WORKING ALONE POLICY

PURPOSE:

Brant Community Healthcare System (BCHS) is committed to providing and maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all staff, professional staff, learners, volunteers, and contractors.

In accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), BCHS will take every reasonable precaution to protect individuals who are required to work alone or in isolation. BCHS is committed to identifying, assessing, eliminating, and controlling hazards associated with working alone through hazard assessments, safety planning, communication protocols, and emergency response measures.

This policy outlines the requirements for working alone safely at BCHS and establishes expectations for individuals, supervisors, and leadership to minimize the risk of injury, illness, violence, and delayed emergency response.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Brant Community Healthcare System recognizes that working alone or in isolation may present additional safety risks due to the absence of immediate assistance during an emergency, injury, illness, or workplace incident.

Individuals working alone at BCHS must have appropriate safeguards in place, including a documented safety plan, hazard assessment, buddy system, check-in procedure, and an effective means of communication. Supervisors and workers share responsibility for ensuring that work conducted alone is assessed, planned, and completed safely.

BCHS encourages that at least two qualified individuals be present when conducting activities where there is an increased safety risk.

INCLUSION CRITERIA

This policy applies to all BCHS Team Members, including:

- Employees
- Professional Staff
- Learners and Students
- Volunteers

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

- Contractors
- Any individual performing work or activities on behalf of BCHS

This policy applies whenever work is performed alone or in isolation within BCHS facilities, properties, offices, community locations, or other BCHS-controlled environments.

DEFINITION(S):

Accident: An incident that results in personal injury, illness, or property damage.

Activity: A task, process, condition, situation, or operation performed by an individual.

Buddy System: A system whereby an individual working alone is monitored by or remains in communication with a designated person to ensure their safety and facilitate emergency response if required.

Check-In Procedure: A documented communication process between an individual working alone and a designated contact person to confirm the individual's safety at predetermined intervals.

Critical Injury: An injury of a serious nature that places life in jeopardy, produces unconsciousness, results in substantial loss of blood, involves fractures or amputations, major burns, or loss of sight.

Effective Means of Communication: A telephone, mobile phone, radio, panic alarm, or other communication device that enables an individual to obtain assistance when required.

Hazard: A condition, circumstance, activity, or process that has the potential to cause injury, illness, property damage, or harm.

Hazard Assessment; A systematic process used to identify hazards, assess risk levels, and determine appropriate control measures.

Incident: An unplanned event that may or may not result in injury, illness, or damage.

Safety Plan: A documented plan outlining the controls, precautions, communication methods, and emergency procedures required to safely perform work alone.

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

Supervisor: Any individual who directs, oversees, or manages workers, learners, volunteers, contractors, or workplace activities.

Working Alone: Working in isolation or in a location where direct contact with co-workers or supervisors is unavailable and immediate assistance may not be readily accessible in the event of an injury, illness, emergency, or incident. High risk areas (ie: mechanical, electrical rooms) will require specific process for check-ins.

PROCEDURE:

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. BCHS Team Members must follow all applicable BCHS health and safety policies and procedures when working alone or in isolation.
2. Prior to working alone, a hazard assessment must be completed to determine the risks associated with the work activity.
3. A documented safety plan must be developed between the BCHS Team Member and their supervisor before work is performed alone or in isolation.
4. Individuals working alone must have an effective means of communication available and functioning throughout the duration of the work activity.
5. A buddy system and check-in procedure must be established prior to working alone.
6. Check-in intervals should be determined based on risk and generally should not exceed two hours unless otherwise documented through a hazard assessment.
7. High-risk activities should not be conducted alone whenever reasonably practicable.
8. BCHS encourages a minimum of two qualified individuals to be present during activities involving increased risk of injury, violence, or medical emergency.
9. Individuals working alone during evenings, nights, weekends, statutory holidays, or other after-hours periods must comply with applicable BCHS security and access requirements.
10. All individuals working alone must be familiar with BCHS emergency response procedures, emergency codes, and methods for obtaining assistance.

