

Supported Residential Services News

Summer 2007 Issue 1

SRS News

Welcome to the first edition of the *SRS News*. This newsletter is designed to communicate important information relevant to SRS proprietors and staff from the Department of Human Services (the department).

Many of you will already receive newsletters from departmental regional offices which will continue. This newsletter is designed to provide a broad perspective of SRS news to everyone across Victoria. We hope you find it useful and informative. If you have any feedback about the newsletter, contact Shannon.Checklin@dhs.vic.au

In this edition:

- Preparing for a hot summer
- Managing infectious diseases
- Training update
- SRS Regulatory Review
- SRS census
- SRS publications update

Preparing for a hot summer

Summer is quickly approaching and given the continuing dry conditions it is an important reminder that Victorians in high-risk areas should prepare their properties and have a fire plan.

For SRS located in bush fire prone areas it is necessary to have a bush fire plan in place that includes documented policies and procedures and regular fire drills. Bush fire plans should be formulated in consultation with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and local government and should include evacuation arrangements, and facility preparedness (for example, fire breaks and management of vegetation around the facility). Plans should also take into account the current drought conditions and any impact this may have on the availability of water for fire fighting.

Your SRS may already have specific plans in place, or may incorporate such plans within existing emergency management procedures.

If you have any queries regarding preparing for the dry season contact your local fire authority.

Fire safety and emergency management proprietor obligations

All SRS proprietors will soon receive a department fact sheet titled *Fire safety and emergency management proprietor obligations*.

This fact sheet outlines proprietor responsibilities, fire safety requirements, ensuring a safe workplace and the department's support strategy soon to be implemented.

Heat stress

Heat stress can also happen in the hot weather and occurs when the body becomes dehydrated and is unable to cool itself to maintain a healthy temperature. If left untreated it can lead to heat stroke and can become a life threatening emergency. Heat stroke can be avoided during hot weather by drinking plenty of fluids, staying indoors or in the shade and avoiding vigorous exercise.

For more information check out the **Better Health Channel** website. It provides easy to understand, reliable online health and medical information. www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au



Fire fighters from the Department of Sustainability and Environment during last years bush fires.

Managing Outbreaks of infectious diseases



Effective hand washing by all residents, staff and visitors is the best method of preventing & controlling the spread of infection.

Residents of SRS are particularly prone to the spread of certain infectious diseases and infestations due to general ageing processes, frailty and communal living environments. Identifying and dealing with risks associated with caring for residents is fundamental to effective management.

Management starts with the identification of those diseases/illnesses and infestations that can occur in SRS. Consideration should be given to planning for managing an outbreak of:

- gastroenteritis
- influenza
- head lice and
- scabies.

An outbreak of any of these could occur in your SRS possibly causing widespread illness and discomfort amongst residents and staff. In addition, it is highly likely that a significant outbreak would impact on your normal business operations.

The following points can assist with your planning and managing outbreaks:

Occurrence of an outbreak:

- know who to contact if an outbreak does occur
- have arrangements for managing residents, staff and visiting health professionals during an outbreak
- understand what information is required during an outbreak

Policy and procedures:

- have clear infection control protocols and policies in place to ensure all staff are familiar with them
- be familiar with infection control resources
- maintain immunisation and vaccination records for residents and staff
- consider what quality assurance activities you can undertake to monitor infection control practices.

Communication:

- have clear information available for residents and families in the event of an outbreak.

Staff training:

- make sure key staff are aware of requirements for managing infectious disease outbreaks
- consider how you will inform staff and volunteers of their accountabilities and responsibilities regarding outbreaks on an ongoing basis
- consider what infection control training is appropriate for staff and volunteers.

Food, supplies and equipment:

- have a process for monitoring food safety and cleaning standards for buildings, fixtures, resident equipment and the general environment

- routinely test and calibrate equipment such as washing machines, dryers and dishwashers
- ensure you have enough personal protection equipment (PPE) such as disposable gloves, masks and gowns to manage in the event of an outbreak
- consider your clinical waste disposal arrangements during an outbreak
- consider how you would manage your linen supply during an outbreak.

How to report outbreaks

For more information on reporting and managing outbreaks in your SRS contact the Department of Human Services, Public Health, on 1300 651 160.

