

ADVOCACY POLICY

COMMUNITY SERVICES (ACQS 6 – FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS)



1. Purpose

To provide guidelines to staff to ensure that all individuals engaged in services or programs in Northside’s Community Service division have the opportunity to choose and utilise an advocate of their choice, to act on their behalf and to ensure that the client’s rights are respected and the client is supported in making decisions.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all clients accessing programs across Community Services (excluding Children’s Services). This policy relates to all programs, services and activities undertaken by Community Service staff. This policy applies to all persons employed (paid and unpaid) within Northside’s Community Service Division. This policy applies to Northside Management, Executive and Board as defined in the Approved Provider of Age Care Accreditation.

3. Policy

Northside recognises that individuals have a right to use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf. This may be a family member, friend or advocacy service. Once appointed or introduced by the client engaged in services, advocates are accepted by Northside as representing the interests of the client.

Advocates may be used during assessments, reviews, complaints, open disclosure meetings or for any other communication between the client and Northside Community Service and/or other service delivery agencies the individual is engaged with at the time.

Information on the use of an advocate is included in information presented to individuals upon entry to service and is explained in assessments and reviews; our organisation reiterates to the individual and their representatives the local advocacy services and ensure clients are aware of their right to use an advocate, and remind them of this option whenever appropriate, including if a complaint is lodged.

Northside encourages the use of an advocate where it is the expressed wish of the client, and particularly for those clients who may require additional support with understanding, communicating or dealing with service providers.

Northside staff will accept the involvement of an advocate of the client’s choice whenever it is the expressed wish of the client, and understand the Advocate has the authority to act as the client’s advocate and accept that the client may choose to self-advocate, change advocates or revoke the authority of their advocate at any time.

Northside will develop links with advocacy groups in the area and will inform clients of the availability of such assistance if required.

4. Procedure

Clients wishing to appoint an advocate inform Northside in writing of the name of the person they wish for their advocate using the *Authority to Act as an Advocate* form.

Clients can change their advocate at any time and inform us in writing using an *Authority to Act as an Advocate* form. If a client has difficulty in completing the form due to language or literacy, Northside staff will assist them or refer them to an advocacy agency to assist.

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The following processes will be adhered to in all client interactions:

- Prior to initial assessment, staff will routinely offer clients the opportunity to nominate an advocate to help represent their interests and help them in any aspect of service delivery;
- Advocacy will be explained as part of the client’s induction to the organisation;
- Northside staff will assist and support people with special needs to access an advocate of their choice by providing whatever support is required;
- Clients will be provided with an ‘*Authority to Act as an Advocate*’ form to complete. This will provide all service providers with details of the client’s chosen advocate;
- The name and contact details of the chosen advocate is entered in the client’s electronic file;
- Completed authority forms are kept in the client’s record in the Client Management System;
- An advocate may be the primary carer, a family member or a friend of the client, another service provider, or someone from an advocacy service;
- Clients are reminded of their right to use an advocate on subsequent visits and contacts; and
- Clients are also reminded of their rights and responsibilities as outlined in the Client Information brochure and other documents found in the Client In-Home file.

5. Definitions

Northside - Northside Community Service Limited

Client - An individual, also known as a consumer, service user or care recipient

Advocate - An advocate is a person who, with the authority of the individual, represents the individual’s interests. A person who represents and works with an individual or group of people who may need support and encouragement to exercise their rights, in order to ensure that their rights are upheld

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 upholding the rights of individuals to appoint an advocate and provide the resources to support staff to work with a client appointed advocate.

Client advise Northside in writing of the appointment of an advocate to act on their behalf.

Northside staff will accept the involvement of an advocate of the client’s choice whenever it is the expressed wish of the client, and understand the Advocate has the authority to act as the client’s advocate and accept that the client may choose to self-advocate, change advocates or revoke the authority of their advocate at any time.

Advocate will work with an individual or group of people who may need support and encouragement to exercise their rights, in order to ensure that their rights are upheld

7. Related Documents & References

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Standards

- Age Care Quality Standards
 - Standard 1 – Dignity and Choice
 - Standard 6 – Feedback and Complaints
- National Practice Standards for Mental Health
 - Standard 1 – Rights Responsibility, Safety and Privacy.
 - Standard 3 - Consumer and Carer participation

Legislation

- Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth), Schedule 1 User Rights Principles 2014.
- Charter of Rights and Responsibilities
- Residential Care Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth), Schedule 2 User Rights Principles 2014.
- Charter of Rights and Responsibilities – Home Care Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth), Schedule 3
- User Rights Principles 2014.
- Charter of Rights and Responsibilities – Short-term restorative Care Aged Care Act 1997 (section 11.3)
- Meaning of people with special needs Australian Privacy Principles 2013
- Australian Government *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*

Documents

- Clients with Diverse Backgrounds Policy
- Informed Consent Policy
- Supported Decision Making Policy
- Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Confidentiality and Privacy Policy
- Clients Rights and Responsibilities Policy
- Access and Equity Policy
- Client Service Guarantee
- Northside Community Service Client Information brochure
- Authority to Act as an Advocate form

8. Document Control & Version History

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Version History

Version No.	Date of effect	Brief Summary of Change
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