



Intimate Relationships Policy

INTRODUCTION

Intimate relationships for people with disability can be particularly beneficial as they result in greater self-acceptance, less internalised stigma and more connection. Research by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities shows that support organisations are key to enhancing the social and intimate relationships of adults with disability.

While Project Independence (PI) is not designed to accommodate couples, it is our mission to support residents to pursue all aspects of an independent life, including healthy intimate relationships.

We believe that maintaining healthy and respectful relationships creates a safe and supportive living environment. Where a resident is in an intimate relationship, either with another resident or a party external to the PI household, we expect it to be a positive and consensual relationship that promotes mutual respect, trust and emotional wellbeing.

PURPOSE

This policy seeks to address the inevitable changes in house dynamics when residents develop a stable and ongoing intimate relationship either externally or with a co-resident. It will ensure that residents of Project Independence exploring this type of relationship are treated appropriately and given access to any internal and external resources that would assist them to develop their relationship while continuing to live harmoniously with their other coresidents. The policy also addresses the need for intimate relationships to develop as a result of both parties desiring this to happen.

POLICY

Residents of Project Independence developing intimate relationships shall be treated appropriately and given access to any internal and external resources that would assist them to learn to manage their relationship while continuing to live harmoniously with their coresidents.

Intimate relationships with external partners will result, at times, in an additional person within the PI house. External partners are expected to adhere to PI policies and procedures and to maintain harmony in the house. Should an external partner cause disruption to house harmony they will be asked to leave. External partner(s) are welcome to sleep overnight in their partners PI unit for a maximum of two nights each week.

Co-residents in intimate relationships may choose to sleep together in the same unit at any time but must equally alternate between their two units to minimise any disruption to other residents.

Relationship discord and especially break-ups have the potential to cause significant disruption and ongoing damage to the harmony of the house. PI will support residents to develop the skills needed



to manage the relationship discord and break-up, however ongoing disruptive behaviour will be dealt with under relevant PI policies and if unresolved, could result in residents being asked to leave PI.

Additionally, PI will not tolerate unhealthy relationships, which may be one-sided, and thus can cause harm to individuals and also impact other residents. As such, any resident who pursues an intimate relationship with another person in a manner that makes that person feel uncomfortable, abused or manipulated, will be subject to disciplinary action under PI Policies and Procedures. Such consequences may ultimately result in the exit of a resident from the PI household.

When co-residents in an intimate relationship reach the stage of wishing to live together in the same unit ongoing, PI is no longer a suitable accommodation option. PI will work with the residents to support the development of skills to transition into further long-term independent living as a couple. Should a resident fall pregnant, PI will support them to access services and support required to manage the pregnancy and find suitable accommodation outside of PI prior to the birth of the baby.

The safety and wellbeing of PI residents remains the priority in all circumstances and will prevail where there is concern about an intimate relationship causing harm.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Policy

AUTHORISATION

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