

# **Strong Family Health Center**

## **Safety and Risk Management Policy & Procedures**

DATE September 25, 2013  
REVIEWED & APPROVED September 25, 2013  
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SUBJECT: **Client, Staff and Board of Directors CODE OF CONDUCT**

It is the mission of Strong Family Health Center (SFHC) to provide quality health care and promote wellness for our tribal community as well as to establish and implement systems of care that will provide culturally appropriate services. In keeping with our mission and values, we believe that setting boundaries for behavior is warranted to protect staff, clients, Board Members and/or visitors within the SFHC Facility or at SFHC sponsored events. For this reason, SFHC staff will follow the appropriate procedures when individuals exhibit threatening, intimidating, abusive, or disruptive behavior

### **POLICY**

Violence, verbal assaults, threatening behavior and other disruptive conduct will not be tolerated. It is our policy to ensure the safety of all occupants of the SFHC facility in the event of a potentially disruptive and/or violent situation and to provide effective services. Persons committing acts of theft, fraud, violence, any willful attempt or threat to inflict bodily injury on another person, or any display of force that gives a person reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm will be reported to the appropriate authorities. This policy applies not only within the office settings, but in any setting in which SFHC employees or volunteers are carrying out SFHC activities (including but not limited to organized walks/runs or camps).

### **PURPOSE**

To provide specific procedures for handling disruptive persons, including situations of verbal abuse; occurrences involving the influence of alcohol, drugs or other behavior altering substances; acts of theft or fraud; and situations involving the threat of harm to self, others, or the facility. The objective of this policy is also to ensure a professional environment and to prevent or eliminate, to the extent possible, conduct that disrupts the operation of SFHC.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the responsibility of all SFHC staff, clients and the SFHC Board of Directors to be familiar with these procedures. The Executive Director or designee will ensure the policy is understood and implemented, and will provide training to new staff and the Board of Directors members. Clients will be made aware of these policies and copies will be made available at their request.

## **DEFINITIONS**

A. Verbal Abuse Any verbal expression that creates, or is intended to create, fear or intimidation in another individual or group of individuals, or verbal remarks or comments expressed in a loud, obnoxious, angry, disrespectful, harsh or threatening tone of voice, including excessive use of foul language.

B. Physical Abuse

1. Any intentional movement of the body, such as gestures, touching, pushing, striking, stalking or any unwanted intrusion of “reasonable space” of any person.

2. Situations in which the individual does not touch or do bodily harm to another person, but demonstrates a willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person or intentionally displays force that gives a person reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm.

3. Any physical harm to property or the facility, such as throwing objects or willfully defacing property, or damaging equipment.

## **SAFETY PRACTICES**

A. Look for Signals SFHC staff, clients or Board of Directors Members should look for signals that may be associated with impending violence, such as the following:

1. Verbally expressed anger and frustration (such as abusive language or criticism directed at the recipient in such a way as to intimidate, ridicule or humiliate);

2. Body language that may or may not include threatening gestures or inappropriate expressions of anger such as destruction of property or throwing items;

3. Signs of drug or alcohol use; or

4. Presence of a weapon (such as a gun, knife, or any other device, instrument, material, or substance that is capable of being used to cause death or serious bodily injury).

B. Safety First When evaluating a situation for potential violence or trying to diffuse a situation, staff should always seek to keep a pathway open to escape if the person becomes violent.

## **PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE INDIVIDUALS**

A. For Verbally Abusive Individuals and Persons

1. Remain calm, actively listen, attempt to defuse the situation as described above, and call the Executive Director or Executive Committee member as soon as possible.
2. The responding Executive Director or Executive Committee member will:
  - a) For verbally abusive individuals, give the person one verbal warning to stop the behavior, and if the behavior continues, ask the person to leave the building or designated area and the Strong Family Health Center property as a whole. Law enforcement will be notified if a person fails to comply with the request to leave.
  - b) For individuals under the influence, ask the person to leave the building, designated area and the Strong Family Health Center property as a whole, they will be allowed to return if they are no longer under the influence. Law enforcement will be notified if a person fails to comply with the request to leave.
  - c) *Exception:* If the situation involves a person who obviously has or claims to have an emergent or life threatening medical condition, 911 will be immediately notified. The emergency medical staff will make the appropriate decisions regarding care of the individual.
3. If matters escalate beyond verbal abuse, see below for Physically Abusive Individuals.

B. For Physically Abusive or Violent Individuals

1. Whenever a person commits an act of physical abuse or violence, staff should follow these “Action Guidelines:”
  - a) If the situation presents an immediate threat to the safety of self or occupants of the SFHC facility, other individuals or property, the first employee out of danger will notify law enforcement directly by calling 911. They are then to summon the Executive Director or a member of the Executive Committee.
  - b) If the situation does not present an immediate threat to the safety of others, the client, staff or Board Member will summon the Executive Director or if they are not available, another member of the Executive Committee.
  - c) The first Executive Committee member respondent at the scene will be the team leader and will be the person responsible for determining **whether or not to notify law enforcement by dialing 911** or how to otherwise handle the situation.

