

CLIENT DECISION MAKING

COMMUNITY SERVICES (ACQS 1 – DIGNITY AND CHOICE)



1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure individuals, and/or their advocates, engaged in Northside’s services and programs are at all times supported to make decisions and exercise free will and choice in relation to all matters that affect them.

This policy also serves to ensure individuals, and/or their advocates, are supported to understand the nature and consequences of the choices available to them, and that they can freely make decisions without unfair pressure or influence from others

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Northside staff and volunteers providing services to clients (with the exception of Children’s Services).

3. Policy

Northside is committed to empowering clients to play an active role in decisions that affect their lives and to make choices for themselves. Northside will adopt best practices that support and maximise the person’s decision-making, choice and self-direction.

Northside staff will use the most appropriate strategies to facilitate the person’s capacity to communicate their choices and decisions when:

- there is uncertainty regarding the person’s capacity to provide informed consent;
- there is an absence of engaged family, other friends and advocates to assist; and
- there are conflicts around what decisions and actions are in the person’s best interests.

Northside staff and volunteers will:

- Work from a strengths based, person-centred framework in which every effort will be made to ensure an individual engaged in service delivery will direct, lead and communicate their preferences in relation to service delivery, expectations and desired outcomes;
- support clients to make informed and safe choices which will provide them opportunities;
- keep records of client preferences and choices regarding their service and expected outcomes;
- empower clients to build self-reliance and maintain social inclusion; and
- regularly revisit the choices or decisions in relation to service delivery to provide the individual with opportunities to reflect and change if necessary

4. Procedure

In supporting a person in their decision making and choice, staff must consider the following:

- Information might need to be provided in different ways depending on the person’s abilities backgrounds, experiences, languages, needs and mental state at the time;
- What the decision or choice applies to must be very clear. For example, in relation to specific service delivery the limitations or scope of the service must be explained and understood;

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- The person must be informed that they have the right to change their mind and communicate their preferences at any time;
- Safety and well-being of the individual and staff members involved in the delivery of service or service engagement; and
- Consideration should also be given to the person having the opportunity to nominate someone they trust to make decisions on their behalf if they are unable to make choices and decisions about their service for some reason.

Decisions in relation to direct service delivery.

Clients will have the opportunity to make choices about their service in the following ways:

1. *Service delivery access.* This may include (but is not limited to): types of service available; the days and times a service can be accessed; frequency of attendance; the location; and how the service is provided to ensure that it meets individual needs (particularly in terms of physical, cultural or communication needs).
2. *Individual service planning.* This may include (but is not limited to): expressing preferences for the level or intensity of service; which other services are involved; the ways that personal goals will be achieved; how progress reviews are conducted; and decisions about changes or exiting the service.
3. *Communication and contact.* Northside actively supports service users to make choices in the way they use services. This may include follow-up on written information and specific assistance to clients who may experience cultural or language barriers, or who may need specialised advocacy or support to take full advantage of the opportunities; and providing information in a range of medium: for example written, pictorial, verbal etc.

Recording and adhering to decisions and choices.

Decisions and choices in relation to service engagement are recorded on the client's secure electronic information file in the Carelink system.

In addition to this, the following Northside documents record input from clients regarding their service preferences:

- Consent to Release information
- Client Action Plan
- Client Services Agreement

The choices and preferences of an individual are communicated (with their consent) to specific staff directly involved in the delivery of the service to the individual. Communication is completed via a face to face client briefing and/or case notes included in the direct staff member's roster.

5. Definitions

Northside Northside Community Service Limited

Client An individual, also known as a consumer, service user or care recipient or the individual's authorised advocate

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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

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

Clients and/or their representatives make their choices known to staff and let us know when they feel they have not been treated with dignity and respect or have not been supported or permitted to express their choices about their care and services.

7. Related Documents & References

Standards and Legislation

- 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

Related documents

- Access & Equity Policy
- Confidentiality & Records Policy
- Compliments, Suggestions, Complaints & Feedback Policy
- Client Rights & Responsibilities Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Informed Consent Policy
- Dignity and Choice Policy

8. Document Control & Version History

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Version History

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