

POLICY: CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

OPERATIONAL

POLICY NUMBER: F4

POLICY STATEMENT:

Anglicare SA values research that leads to the development of new knowledge and that enhances the organisation's advocacy role and its ability to make an informed, positive difference to the quality of life of individuals, families and communities.

Anglicare is committed to supporting and conducting research involving staff, volunteers, clients and community members that is consistent with ethical principles and best practice. Duty of care and confidentiality are essential at all times.

Current version approved	Executive (date)	11 August 2009	
	Chief Executive	SIGNED ON MASTER COPY	Date: 14.08.2009
	Board (date)	N/A	
	Chair of Board	Signature:	Date:

Responsible Review Officer	Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Services
Next review due	2012

Conducting research with human participants

1. OVERVIEW

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all research involving Anglicare SA staff, volunteers, clients and/or community members is conducted in a manner that promotes respect, equity, transparency, beneficence and non-maleficence, and is consistent with Anglicare SA's organisational values.

The policy has been developed to guide Anglicare staff and external researchers through the process of conducting research projects within or through Anglicare SA. It contains reference to relevant legislation and documentation as well as instructions on the process that must be adhered to when planning and conducting research projects.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all research undertaken internally by Anglicare staff, joint research projects conducted in partnership with other organisations, and research carried out by undergraduate or postgraduate students, academics and other external researchers who wish to make contact with Anglicare staff, volunteers and/or clients.

The types of research projects covered by this policy include research proposals to be submitted for funding, major program and service evaluations, action research projects and research that asks for the personal opinions, comments or views of staff, volunteers, clients and/or community members (e.g. client satisfaction surveys).

This policy does not apply to internal evaluations, reviews, audits and similar feedback activities that are conducted for the sole purpose of continuous quality improvement and service development. The decision of whether data collection is research or a routine activity is the responsibility of the Manager of the service or program.

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

3.1. ALIGNMENT WITH RESEARCH PRIORITIES

In keeping with Anglicare's Strategic Directions and Research Agenda, it is anticipated that all research conducted within, or through, our organisation will fit within at least one of the following research themes:

3.1.1. Growing capacity and opportunity

The research will lead to the development of our understanding of barriers to participation in the social and economic life of our society, and identify mechanisms for empowering marginalised people and communities to overcome these barriers to become active participants in the wider community.

3.1.2. Creating a more just and sustainable society

The research will identify and increase our understanding of the root causes of injustice, and explore effective, sustainable solutions that may positively influence public policy, community values and the environment.

3.1.3. Building partnerships

The research will investigate opportunities for, and successful approaches to, building strong productive partnerships with the broader church community, business, other community service organisations, government and the wider community in order to assist Anglicare to achieve its vision.

3.1.4. Promoting positive ageing

The research will examine the needs and aspirations of older people, and explore opportunities to contribute to their enhanced wellbeing, active participation in the community and positive experience of ageing.

3.2. INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Research conducted within, or through, Anglicare will encourage and enable the participation of a diversity of people, with particular consideration given to people who identify with the groups specified below:

3.2.1. Indigenous Australians

Anglicare SA research with Indigenous communities will seek to strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal people, will be conducted in a culturally aware and sensitive manner and will support the vision for reconciliation identified by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

3.2.2. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

The involvement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Anglicare SA research is encouraged where relevant and appropriate. Strategies to increase their involvement need to be considered when planning the research.

3.2.3. People with a disability

If a person has a disability, their access to involvement in the research must also be encouraged where appropriate and relevant. All materials related to the research project must be presented in a manner that enables the participant to access them, and all data collection procedures must be conducted in a manner that allows the person to participate.

3.3. ETHICAL CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

Anglicare SA is committed to the ethical conduct of research. For this reason, the Anglicare SA Research Ethics Committee is mandated to review research proposals to ensure that they are consistent with Anglicare's organisational values and that they abide by the principles of respect, equity, transparency, beneficence and non-maleficence, as described below:

3.3.1. Respect

The autonomy of individuals who are capable of making informed choices is acknowledged, and individuals with impaired or diminished autonomy are protected.