1) **Official respondents are designated in the order as follows:**

- i. The Executive Director (or designee)
  - ii. Member of the Executive Committee
  - iii. Member of the SFHC Board of Directors.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

A. Forms An Incident Report Form will be used to document all occurrences involving disruptive individuals on SFHC property or at SFHC events, regardless of perceived severity.

B. Submission of Report All employee and witness reports should be submitted to the Executive Director.

C. Acknowledgement of Report The Executive Director will acknowledge to the staff person submitting the report that the report has been received and that it will be addressed by the Executive Director. Incident reports submitted by clients, Board of Directors or the public will also be immediately handled by the Executive Director (or designee).

D. Action Taken on Receipt of Report Based on: The report and any and all previous reports regarding the same individual, and any other verified information the Executive Director obtains from SFHC staff, law enforcement or other individual or entity pertaining to the individual's behavior, MOVE TO FIRST SENTENCE: The Executive Director will exercise discretion in determining the appropriate course of conduct to take in accordance with Warnings and Sanctions.

## **WARNINGS & SANCTIONS**

### A. Written Warning

1. A written warning will be issued in all written reported situations.

2. A letter of incident shall be signed by the Executive Director, which will state the problem and indicate the individual is required to behave in a cooperative manner. The individual will be advised that such conduct is intolerable and must stop, and that continued negative or disruptive behavior may result in exclusion from SFHC activities and removal of access from SFHC properties including transportation services or termination of employment.

### 1. Individuals Who Pose a Safety Risk or Engage in Multiple Disruptive Conduct Offenses

a) Individuals may be barred from SFHC facilities for a set period of time in circumstances where the Executive Director and the Board of Directors jointly determine the individual poses a significant risk of danger or harm to clients, SFHC visitors, Board Members and/or staff. Individuals may be barred from SFHC facilities for a set period of time if the person engages in more than one documented offense involving verbal or physical abuse, or as otherwise provided in this policy; and the Executive Director and Board of Directors jointly determine the behavior interferes with the ability of SFHC and its providers and staff to provide effective services. In the event there is an individual barred from SFHC facilities or events, the Executive Director and the Board of Directors shall consider the specific conduct offenses and establish a suspension period that is appropriate to address the safety risks and disruptions caused by these conduct offenses.

b) Individuals who are barred from SFHC properties or events will be informed through a letter signed by the Executive Director and sent to the individual at their last known address via certified mail. This letter will explain the reasons for and length of time of the individual(s) being

barred, the circumstances under which it may be possible to end early, if any, and give the client pre-suspension right of appeal to be conducted.

c) Any decision must be documented in a written memorandum signed by both the Executive Director and the Board Chairperson and include correspondence with the individual and documentation substantiating the decision, and be maintained in a confidential file separate from the client record in accordance with the SFHC records retention policies. The Executive Director will notify staff of said situation as they deem necessary to keep clients, staff Board Members and SFHC guests safe. When an individual can document he or she may safely return to the SFHC facilities (such as having completed a substance abuse or anger management program), the Executive Director may determine the client's suspension could end early. The Executive Director must ensure written documentation of the decision is maintained in the client file.

## 2. Clients, Staff or Members of the SFHC Board of Directors Who Commit Theft or Fraud

a) Any of the above individuals who are suspected of committing theft or fraud against the SFHC such as, but not limited to; stealing supplies or medications, forgery of prescription pads, falsifying records, or false representation will be reported to the police and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Not limited to termination of employment.

b) If a client or Board Member, is found guilty or pleads guilty or nolo contendere (i.e. "no contest") to crimes of theft or fraud against the SFHC, the SFHC may place reasonable limitations on the client's ability to receive advance funds (such as requiring the client be accompanied by a SFHC staff person at all times or other reasonable measures designed to protect the SFHC's interests, or participation in SFHC activities.

3. Effective Date During the time in which the individual's appeal is pending, SFHC may impose reasonable limits on the individual's access to the SFHC facilities, services and providers as the Executive Director deems is prudent to protect the safety of the SFHC employees, clients and visitors.

## APPEALS

A. A client or previously listed individual(s), who has received a notice that his/her services or SFHC accesses will be suspended or dismissed under this policy may submit a written appeal to the Executive Director within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date on which SFHC mailed a written notification to the client. All appeals must state the grounds supporting the appeal and include supporting documentation.

B. The Executive Director will forward a timely appeal to the SFHC Board of Directors, which will serve as an Appeals Committee, which will schedule a hearing as soon as possible but no later than thirty (30) calendar days from when SFHC received the appeal. Notice of the hearing will be sent to the individual via certified mail stating the date, time and location of the hearing, the individual's right to call witnesses; and their right to submit written statements for the record prior to or at the hearing. If the individual cannot participate in the hearing, they must call the

Executive Director as soon as possible. A hearing will be delayed or rescheduled only for good reason and based on the Appeals Committee's availability.

C. The hearing will be conducted on the record and a full recording made and maintained by the Board Secretary or designee. All written statements made available prior to or at the hearing will be added to the record.

D. The Appeals Committee will issue a written decision within fourteen (14) calendar days after the hearing. The decision will be mailed to the individual via certified mail and shall be final.