RESPONSIBILITIES

BCHS

BCHS is responsible for:

1. Ensuring emergency contact information and emergency response resources are readily available.

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

2. Assessing BCHS-controlled environments for hazards that may affect individuals working alone.
3. Implementing corrective actions to reduce or eliminate identified hazards.
4. Maintaining security measures, including controlled access systems, surveillance systems, and emergency communication resources where appropriate.
5. Ensuring communication systems remain operational and accessible.
6. Supporting the reporting, investigation, and follow-up of incidents, accidents, injuries, illnesses, and critical injuries.
7. Ensuring compliance with applicable legislative and organizational health and safety requirements.

BCHS Team Members

BCHS Team Members working alone are responsible for:

1. Performing work safely and in accordance with BCHS policies and procedures.
2. Immediately notifying their supervisor if they are uncomfortable performing any task while working alone.
3. Stopping work activities when a safety concern exists and not resuming work until appropriate controls have been implemented.
4. Collaborating with their supervisor to develop and follow a safety plan.
5. Participating in the buddy system and check-in procedures established for their work.
6. Maintaining access to an effective means of communication while working alone.
7. Seeking medical attention following any workplace incident, injury, illness, or exposure, as required.
8. Immediately reporting all incidents, hazards, near misses, accidents, and critical injuries in accordance with BCHS reporting requirements.
9. Following BCHS emergency response procedures when assistance is required.

Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for:

1. Conducting and documenting hazard assessments for work activities that may be performed alone.
2. Determining whether work may be safely performed alone and identifying activities that are prohibited from being conducted alone.
3. Communicating known hazards and required safety measures to BCHS Team Members.
4. Providing written instructions regarding safe work practices and emergency procedures when appropriate.

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

5. Developing and maintaining safety plans with BCHS Team Members who perform work alone.
6. Ensuring buddy systems, check-in procedures, and communication methods are established and appropriate to the level of risk.
7. Ensuring check-in intervals are documented and monitored.
8. Ensuring incidents, accidents, hazards, near misses, and critical injuries are reported and investigated in accordance with BCHS policy.
9. Reviewing and updating safety plans when work activities or hazards change.

HAZARD ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Prior to approving work to be conducted alone, supervisors must ensure a hazard assessment is completed and documented.

The assessment should consider:

- The location of the work activity
- The nature of the work being performed
- Potential workplace violence risks
- Environmental risks
- Patient, visitor, or participant interactions
- Equipment, chemicals, or hazardous materials
- Access to emergency assistance
- Communication capabilities
- The likelihood and severity of potential incidents

Appropriate control measures must be identified and implemented before work proceeds.

INCIDENT REPORTING AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

1. All incidents, accidents, occupational exposures, hazards, near misses, and critical injuries must be reported immediately to the supervisor and documented according to BCHS reporting processes.
2. Individuals requiring immediate assistance must activate the appropriate BCHS emergency response process. ie: code response
3. Supervisors must ensure all workplace incidents are investigated, and corrective actions are implemented where required.

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

4. BCHS Team Members must seek medical attention whenever necessary following a workplace incident or injury and follow the BCHS Member incident reporting procedures for first aid, health care or

DOCUMENTATION AND /OR COMMUNICATION

1. Hazard assessments and safety plans must be documented and maintained by the responsible department.
2. Buddy system arrangements and check-in procedures must be communicated to all relevant individuals before work begins.
3. Changes to work activities, locations, or hazards must prompt reassessment of the safety plan.
4. Incident reports must be completed in accordance with BCHS member incident reporting requirements

QUALITY MONITORING PROCESS

1. Any BCHS Team Member identifying potential or actual safety concerns related to working alone will notify their manager or supervisor.
2. Incidents, hazards, near misses, accidents, occupational exposures, and critical injuries will be reported and investigated in accordance with BCHS policies and procedures.
3. Trends and opportunities for improvement may be reviewed through Organizational Health, Joint Health and Safety Committees, and departmental leadership

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Working Alone Hazard Assessment Template