3.3.2. Equity

The right to equal opportunity to participate in research is respected, regardless of culture, language, spiritual beliefs or ability. The right of individuals to choose not to participate, or to withdraw from research at any time, is also respected and does not lead to discrimination of any kind.

3.3.3. Transparency

Individuals who participate in research are informed about the purpose of the research and the use that will be made of the findings.

3.3.4. Beneficence

There must be a reasonable likelihood that the findings of the research will lead to positive outcomes for the cohort involved and/or to an increased level of understanding of the issue being investigated.

3.3.5. Non-maleficence

The research must not cause any harm. In particular, participants should not be subjected to discomfort, duress, embarrassment or any other harm as a result of participating.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1. PLANNING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

It is advised that staff planning to conduct a research project obtain assistance from one of the following sources:

4.1.1. Intranet resources

A series of documents about conducting research are available for staff on the 'Research in Anglicare' section of the Matrix. These include a research planning tool and detailed notes about how to work through each stage of the process of undertaking research within Anglicare. Copies of the relevant policies and the *research ethics application form* are also available on this section of the Matrix.

4.1.2. Research Fellow

Anglicare's Research Fellow is available to provide advice to staff wishing to conduct research within their programs/services. This may include assistance with planning the project, selecting or developing appropriate questionnaires/tools for collecting data, analysing data and reporting the results.

4.2. IDENTIFYING THE NEED FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

Proposals for research projects to be undertaken within, or through, Anglicare SA by staff and/or external researchers should be submitted to the Anglicare SA Research Ethics Committee under the following circumstances:

4.2.1. Research projects

All research projects (as specified in the 'Scope' section of this document) must be approved by the Anglicare SA Research Ethics Committee prior to the recruitment of participants and commencement of data collection. This includes projects that have been assessed by ethics committees external to Anglicare SA.

4.2.2. Routine data collection

Procedures and/or instruments to be used in routine data collection activities may be referred to the Anglicare SA Research Ethics Committee for comment rather than approval.

4.3. APPLYING FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

The Anglicare SA Research Ethics Committee will accept applications for research ethics approval at any time, and will usually make their assessment within 3 weeks of receiving the application. The steps involved in making an application to the Committee are as follows:

4.3.1. The application form

The 'Application for approval of research involving human participants' form may be obtained from the Intranet (either from the Policy Site or the Research in Anglicare section of the intranet) or from the Anglicare SA Policy Manual. The completed application form must be signed by the researcher, the Manager of the program or service in which the research will take place, the relevant Executive or General Manager, and the Chief Executive of Anglicare SA.

4.3.2. Additional documents

All documentation used in the recruitment of participants and in data collection must be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee with the 'Application for approval of research involving human participants' form. Examples of the types of documentation that must be submitted are as follows:

- A letter from the researcher introducing themselves and the research project to potential participants;
- Promotional or participant recruitment flyers;
- Consent form;
- Questionnaire or list of interview questions;
- Letter from any other Ethics Committee from whom approval is being/has been sought (where applicable)

4.3.3. Submission of the application

A hard copy of the application form and all accompanying documents should be submitted to the Project Officer, Strategy & Research who will then distribute copies to the members of the Research Ethics Committee.

4.3.4. Approval notification

A letter outlining the Committee's decision, including any recommended or required changes to the original research proposal, will be sent to the applicant as soon as possible (and usually within 3-4 weeks of receiving the application).

If approval is not given, a redrafted research application may be submitted to the Committee for consideration and approval.

The decisions and requirements stipulated by the Committee must be adhered to otherwise the research will not be permitted to proceed.

4.4. CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

In conducting a research project, there are specific guidelines that must be adhered to in relation to obtaining informed consent, participation, data collection and storage, and publishing the research findings, as outlined below.

