

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR DISABILITY SERVICES

Developed by the Disability Service Standards Working Party

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Explanatory Notes	4
Characteristics of Standards	5
Structure of Standards	6
Glossary	6
The Standards	8

INTRODUCTION

Preface

The National Disability Services Standards have been developed in the context of the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement (CSDA). Under this five year agreement, State Governments will assume responsibility for all accommodation and other support services, including recreation, information and respite. The Commonwealth will have responsibility for all employment services and national print disability services. Funding of advocacy services and research and development will continue to be the responsibility of both levels of government.

The Standards have been developed by a Working Party comprising Commonwealth and State government representatives, plus three each of consumer and service provider representatives. The Standards have been the subject of wide consultation nationally during 1992.

The Standards have a primary focus of ensuring results for consumers that are consistent with the Principles and Objectives of Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation. The Standards will ensure that the philosophy of social justice embodied in the Principles and Objectives are extended to all consumers of Commonwealth and State/Territory funded disability services.

The National Standards must be viewed in the context of both international agreements or statements and relevant Australian legislation such as laws relating to discrimination, guardianship provisions, Equal Employment Opportunity, Occupational Health and Safety, and Freedom of Information. The standards compliment these provisions. If a conflict occurs services should meet the relevant legal provisions.

Broader Quality Assurance Context

The Standards required by Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments will represent only the core elements of a quality service, and of a performance monitoring system that aims to ensure that people with a disability have maximum opportunities to enhance their lives. These government requirements, therefore, represent only one element of an effective and comprehensive quality assurance system that protects the rights and the quality of life of people with a disability and drives continuing improvement towards excellence in service delivery.

Service providers, consumers and other members of the community need constantly to strive to improve the quality of the services people with a disability receive. This process is one of quality assurance.

A complete quality assurance system provides internal and external ways of assessing all aspects of the service system, ensuring ongoing improvements within and across services in policy-making, service planning and delivery.

An effective quality assurance system uses a number of complementary strategies including:

- assistance to improve service effectiveness and efficiency;
- Identifying “best practices”;
- Provision of training and support required by consumers to participate effectively in both internal and external quality assurance systems;
- Improving business and financial management;
- Greater service provider information and training;
- Better coordination with, and access to, mainstream services and resources;
- Fostering better peer support within the service provider industry; and
- Formal skills and workplace development for service staff.

The benefits of introducing a quality assurance system include:

- Consumers receiving quality services;
- Continuing improvement in service delivery;
- More effective and efficient use of resources;
- Establishing high expectations of service provision;
- Services developing an understanding of what constitutes “good”; and
- Provision of regular, ongoing feedback to service providers.

The detailed content and structure of a national quality assurance system for services for people with a disability in Australia will need to be developed at a later stage by a process of open and public consultation. Such a system will build on these National Standards.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The terms ‘people with a disability’ and ‘consumers’ have been used in the standards. Where ‘consumer’ is used, this refers to a person with a disability (or his/her family or carer) who receives a service from an agency funded under the Commonwealth Disability Services Act or State/Territory services funded within the scope of the Commonwealth State Disability Agreement.

People with a disability have the same rights as other Australians. The standards support these rights. As well as rights though, people have responsibilities or obligations. Service consumers have a responsibility to respect the rights of other service users, staff of organisations providing services and others in their community. They also have a responsibility for the outcomes of any decisions they make. The standards provide opportunities for people with a disability to make decisions, take risks and accept responsibility for their decisions and the consequences.

Any person with a disability should have access to an advocate to assist them if necessary. Children have a special need for the assistance of family, friends or advocates to obtain their rights as outlined in the standards. Children with disabilities have particular needs, including the right to be supported in an appropriate family setting, the right to respect for their evolving capacity for independence, and the right to any guidance they may need.

Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments are committed to eliminating discrimination. As with all members of the community, people with a disability should not be excluded from obtaining a service on the basis of their gender, marital status, religious or cultural beliefs, political affiliation, ethnic background, age, sexual preference or geographic location.

When drafting the standards the Working Party considered the link between resources and meeting standards. It is recognised that agencies must operate within the resources available to them. It is also recognised that services are subject to external factors, for example, the current economic climate, which may impact on their ability to achieve the results for consumers envisaged in the National Standards. These factors will be taken into account when monitoring the implementation of these standards.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STANDARDS

The standards state what is required while allowing services flexibility to best suit their consumers' needs.

