

# **RISK MANAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT**

## **RISK DEFINED:**

Risk is defined as any uncertainty about a future event that may threaten VIDEA's ability to accomplish its mission and protect its assets.

Staff, volunteers and Interns will be encouraged to practice good risk management techniques:

- to provide a safe environment for all those engaged in VIDEA projects
- to protect staff and volunteers, provided they are performing their duties in a reasonable manner and in accordance with the processes outlined below
- to protect the assets of VIDEA programming.

VIDEA programming assets include:

- people -Interns, board members, volunteers, employees, donors and the general public
- income - grants, donations, contributions
- goodwill - reputation, stature in the community, and the ability to raise funds
- appeal to prospective volunteers and members.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

### **RISK FACTORS**

Risk factors can be divided into Biopsychosocial, Environmental and Sociological factors. They include a vast range of issues, circumstances and history. These can include mental and physical health issues, substance use, job stress and suicidal ideation. Ruptures in close relationships and separation from cultural beliefs as well as a sense of isolation and lack of social support may be predominant, particularly when in an unfamiliar cultural environment.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

When deemed necessary a risk assessment process will be put in place. During the risk assessment process, staff and support person(s) will engage in a conversation around risk with the intern. The intent of this conversation is that the intern and staff will have the opportunity to share their concerns about the Intern's safety.

### **AREAS TO EXPLORE WHEN ASSESSING RISK**

VIDEA staff and volunteers will, when necessary, take into consideration each intern's life experience and past behavior patterns when assessing risk. Any evidence of vulnerability to self-

harm, exposure to danger or isolation will be explored. Inquiries about the intern's personal assessment of their risk, stress, and crisis level will be also be taken into consideration.

## **PAIN**

Determine how the intern is feeling, currently and generally. It may be helpful to use a 10 point scale to allow the intern to point out their level of physical or emotional discomfort. Ask the intern how often they feel pain. If the intern identifies experiencing severe pain (an 8, 9 or 10 on the scale), the VIDEA staff will ask how often they feel this way, and for how long.

## **INTENT TO HARM**

If there are immediate thoughts of suicide, homicide or self-harm, a written document containing pertinent information should be completed immediately *with the intern* to determine the next course of action. In addition, the same process will apply if the individual has exited hospital within the last 7 days, or if the Intern is engaged drug or alcohol use, aberrant behaviour, and/or sexual exploitation.

## **IS THERE A "CURRENT PLAN"?**

Staff and support person(s) should be comfortable bringing up the subject of suicide, if appropriate, and discussing it openly with the intern. The staff or support person(s) will attempt to determine if the intern has a thought-out plan for harming themselves or others. They will ask questions around the details of the plan to determine how serious the intern is about following through. Questions could include, but are not limited to:

- What is your plan? (The staff/support person will attempt to get as many details as possible. The more details the Intern can provide on a plan, the more at risk they are.)
- Do they have a specific time/date/place to carry out the plan?
- What materials/objects would they use? Do they have access to the materials?
- Have they written a suicide note?

## **RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

VIDEA's risk management process will consist of the following steps:

- establishing personal and general protective risk factors
- establishing risk management procedures to be accessed by Interns, staff, and volunteers
- establishing efficacy in risk factor assessment by Interns, staff and volunteers
- creating a written safety plan when indicated
- contacting emergency safety supports when indicated
- establishing and acknowledging closure of VIDEA responsibility

While focusing on providing post internship support, VIDEA staff will be aware of the importance of gradually easing Interns from Staff support by encouraging them access their personal supports and resources. The intention here is to encourage the healthy development of independence, personal responsibility, resilience and self-sufficiency. This will be done with thoughtful consideration of each Intern as an individual with his or her own personal history and skillset.

### **PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

Prior to travel departure Interns will be advised about valuable protective risk factors as a means of reducing the likelihood of harm to self or others. Protective factors are personal strategies that enhance resiliency and serve to counterbalance risk factors. Protective factors are varied and include an individual's attitudinal and behavioral characteristics, as well as attributes of the environment and culture.

Protective factors include:

- Supportive connections with family, friends, Elders, cultural and spiritual traditions, community support, professional and non-professional support persons.
- Support with problem solving, conflict resolution and nonviolent handling of disputes
- Support of cultural, religious and spiritual beliefs that promote self-preservation
- Physical and mental health care that is supportive and addresses the needs of the individual(s).
- Support for the individual(s) to seek medical or psychological help.

**The Executive Director** will be notified by the VIDEA Project coordinator(s) in the event that an Intern is considered to be at risk. Risk factors are any factors which may lead to, or may be associated with, exposure to danger to self or self-harm or harm to others.