4.4.1. Obtaining informed consent

The researcher must provide potential participants (including children), at their level of comprehension, sufficient information about the purposes, methods and time involved in participating in the research, and the potential risks and inconveniences that may be associated with participation. Potential participants should also be informed about the use that will be made of the findings. In all cases, the information provided must be sufficient to enable potential participants to make an informed decision about whether or not to take part in the research.

Except in the case of written questionnaires (where written responses are taken as consent), people who agree to take part in the research must sign a consent form.

If the participant is 17 years of age or younger, consent must also be obtained from their parent or legal guardian.

If the participant is an adult who does not have testamentary capacity, consent must also be obtained from a next of kin or legal guardian.

In all cases, all research participants must be consulted and have their opinions respectfully considered.

Templates for the information letter and consent form are available in Attachment B. These documents, modified as appropriate for the particular research project, must be included in the application for approval from the Anglicare SA Research Ethics Committee.

4.4.2. Participation

The participant must not be subjected to any coercion to participate in the research.

Participants need to be informed that disclosures of illegal activities, including child or elder abuse made in the course of obtaining information for research purposes, will be notified to the relevant authorities and that confidentiality provisions will not apply in such circumstances.

When involving Aboriginal people in the research, consideration must be given to the following:

- Consultation with traditional elders and community members will be an integral part of developing and implementing the research project;
- An effective working relationship will be established and maintained between the community, researcher and funding body;
- The social, historical and cultural context of the Indigenous community will be acknowledged;
- The researcher will be trained in cultural awareness;
- Training and support will be provided to increase the skills of community members;
- A formal agreement will be developed between the community, researcher, Anglicare SA and the funding body regarding sensitive information, censorship matters, ownership of data and publication rights.

Research methods and approaches may also need to be modified to respect cultural requirements such as gender-matched interviewers or wording questions in a way that makes the issue clear in their cultural context.

If requested, the participant shall be given the name and telephone number of the research supervisor and offered the opportunity to check the authenticity of the project and the credentials of the researcher before the interview proceeds.

4.4.3. Data storage

If the research is initiated at Anglicare SA, data generated by the research (appropriately referenced) shall be kept in a locked cabinet or password secured electronic format at Anglicare SA for five years.

4.5. REPORTING ON THE RESEARCH

The researcher is required to provide the Project Officer, Strategy & Research with a Final Report at the completion of their research project, as described below. This report will be made accessible to staff through the Anglicare SA Intranet.

4.5.1. Final Report

The Final Report should include:

- a summary of the research project (including its progress in relation to time frame, ways in which original plans were changed, the extent to which the project achieved its goals, and any apparent positive or negative impact for stakeholders resulting from their involvement in the project)
- a brief summary of the research findings
- implications for Anglicare and any relevant recommendations for future action
- a list of publications based on the project (including conference papers and the final research report) that have been completed or are anticipated to be completed
- a copy of any reports or publications available at the time or in preparation

4.5.2. Other Feedback

At the time of approving a research project, the Research Ethics Committee may also request other forms of feedback from a researcher including:

- An interim progress report, which is to include the general progress of the research, preliminary findings and any impacts on the participants or the host program
- Conducting an information session for relevant staff to present the findings of the research

4.5.3. Publications

If publication of the research is being considered, approval will need to be sought from the Chief Executive through the Executive Director of Strategy, Policy & Services. This can be actioned through the provision of documentation describing the purpose of the publication, its contents, audience and distribution.

