, and visitors is to be signed upon entering and exiting the building. This includes when working outside of standard working hours.

Working Alone: Students and Volunteers:

- Students and/or volunteers cannot be at any of Big Yellow Umbrella's sites or programs if an employee is not present.
- Students and/or volunteers must be notified immediately and requested to either join another program where staff are available or return home.
- The team will have a list of students, volunteers, and employee's private phone numbers in case contact is required at short notice.

Exceptions to these conditions:

- Employees do not need to be on-site for volunteer-led programs such as Hampers Food Relief and with volunteer drivers. An employee does however need to be available to these volunteers during the program times.
- Volunteers and students can attend non-client-facing events and activities without a BYU employee if they have permission from a BYU employee and it involves other services with trained workers.

- Risk assessments are mandatory for all programs and activities. The attached [Working Alone Risk Assessment Checklist](#) applies.

Security Measures When Working Alone at Big Yellow Umbrella:

- During business hours, the main office door must remain closed at all times. All client communication is to happen through the sliding glass window. Use of the security monitor in the kitchen is advised if there is a safety concern.
- The sliding glass window is to remain locked in between clients.
- All external doors must remain locked during non-business hours. Employees are responsible for ensuring they are securely locked upon entry and exit when the flags are brought in.
- Employees must always carry their security passes and use them for all entries and exits. These security passes should never be shared with non-employees.
- Upon arrival, the employee must ensure that all security systems are active if they are the only person in the building.
- Regular safety checks of the premises are encouraged to ensure no security breaches or hazards have occurred.

Working Alone: Administration:

- Office closed signs are to be readily available and displayed outside the building when an employee is working alone. This is important to reduce client expectations of what services are available.
- Employees who are unable to resolve a client query when working alone, must take messages rather than risk inaccurate information being given.
- Employees are to check phone messages regularly when working alone means not being able to answer all phone calls that come in.

Health and Safety:

- Employees should familiarize themselves with all exits and emergency equipment locations, such as fire extinguishers and first aid kits.
- Employees are to avoid taking any potential risks when working alone, including dealing with challenging behaviour from clients.
- The use of hazardous materials or equipment requiring supervision is strictly prohibited when working alone.

Emergency Contacts:

- In case of any emergency, employees should follow the standard emergency protocol, including contacting local authorities and the designated emergency contact within the company.
- A list of emergency contacts, including management, building security, and local emergency services, will be prominently displayed in all office locations and included in the employee handbook.
- Employees should have immediate access to a working phone, either mobile or landline, during their time alone in the office.

Training and Awareness:

- All employees will receive training on this policy and general safety and emergency procedures.
- Refresher courses will be provided annually or as needed to ensure all employees are aware of the procedures and any updates to this policy.

Working Alone: Away from the Big Yellow Umbrella office:

Community workers are regularly required to deliver programs to various external sites alone. These sites could include schools, community halls, other services, local parks, and shopping centers to mention a few. The safety and security of our employees, students, and volunteers are paramount, and for this reason, the following procedures must be followed.

- All employees must notify their line manager or relevant team member if changes to the original program occur.
- All employees must keep a working mobile phone on them and be contactable at all times. The technology must always be supported by infrastructure and adequate coverage.
- Employees must understand and follow all relevant risk management and worker health and safety requirements as laid out in Big Yellow Umbrella's policies and procedures, even when off-site programs are being delivered.
- Big Yellow Umbrella employees are not permitted to do home visits at any time. Employees must only meet with clients in safe public places.
- Clients are only permitted to travel in an employee's car with prior approval from management.
- Employees must complete an incident report whenever something occurs that is unsafe. This includes incidents that happen at other venues that are not Big Yellow Umbrella.

Compliance:

- Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Employee safety is a collective responsibility, and adherence to these guidelines ensures a secure working environment for everyone.

RELATED DOCUMENTS
Access and Equity Policy
Bullying & Harassment Policy
Code of Conduct Policy
Complaints Management Policy
Customer Service Policy
Home Working Arrangements Policy
Managing Difficult Behaviours Policy
Risk Management Policy
Sexual Harassment Policy
Staff Induction Policy
Volunteer Management Policy
WHS Policy
WorkSafe publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevention and management of aggression in health services 2008. - Working safely in community services 2006. - Volunteer health and safety – a handbook for community service organisations 2008.

AUTHORISATION

The Board of Big Yellow Umbrella has reviewed and approved this policy.

Signature of Board Secretary: _____

Date of approval by the Board: _____

On behalf of the Big Yellow Umbrella