Department: _____
Employee Name: _____
Supervisor: _____
Date Completed: _____
Work Location: _____

Work Activity Description
Describe the work being performed:

Hazard Assessment

Hazard Category	Hazard Identified	Risk Level (Low/Medium/High)	Control Measures Implemented
Working Environment			
Workplace Violence			
Patient/Visitor Interaction			
Equipment/Machinery			
Slips/Trips/Falls			
Chemical/Biological Exposure			
Medical Emergency Risk			
Security Concerns			
Other			

Controls in Place	Overall Risk Rating
☐ Buddy System Established	☐ Low Risk
☐ Communication Device Available	☐ Medium Risk
☐ Security Notified (if applicable)	☐ High Risk
☐ Safety Plan Completed	
☐ Check-In Procedure Established	
☐ Emergency Procedures Reviewed	

Approval
Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

Appendix B: Working Alone Safety Plan Template

Employee Name: _____
Department: _____
Supervisor: _____
Date Effective: _____
Work Location: _____
Work Schedule

Date	Start Time	End Time

Designated Buddy / Contact Person
Name: _____
Phone Number: _____
Relationship: _____

Check-In Procedure

Check-In Method	Frequency	**Missed Check-In Procedure** If a check-in is missed:
☐ Phone		Contact the employee immediately.
☐ Text Message		Attempt alternate communication methods.
☐ Email		Notify the supervisor.
☐ In Person		Contact BCHS Security (if applicable).
☐ Other		Escalate to emergency services if welfare concerns exist.

Emergency Contacts

Contact	Phone Number	Communication Method
Supervisor		☐BCHS Phone
Manager		☐ Personal Cell Phone
BCHS Security		☐ Radio
Emergency Services	911	☐ Panic Alarm
Occupational Health & Safety		☐ Other: _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____
Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Working Alone Check-In Log

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

Employee Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Time	Check-In Completed (Y/N)	Contact Person Initials	Comments

End of Shift Confirmation

☐ Employee has safely completed work.

☐ Employee has left work location.

Buddy/Contact Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date/Time: _____

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

Appendix D: Supervisor Working Alone Assessment Guide

Prior to authorizing work to proceed alone, supervisors should consider the following:

Worker Factors

☐ Experience and training
☐ Ability to respond to emergencies
☐ Medical limitations or restrictions
☐ Familiarity with work area

Work Factors

☐ Complexity of work
☐ Potential for workplace violence
☐ Exposure to hazardous substances
☐ Equipment operation
☐ Risk of injury
☐ Requirement for patient interaction

Environmental Factors

☐ Building access
☐ Lighting
☐ Weather conditions
☐ Public access
☐ Security concerns
☐ Cell phone reception

Emergency Response

☐ Assistance readily available
☐ Communication equipment tested
☐ Emergency procedures reviewed
☐ Emergency contact information provided

Final Assessment

☐ Work may proceed alone
☐ Work may proceed with additional controls
☒ Work may not proceed alone

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

Appendix E: Emergency Contact Information Template

Department: _____
Location: _____
Date Updated: _____

Emergency Contact	Phone Number
Emergency Services	911
BCHS Switchboard	_____
BCHS Security	_____
Manager	_____
Director	_____
Occupational Health & Safety	_____
Human Resources	_____
After-Hours Manager	_____
Project Manager	_____

Emergency Information
Nearest Exit(s):

Nearest AED Location:

Nearest Fire Alarm Pull Station:

Nearest First Aid Kit Location:

Employee Acknowledgement

I have reviewed the emergency contacts and procedures for working alone.
Employee Name: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.

REFERENCES:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1
- Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- Ontario Hospital Association Health and Safety Resources
- BCHS Occupational Health and Safety Program
- BCHS Member Incident Reporting Policy
- BCHS Emergency Codes Policy
- BCHS Workplace Violence Prevention Program

DISCLAIMER: This is a CONTROLLED document. The most current version is in electronic format on the BCHS intranet site. Any documents appearing in paper form are NOT controlled.