The standards are not static; they will be revised over time to reflect ongoing expectations in the disability field.

Some services will already have in place many of the policies and procedures required to meet the standards.

The standards have been developed with a number of characteristics in mind. Each standard should be:

Understandable.....clear and free of jargon.

Agreed.....the product of the cooperation and active participation of key stakeholders in the disability services field.

State-of-the-Art.....reflect accumulated knowledge and best current practices.

Achievable.....set at a level that organisations can reach.

Practical.....grounded in the day to day real world of service delivery to obtain majority service confidence.

Relevant.....make sense and be related to issues which are important to the consumer.

Outcome Oriented.....reflect results desired by consumers.

Measurable.....able to be assessed.

Cost Effective.....maximise the positive outcomes for consumers, while balancing the benefits with the costs involved in implementation.

STRUCTURE OF THE STANDARDS

Each National Standard has the following components:

Purpose

The purpose focuses on the reason for the standard.

National Standard

Each National Standard is a statement of the results to be achieved for each consumer from the implementation of that standard.

Supporting Standard

Each Supporting Standard is a key practice that the service should have in place to achieve results for consumers. The supporting standards are not listed in any order of priority.

GLOSSARY

Unless the contrary intention appears, words and expressions used in the Standards have the following meanings:

'Advocate' means a person who primarily represents the interests of a person with a disability in a way consistent with the expressed wishes of the person with a disability, or who acts in the best interests of the person with a disability where he or she is unable to express his or her wishes, in order to assist the person with a disability to exercise control over his or her life.

'Agency' means the management and operational units of an organisation responsible for the service in respect of which funding has been granted to the organisation under the Act.

'Community' refers to both the immediate local environment and to broader society.

'Complaints and disputes' refer to instances which involve a problem of cause for discontent relating to some aspect of the agency or the service being provided to a consumer.

'Consent' means consumer agreement based on an understanding of the implications of a particular activity or decision and the likely consequences for the consumer.

'Consultation' means seeking, accepting and recognising active consumer input at all stages of the process leading up to and including decision making.

'Consumer' has been used in three ways:

- primarily it is used to mean a person with a disability
- but it may also mean family member/s of the person with a disability; or
- it may also mean unpaid primary carer of a person with a disability; where that person is receiving a service.

'Integration' has two important components – physical and social. Physical integration means ensuring that people with a disability have access to the same places, and in the same manner as other people. It also means that they receive services in the community. Social integration means that people with a disability are able to build and maintain a wide range of relationships with members of the community.

'Least restrictive way' means the provision of services which are appropriate to people's needs, while allowing them as much freedom of choice, independence and opportunity as possible.

'Organisation' means an organisation or a State.

'Participation' refers to the process of consumers taking part, or actively sharing, in the life of the community.

'Relative need' is a concept that ranks potential consumers on the basis of greatest unmet need and the benefits they would gain from the service.

'Responsibilities', in respect of a person with a disability, means the responsibilities that person can be reasonably expected to carry.

'Resolved': a complaint or dispute is 'resolved' when it is settled or concluded, and each of the parties is notified of the outcome. 'Resolved' does not necessarily mean that the complaint or dispute is concluded in favour of any of the parties.

'Retribution' is negative action taken in response to a consumer's complaint or dispute. It includes intimidation, punishment or withdrawal of service.

'Service' is the support or assistance provided to a consumer.

THE STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 SERVICE ACCESS

Each consumer seeking a service has access to a service on the basis of relative need and available resources.

STANDARD 2 INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Each person with a disability receives a service which is designed to meet, in the least restrictive way, his or her individual needs and personal goals.

STANDARD 3 DECISION MAKING AND CHOICE

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions about the events and activities of his or her daily life in relation to the services he or she receives.

STANDARD 4 PRIVACY, DIGNITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Each consumer's right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality in all aspects of his or her life is recognised and respected.

STANDARD 5 PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION

Each person with a disability is supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in the life of the community.

STANDARD 6 VALUED STATUS

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to develop and maintain skills and to participate in activities that enable him or her to achieve valued roles in the community.