It is anticipated that the intention to publish the research will be highlighted in the initial application to the Research Ethics Committee. This will allow for any discussion on protection of confidentiality, ownership of material and appropriate acknowledgements to occur before publication.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Researcher

- Adhere to the processes and responsibilities documented in this policy

Research Fellow

- Provide support and advice to Anglicare staff wishing to undertake research projects

Project Officer, Strategy & Research

- Provide information about Anglicare's policy and procedures regarding the conduct of research to external researchers wishing to undertake research involving Anglicare staff, clients and/or volunteers
- Forward applications to the Anglicare SA Research Ethics Committee for consideration

Program Manager

- Determine whether a data collection activity is a research project or a routine activity
- Provide written approval on the *research ethics application form* for research projects that are to be undertaken within his/her program
- Ensure that program staff involved in the research project adhere to the processes and responsibilities documented in this policy
- Notify the Project Officer, Strategy & Research of any requests from external researchers to recruit participants for projects that have not been approved by Anglicare's Research Ethics Committee

Senior Manager

- Provide written approval on the *research ethics application form* for research projects that are to be undertaken within his/her suite of programs
- Ensure that Program Managers monitor the research activities of their staff to ensure that the processes and responsibilities outlined in this policy are adhered to

Executive Manager

- Provide written approval on the *research ethics application form* for research projects that are to be undertaken within his/her department
- Ensure that Senior Managers monitor the research activities of their staff to ensure that the processes and responsibilities outlined in this policy are adhered to

Chief Executive

- Provide written approval on the *research ethics application form* for research projects that are to be undertaken within Anglicare

Research Ethics Committee

- Consider research proposals to ensure that they are consistent with Anglicare's organisational values and that they abide by the principles of respect, equity, transparency, beneficence and non-maleficence
- Provide advice on procedures and/or instruments to be used in routine data collection activities, on request

6. DEFINITIONS

“child” – An individual aged 17 years or younger.

“human participants” – Anglicare SA staff, volunteers, clients or members of the wider community who take part in the research.

“research” – The systematic gathering of data for the purpose of major program/service evaluations, specific action research projects and/or analysis of personal opinions/comments/experiences. The data may be collected through any of a variety of methods including written questionnaires, face-to-face or telephone interviews, observation or reviews of records relating to an individual.

“stakeholder” – Anyone who is impacted by the research, for example an individual/organisation conducting the research, someone who would benefit from the research or a funding body requiring research to occur to ensure quality and continued service development.

7. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, ANGLICARE POLICIES AND DOCUMENTATION

7.1. Legislation

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
 National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992
 Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
 Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 (Commonwealth)
 Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
 Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
 State Records Act 1997 (SA)
 The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (Commonwealth)
 The Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)

7.2. Related Anglicare policies

F5 Evaluation of Services and Systems

7.3. Documents/Forms

Anglicare SA Research Agenda 2009-2013
 F4-f1 Research ethics application form
 F4-f2 Research participant consent form
 F4-f3 Research participant information sheet

7.4. References

- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007)
- Anglicare SA Family and Community Development Department, Draft Policy on Conducting Research Using Human Participants (2003)

8. CONTACTS

Executive Director, Strategy, Policy & Services
Project Officer, Strategy & Research

8305 9210
8305 9347

9. POLICY MANAGEMENT PROCESS

This policy is managed in line with Anglicare SA's policy framework as documented in its 'Policy Development Guidelines'. Staff access is provided (1) online, via Anglicare's intranet, The Matrix, and (2) in hard copy via policy folders located at work sites.

10. POLICY HISTORY

HISTORY	
Date approved	Amendments made (<i>summary of major changes</i>)
August 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change in process for applying for and obtaining ethics approval• Addition of information about resources available to support staff in conducting research in their service/program• Merging of information about processes for internal and external researchers• Updating of legislation, documentation, etc• Updating of contact persons to reflect structural and personnel changes in the organisation• Linking the policy to Anglicare SA's organisational strategic directions and research agenda• Change in layout to fit with new policy template• Slightly changed instructions regarding obtaining informed consent• Streamlining of consent forms and information sheets
December 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes made to reflect that the Project Officer, Strategy & Research has now taken over as Executive Officer of the Research Ethics Committee.
April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amendments made to section 4.5 Reporting on the Research as requested by the Research Ethics Committee. It is mandatory that a researcher provide Anglicare with a final report and other required feedback is determined on a case by case basis.