

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND CONDUCT

COMMUNITY SERVICES (ACQS 7)



1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to apply a code of professional ethics to the workplace which is consistent with the mission, values, and objectives of Northside Community Service Ltd (Northside) and with best practice in the industry. This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Code of Conduct Agreement.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff of Northside Community Service including volunteers, student placements and contractors engaged in the provision of community service activity.

This policy relates to the following Standards:

- Aged Care Quality Standards – Standard 1 Dignity and Choice
- National Mental Health Standards
- National Homelessness Standards

3. Policy

All staff members will conduct themselves professionally and respectfully in the course of their work in order to maintain the highest standards of integrity and leadership. It will help ensure Northside Community Service (Northside) remains effective, open and accountable to its communities of interest.

Staff members will conduct business transparently, fairly and in the best interests of Northside and working towards achieving the Mission, Goals and Core Values of Northside in the best way possible.

Professional ethics within Northside's Community Service division are expected from staff members at all times. Ethical behaviour in community work is essential because workers, practitioners and volunteers often work with the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of people within a community. Northside's Community Service division adheres to the Australian Community Worker Association Code of Ethics¹ and any conduct or behaviour opposed to the full recognition of human dignity and individual rights will be considered improper and unacceptable. The principles underlying the code of ethics are:

1. Every human being, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, sexual and gender diversity, or other individual differences has a right to maximise his or her potential providing it does not infringe upon the rights of others
2. Social inclusion is a human right where every individual has an active role to play in society and has the expectation of full social, educational and economic participation. An inclusive society is based on the fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.
3. Every society has an obligation to provide for and deal equitably with all its members and to make extra provision for those who are excluded or disadvantaged.
4. Every person is legally protected against discrimination on the basis of age, sex, race and disability and their universal human rights are inviolable.

¹ http://www.acwa.org.au/resources/ACWA_Code_of_ethics_Jan_2017.pdf

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Northside Community Service recognises Australia's first people and their right to self-determination

4. Procedure

Responsibility to clients, community members and individuals engaged in services.

Northside community service staff:

- shall determine with the client or client group the exact nature of the relationship, the role of the community worker, and clarify the expectations of the client
- shall regard all information concerning clients as confidential except where: - with the permission of the client, referrals are to be made, or other professional consultation, opinion or advice is sought; - failure to disclose information would breach the terms of the community worker's employment (such exceptions must be notified to the client); or where - failure to disclose information would contravene mandatory reporting requirements or other legal obligations
- has an obligation to treat clients with dignity and to safeguard, promote and acknowledge their capacity for self determination
- in exercising certain powers and using information, is accountable to the client to ensure that: - they are fully informed of their rights; - have choices; and - can access information about themselves
- will improve their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the client
- will establish and maintain professional boundaries with clients at all times and not form personal relationships that compromise the primary practitioner-client relationship
- are required to report any inappropriate conduct including suspected abuse of children, individuals or staff members using the appropriate reporting mechanisms. This can include, but is not limited to:
 - > Children and Youth Services Mandatory Reporting (Children and Young People)
 - > ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme (Children and Young People)
 - > ACT Policing (All)
 - > ACT Policing Older Person's Unit (older individuals and community members)
 - > ACT Public Guardian (Individuals under Public Guardianship)
 - > Northside Senior Management (All of the above)

Responsibility to colleagues.

Northside community service staff are expected to:

- Work in an environment of collaboration, respect and integrity
- share professional knowledge and insights with colleagues
- respect the skills, knowledge and experience of colleagues including volunteers
- be generous in using their skills and knowledge to enhance the practical fieldwork education of students
- discuss any unethical behaviour that may have been observed in a colleague directly with their colleague unless to do so would pose a risk to a client or the practitioner
- acknowledge and observe the legal rights and protections of colleagues, including, but not restricted to, confidentiality and privacy, workplace health and safety, and antidiscrimination legislation.

Protecting the integrity of the organisation;

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Northside community service staff are expected to:

- maintain, through ongoing education and training, the standards required for exemplary and contemporary practice
- address in a timely manner and through an appropriate channel any behaviour in a colleague or an employer that is either incompatible with this code, or impinges on the rights of clients and their families, or contravenes the law
- seek advice when unsure of a course of action and make informed decisions
- participate in any complaint process if a public complaint is brought against them
- distinguish in public statements, for example on social media, whether acting as an authorised spokesperson of their organisation or in a private capacity
- respect the rights and legal protections of others
- act responsibly in the expenditure of public monies
- disclose any improper relationship between a colleague and client
- meet the expectations of this code and the practice standards at all times
- carry out the duties and responsibilities of the role as outlined in their terms of employment by adhering to the stated aims, policies and procedures of the employing body
- achieve the aims of the employing organisation without denying clients their rights
- bring to the employer’s attention where organisational expectations or practices contravene the profession’s code of ethics - particularly in the area of client rights
- maintain a professional relationship with clients at all times and disclose any out-of-hours contact or social media contact
- act responsibly in the expenditure of public monies

5. Definitions

Approved Provider: A person who holds a provider approval under the Aged Care Provider Approval and (if relevant National Mental Health Standards). Key Personnel linked to Approved Provider Accreditation include the Board of Directors, CEO, All Executive positions, Senior Management and management positions directly related to the provision of age care and in the case of the Mental Health Standards, mental health.

Northside: Northside Community Service, including all Services operated by both Community Services and Children’s Services.

Client – individual engaged in or accessing Northside’s community service programs.

Northside staff - paid and unpaid employees delivering services, programs and activities

6. Responsibilities – Key roles & responsibilities

Approved Provider Key Personnel ensure regular monitoring and review of systems and processes through internal auditing and regular reporting.

Management ensures processes and practices are in accord with consumer dignity and choice and provide the resources to support staff and consumers including staff development and supervision

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Staff follow policies and procedures, participate in development opportunities, treat consumers with dignity and respect at all times, work to maintain an environment that is culturally safe, support consumers to make informed choices about their care and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of consumers

7. Related Documents & References

- Australian Community Workers Code of Ethics 2017
- National Standards for Mental Health Services
- National Standards for Disability Services
- National Quality Standards for Age Care
- Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 – amended in Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012
- Australian Privacy Principles 2014
- Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Freedom of Information Act (ACT) 1989

8. Document Control & Version History

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Corporate/Community Services or Children’s Services:	Community Services

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