STANDARD 7 COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

Each consumer is free to raise and have resolved, any complaints or disputes he or she may have regarding the agency or the service.

STANDARD 8 SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Each agency adopts sound management practices which maximise outcomes for consumers.

1. SERVICE ACCESS

Purposes

To ensure that each consumer seeking a service has access to a service on the basis of relative need.

National Standard:

Each consumer seeking a service has access to a service on the basis of relative need and available resources.

Supporting Standards:

- 1.1 The agency has developed written entry and exit policies and procedures.
- 1.2 The agency's entry and exit policies and procedures are accessible by potential and current consumers.
- 1.3 The agency implements its entry and exit policies and procedures.
- 1.4 The agency's entry and exit policies and procedures are reviewed regularly with consumers.
- 1.5 The agency establishes clear entrance criteria for determining the priority for service for each person with a disability.
- 1.6 The agency's entrance criteria provides for access to be given on the basis of relative need.
- 1.7 Other than relative need, the access of a person with a disability to a service is decided on a non-discriminatory basis.
- 1.8 Where an agency is unable to provide a person with a disability access to its service, a referral to another similar service is made, where this exists.
- 1.9 The agency targets its information activities to be accessible to all identifiable groups within the target population.

2. INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Purpose:

To ensure that each person with a disability receives a service that is planned, reliable and meets his or her needs in the least restrictive way.

National Standard:

Each person with a disability receives a service which is designed to meet, in the least restrictive way, his or her individual needs and personal goals.

Supporting Standards:

2.1 The agency has developed in consultation with consumers, written policies and procedures on planned approaches to meeting individual needs.

2.2 The agency's policies and procedures on planned approaches to meeting individual needs are made available to consumers in appropriate formats.

2.3 The agency implements its policies and procedures on planned approaches to meeting individual needs.

2.4 The agency's policies and procedures on planned approaches to meeting individual needs are reviewed regularly with consumers.

2.5 The agency, in consultation with each consumer, identifies and documents the ongoing and changing needs of the person with a disability and the approaches for meeting those needs.

2.6 The agency considers the appropriateness of general community facilities and services in meeting the individual needs of each person with a disability.

2.7 The agreed approach to meeting each consumer's individual ongoing and changing needs is implemented and reviewed with that consumer within an agreed timeframe.

2.8 Each person with a disability is provided with support in a manner which maximises his or her potential to reach personal goals.

2.9 Services are provided in a manner sensitive to the age, sex, cultural, linguistic and religious background of each person with a disability.

2.10 The agency supports each consumer's efforts to gain access to general community facilities and services and/or to other specialist services.

3. DECISION MAKING AND CHOICE

Purpose:

To ensure that each person with a disability has the opportunity to make decisions and choices.

National Standard:

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions about the events and activities of his or her daily life in relation to the services he or she receives.

Supporting Standards:

3.1 The agency has developed, in consultation with consumers, written policies and procedures which maximise consumer participation in decision making at the individual and service levels.

3.2 The agency's policies and procedures to maximise consumer participation in decision making are made available to consumers in appropriate formats.

3.3 The agency implements its policies and procedures to maximise consumer participation in decision making at the individual and service level.

3.4 The agency's policies and procedures to maximise consumer participation in decision making are reviewed regularly with consumers.

3.5 The agency offers each person with a disability support to make informed decisions and choices in relation to the service he or she receives.

3.6 Each person with a disability can involve an advocate in making decisions about the service he or she receives.

3.7 The agency informs each consumer of other services that might meet his or her needs.

3.8 The right of each person with a disability to exercise control over his or her life is not restricted by the policies and procedures of the agency.

3.9 The agency takes reasonable care to avoid foreseeable risks without unduly limiting the ability of each person with a disability to take responsibility for their own decisions.

4. PRIVACY, DIGNITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Purpose:

To ensure that each consumer has the same level of privacy, dignity and confidentiality as is expected by the rest of the community.

National Standard:

Each consumer's right to privacy, dignity and in all aspects of his or her life is recognised and respected.

Supporting Standards:

4.1 The agency has developed in consultation with consumers, written policies and procedures on protecting consumers' privacy, dignity and confidentiality.

4.2 The agency's policies and procedures on protecting consumers' privacy, dignity and confidentiality are made available to consumers in appropriate formats.