In cases of gastroenteritis also notify your local Council Health Department.

For urgent after hours notifications please ring the Department of Human Services after hours service on 1300 790 733.

Further information

General enquiries can be made to the Department of Human Services, Public Health, on 1300 651 160.

Serious concerns

If you have concerns about the impact of an outbreak on residents and informing the broader community or general enquiries contact the Department of Human Services, Public Health, on 1300 651 160.

See enclosed posters 'protect yourself and your family'

- **Wash your hands regularly**
- **Cover your cough and sneeze**

Training update

The SRS training calendar has been running since 2004 and continues to offer a range of free, up-to-date training specifically designed to meet the needs of SRS proprietors and staff.

Some of the key courses on offer include:

- managing challenging behaviours
- medication management
- understanding mental illness
- care planning and key practice issues.

The photo shows participants and trainers of the recent Medication management course.



(back row) Perla Armstrong, Maria Phuah, Maria Tizzano-Hicklin, Tony Allen, Robyn Saunders (trainer), Renata Piniuta, Jenny Gowan(trainer) Mahshid Khademollah, Peng Zhang

(front row) Valerie Ekanayke, Malini Jayawardena, Achala Seneviratne

Benefits of training

It is often difficult to take the time out of our busy routines to get to a training session. However, training has many benefits that can help you do a better job at your SRS and provide a better environment for your residents.

Training is a great way to:

- learn new skills in a supportive and positive environment
- reinforce current skills and knowledge
- network with people in the same industry
- meet new people and share experiences.

Places for training sessions fill up quickly so don't forget, if you can't make it to a session, just let us know so we can offer a place to someone else.

Next year

Keep a look out for upcoming training courses and dates for 2008 in your letter box.

The training calendar is also kept up-to-date on the SRS website:

www.health.vic.gov.au/srs

SRS Regulatory Review

Like many sectors, the SRS sector has undergone a range of changes, and continues to evolve. There has also been a range of broader system changes, including changes in government policy that are directly relevant to SRS regulation. It is now timely to review the current regulatory arrangements.

The Victorian Government is undertaking a review of the regulatory scheme that applies to Supported Residential Services (SRS).

The Victorian Government regulates SRS under the *Health Services Act 1988* (HS Act) and the Health Services (Supported Residential Services) Regulations 2001 (SRS regulations). The broad policy objective of this regulation over time has been to provide a level of protection for residents of private facilities, offering the combination of accommodation and special or personal care whose safety and/or wellbeing may otherwise be at risk.

A discussion paper will be circulated in February 2008 with consultation to following in April 2008.

You will have the opportunity to contribute to the process during this time.

SRS Census: your input counts!

The Department of Human Services has conducted a census of the SRS industry approximately every five years since 1993. The census collects information about SRS facilities and residents, and is the only source of comprehensive information about the industry and residents. The data is crucial for SRS proprietors, other individuals and organisations with an interest in the industry. It is also extremely important for government as it provides the information necessary for appropriate and responsive policy and program planning.

The next SRS industry census will be carried out by March 2008. The Social Research Centre, an external organisation experienced in conducting census', will be completing the work.

In order to ensure we receive relevant, high quality information about the SRS industry, we need your input! We encourage all SRS proprietors to participate in the 2008 census and help us maintain accurate, up-to-date information about your sector.

Further information about the census will be provided to all SRS proprietors as the census date draws nearer.

Information will also be available on the SRS website in the New Year.

Shane McDonald is managing the SRS Census. He can be contacted on

☎ 03) 9096 7227

✉ shane.mcdonald@dhs.vic.gov.au



Contacts

If you have comments, feedback or requests please let us know.

All correspondence to:

Shannon Checklin
SRS & Accommodation Support Unit
Department of Human Services
Level 12, 50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne 3000

☎ 03) 9096 6978

✉ shannon.checklin@dhs.vic.gov.au

Publications

An updated version of *Meeting the Need – a guide to providing quality care in SRS* is currently being distributed to all SRS.

The new version has been updated to reflect the legislative changes to the *Health Services Act 1998*. In particular, the new requirements regarding managing resident's money including reportable transactions are explained.



*Wishing all SRS proprietors, staff and residents
a wonderful, safe festive season and
all the best for 2008.*