**The Project Coordinator**, ED and, when appropriate, a volunteer mental health worker may jointly decide on an assessment plan. An assessment will take into account how the individual is impacted by the identified risks, if the person's support system is available, and if so, how extensive it is.

All VIDEA staff role model self-care and safe behaviour at all times. If any VIDEA staff has concerns about his/her/their personal safety or the safety of interns, these concerns must be discussed immediately with the Executive Director.

**A RISK MANAGEMENT INTERN AGREEMENT** will be provided to each Intern to be read, signed and submitted to the project coordinator prior to departure.

Risk management is an important component of best practices. Risk management will be Intern and staff focused and aimed to provide optimal support and/or treatment for Interns. VIDEA staff and volunteers will refer to, and encourage, the following considerations when risk factors are apparent with an Intern(s).

## **RISK MANAGEMENT PLANS**

### ***Mild/Low Risk Considerations:***

- Increase protective factors, including support from others.
- Increase frequency of contact/check-ins.
- Ongoing safety planning and monitoring.
- Involvement of family/significant others in the planning as appropriate.
- Referral to other resources/programs as appropriate.
- Notification of other team members in the support system of the current situation.

### ***Moderate Risk Considerations:***

- Hospitalization if appropriate with evaluation if necessary.
- Increasing services/referrals for additional supports should be considered.
- Consultation/supervision should be sought with other staff and/or professional support.
- Review of safety plan to ensure appropriate interventions.
- Safety plan should be completed and include the individual's environment.
- Monitoring of condition should be ongoing.
- Family and supports should be involved in the process as necessary.
- Referral to other resources/programs.
- Notify other team members in the support system of the current situation.
- All actions taken during risk management procedures will be documented and recorded by the project coordinator.

### **Severe/Emergent Risk Considerations:**

- Immediate hospitalization voluntary or involuntary.
- Notify other team members in the support system of the current situation.
- Notify contacts on Intern's personal support plan as appropriate.
- Arrange evacuation/emergency transportation plans if necessary.
- All actions taken during risk management procedures will be documented and recorded by the project coordinator.

### **SAFETY PLAN**

If there is sufficient concern for the safety of the intern by staff, a safety plan will be worked out with the intern who is at risk, or has exited the hospital within the last 72 hours. Other reasons appropriate to completing a safety plan with an intern could be if the individual is engaging in substance use, has severe mental health concerns, or is involved with sexual exploitation or other risky behaviors. This safety plan will take the form of a written and signed document containing the following information:

- Identify what the risky behaviors are or have been in the past
- Discuss and note ways in which the individual can keep safe
- Confirm that the individual is comfortable approaching staff if they are feeling at risk. If not, then ensure that the individual has contact information for a support that they do feel comfortable contacting
- Outline the components of the commitment to a safety plan. This may be regarding the use of drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, isolation, lack of communication about emotional state.

### **RESOURCES**

Staff will explore with the intern any available resources which are supportive for them. Both parties will discuss these supports and how they are helpful to the intern. Staff will ask about any prior behavior that may put the intern's safety at higher risk. Staff will also explore any existing mental health concerns that the Intern may be presenting. The staff will inquire if the intern ever was connected to mental health supports, currently or in the past. Staff will attempt to obtain as many details as possible when asking questions.

### **SAFETY CONTACTS**

Each intern will be required to complete a *Resource Contact Plan* prior to their departure. This aims to identify the intern's resources - those people they would feel comfortable reaching out to for support. The intern will be encouraged to inform these individuals that they are a part of their safety plan. These resources could include: family members, friends, family doctor,

psychologist or psychiatrist, community counsellor, Elders, cultural or spiritual advisors, Chiefs or other supports the intern identifies as personally and/or therapeutically supportive.

## **POST INTERNSHIP RISK MANAGEMENT SUPPORT**

VIDEA takes its responsibility for the ongoing wellbeing, safety and success of each and every one of its Interns very seriously. Focusing on this, VIDEA will prioritize, to the very best of its capabilities, the support and services needed to accomplish these objectives.

VIDEA will provide post travel support for its Interns on return home. This support will be provided by the VIDEA community – staff, volunteers, previous Interns, wellness team, Elders and other cultural resource persons.

This support will take the form of:

- Support with issues around reverse culture shock experienced with family, friends, communities, Elders and employers.
- Support with a possible sense of isolation, depression, frustration resulting from a return to “home” life.
- Job research and application processes.
- Education application processes.

VIDEA maintains the priority of further encouraging the development of independence and sound judgement in each Intern. While VIDEA staff may continue with career and education advice, VIDEA will continually encourage Interns to reconnect with their personal support plan, those people noted in their briefings before and after their travel experiences as their personal support people.