4.3 The agency implements its policies and procedures on protecting consumers' privacy, dignity and confidentiality.

4.4 The agency's policies and procedures on protecting consumers' privacy, dignity and confidentiality are reviewed regularly with consumers.

4.5 The agency only collects consumer information that is directly relevant to effective service delivery.

4.6 Each consumer is informed of the types of personal information that the agency holds and the reasons for holding this information.

4.7 Each consumer's consent is obtained before any information about him or her is sought or released by the agency.

4.8 Each consumer has the right to see any information the agency keeps in respect of him or her.

4.9 Each consumer's right to dignity and privacy is recognised, respected and protected in relation to personal activities.

5. PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION

Purpose:

To ensure that each person with a disability has the opportunity to participate in the life of the community.

National Standard:

Each person with a disability is supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in the life of the community.

Supporting Standards:

5.1 The agency's written policies and procedures are framed in a way that provides opportunities for people with a disability to participate in the community.

5.2 Services are provided in a way that facilitates the integration and participation of each person with a disability in the community, at times and in ways similar to other members of the community.

5.3 Each consumer is provided with information about general community facilities and services and how to use them.

5.4 The agency provides each person with a disability with the opportunity to form and maintain a variety of ties, connections and involvements in the community.

6 VALUED STATUS

Purpose:

To ensure that services play an active role in promoting the valued status of people with a disability.

National Standard:

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to develop and maintain skills and to participate in activities that enable him or her to achieve valued roles in the community.

Supporting Standards:

6.1 The agency's written policies and procedures reflect the valued status of consumers.

6.2 The agency promotes the abilities, contribution and competence of people with a disability.

6.3 Each person with a disability has the opportunity to develop and maintain skills, capacities and life-styles that are valued in the community.

7. COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

Purpose:

To ensure that each consumer has access to fair procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes.

National Standard:

Each consumer is free to raise and have resolved, any complaints or disputes he or she may have regarding the service.

Supporting Standards:

7.1 The agency has developed, in consultation with consumers, written policies and procedures on the resolution of consumers' complaints and disputes.

7.2 The agency's policies and procedures on consumers' complaints and disputes resolution are made available to consumers in appropriate formats.

7.3 The agency implements its policies and procedures on consumers' complaints and disputes resolution.

7.4 The agency's policies and procedures on consumers' complaints and disputes resolution are reviewed regularly with consumers.

7.5 Each consumer is able to have resolved issues regarding aspects of the service with which he or she is dissatisfied.

7.6 Complaints or disputes are handled in a manner consistent with the agency's policies on privacy.

7.7 Each consumer is encouraged and assisted to raise any concerns he or she has about the agency or service, without fear of retribution.

7.8 The complaints and disputes procedure allows for the participation of the consumer's advocate, where requested.

7.9 Each consumer is provided with information on relevant complaints and disputes processes available in the community.

7.10 The agency ensures that progress towards resolution of each complaint or dispute is reviewed within an agreed timeframe.

8. SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Purpose:

To ensure that each consumer receives services that are efficiently and effectively managed.

National Standard:

Each service adopts sound management practices which maximise outcomes for consumers.

Supporting Standards:

8.1 The agency ensures the legal and human rights of people with a disability are upheld within the service.

8.2 The agency provides a safe physical environment for its consumers.

8.3 Consumers have the opportunity and support to take part in the planning, management and evaluation of the service.

8.4 The agency monitors its activities and regularly evaluates whether it is meeting its objectives and the Disability Service Standards.

8.5 The roles and responsibilities of the board, committee of management, and staff of the agency are clearly defined, documented and available.

8.6 People with a disability receive services from appropriately skilled and competent staff.

8.7 The agency ensures that its employed and volunteer staff receive appropriate support; and that they understand their role, the administration of the service and their accountability for their work related activities.

8.8 The service implements a policy on affirmative action with regard to employment of people with a disability.

8.9 The agency develops and implements written policies and procedures relating to complaints and disputes by staff and other persons.

8.10 Resources are managed to maximise the funds available to provide services for consumers.

8.11 The service has available, on request, annual reports that demonstrate consumer, service and financial outcomes.

8.12 The service has a process of coordination with other agencies, advocacy and consumer organisations in the area.