Handout 18: Principles in Handling Medication

Workers should generally provide whatever assistance is necessary to enable a person to take their own medications. Although this does apply to injections.

Staff have a duty of care to ensure the person's safety and proper use of medication.

Storage

- Check the manufacturers label. Most should be stored below 25° Celsius. Very few need to be stored in the refrigerator.
- Store in the original airtight container away from direct sunlight.
- Medication should not be removed from the original labelled container (this includes taking medication out of blister packs for later use) and put into other containers except by a pharmacist, nurse or doctor.

Administering

When administering medication, the worker should read the pharmacy label to check the person's name, name and strength of the medication and directions for use. Any uncertainty should be checked with the pharmacist or doctor.

The medication should be handed directly to the person at the appropriate time and staff should watch the medication being taken (ingested).

Unless stated otherwise, tablets or capsules should not be crushed and mixed with food or liquid. Some tablets have coatings which become ineffective when crushed or have slow release properties that will be destroyed.

When a client goes on an outing they should take their original dispensed pack of medication if a dose needs to be taken during the day. A dose should never be removed from a blister pack, box or original container except for immediate use. It is not acceptable to put medication into an envelope or container for future use. It may be appropriate to ask the pharmacist to dispense the day time dose into a smaller labelled pack for day trips.

(Taken from NSW Department of Health Circular 97/10 available at www.doh.nsw.gov.au)