



Advocacy Policy and Procedures

"I have a right to the use of an advocate to assist me in voicing my wishes, provide feedback, make a decision or report abuse and represent my interests" - client voice

Introduction

Play Grow Flourish is committed to pursuing the rights and principles of equality, independence, choice, and inclusion that underpin a person-centred philosophy.

In achieving this goal, Play Grow Flourish acknowledges that some clients may need assistance to understand issues fully and to voice individual needs and concerns. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Disability Strategy promotes social and economic inclusion for people with disability. The availability of high quality, accurate, appropriate, and timely information is a key determinant of how well a person can plan and make decisions that affect their lives. Where appropriate, Play Grow Flourish supports clients to self-advocate as first option through encouragement and the provision of information to promote, protect and ensure their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights enabling community participation. The purpose of this policy is to provide an overarching framework for recognition and engagement with advocates who are working with clients to ensure that the rights and wishes of the individual are adequately informed and at the centre of the decision-making process.

Scope

This policy applies to all Management, staff and any other person who represents Play Grow Flourish.

Principles

Play Grow Flourish is an active supporter and promoter of self- advocacy through the development of skills in both clients and their parent/carer representatives. This life-long skill promotes choice, control and autonomy over one's life.

Play Grow Flourish recognises that for a person to lead an inclusive life they may require their family, friends, colleagues, and other important people in their life to have access to information so they can better support and interact to achieve real social inclusion.

In order to exercise choice and maximise independence, people require access to accurate information that will help them manage their own lives, understand their options, manage issues and grievances, access community, and engage on topics of interest



Policy

Whenever possible clients will be supported and encouraged to self-advocate, however, Play Grow Flourish will facilitate access for a client to use an advocate should they wish Play Grow Flourish to do so.

Play Grow Flourish acknowledges that any client of the service has the right to seek support of an advocate or advocacy agency to help them with all aspects of service delivery provided by Play Grow Flourish or from other providers.

Play Grow Flourish will not disclose any information about the client to an advocate, when the client is not present, unless the client has given express permission to do so. If a client wishes the organisation to disclose information to an advocate, they will be required to disclose this information in writing.

Procedure

Advocacy in relation to Play Grow Flourish

At first point of contact, clients will be advised of their right to have someone represent their interest and to assist them with part or all aspects of their service delivery, including planning, review, complaints, and incidents.

Contact details for advocates are listed in their Client Handbook.

Staff must ensure the client is aware of their right to use an advocate, and regularly remind clients of this opportunity. This information is explained as part of the planning review process or as needed. This includes instances where clients are:

- Making initial contact with the service
- Transitioned and orientated to the service.
- Transitioned out or refused service.

Or if:

- They wish to make a complaint about the service.
- A staff believes an advocate may be beneficial for the person.
- Where support is required in decision making.

Clients will be provided information regarding available advocacy services at any time, if requested. Play Grow Flourish will assist with a referral if required.

Confirmation of the name and contact details of advocates is established and maintained in the person's client information records. These details are maintained regularly and can be changed at any time, at the clients' request.

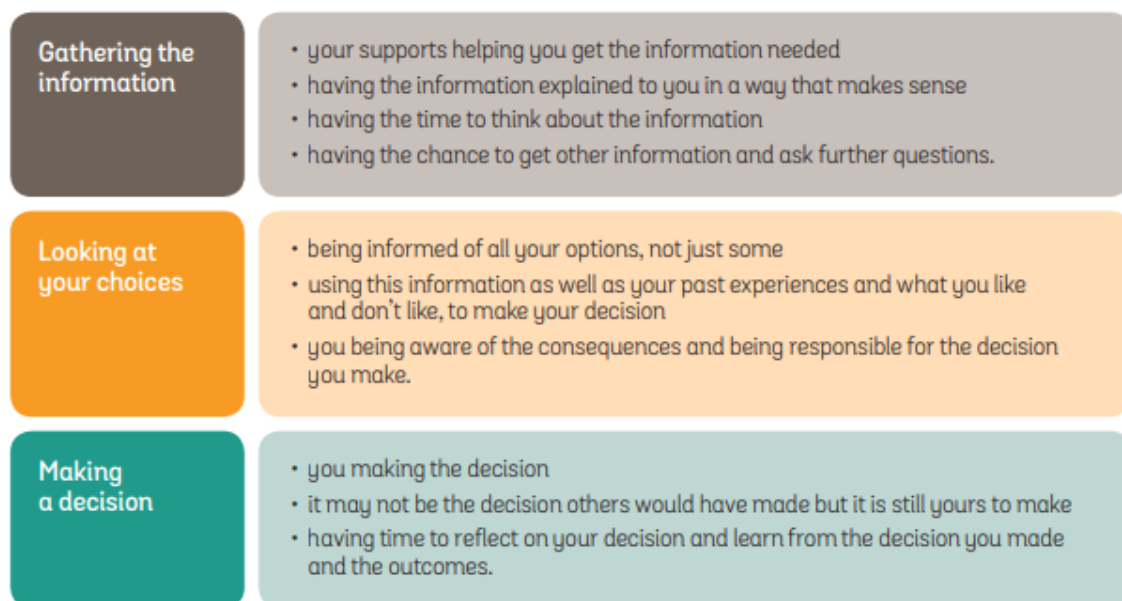


Self-Advocacy

Education and Communication

Play Grow Flourish support clients and their support network to self-advocate through the provision of education in terms of communication wants, needs and preferences. This includes how preferences can and legally must be met within the systems.

Self-advocacy model



Source: SELF-ADVOCACY FOR THE NDIS (MENTAL HEALTH) Resource booklet (<https://www.imha.vic.gov.au/>)

Independent Advocacy

While Play Grow Flourish recognises that NDIS is not funded to provide advocacy support, staff play a vital role in supporting clients to develop self-advocacy skills. Play Grow Flourish provide skills development support for communication and education to assist clients with self- efficacy in decision making, obtaining person-centred service provision, and meaningful participation and inclusion in community life.

This may include:

- Supporting clients to select and access an independent advocate through the process of calling an advocacy service or emailing a referral themselves.
- Making a referral on a client's behalf, demonstrating the process
- Assisting the person with their interactions with the advocate



Play Grow Flourish will always work collaboratively and cooperatively with independent advocates supporting clients to promote individual choice and autonomy, effective and valuable supports, and to empower the person with a disability in upholding their legal and human rights.

Advocacy in relation to another organisation

Play Grow Flourish provides individual advocacy to people using the service, in relation to another organisation, where such advocacy falls within the scope of the organisations service delivery, information provision and referral roles. When a person requires more comprehensive advocacy support, Play Grow Flourish will refer them, whenever possible, to another organisation that will provide more comprehensive advocacy support.

Equity and access

Staff are to ensure that services are provided with sensitivity to, and awareness of, people with culturally diverse or Indigenous backgrounds, and cultural practices. Information provided to a person, their family/carer, person responsible or other support person about advocacy, legal rights, options, and support services, must be provided in a format that suits their individual communication needs.

Play Grow Flourish induction orientation and training

Staff' orientation and training programs include:

- Definition and roles of advocate
- Persons rights with regards to an advocate
- How to work with a person and their advocate
- How to encourage and support use of advocates
- Confidentiality in relation to advocates
- Documentation of advocates
- Information on relevant advocacy services.

Communication

Communication about this policy should be implemented in a way that suits each person with regard to their cultural background, for example, using an interpreter or easy to read documents.

The policy will be:

- Communicated to clients, families/carers, key internal and external stakeholders of Play Grow Flourish
- Communicated to staff through training and development opportunities.



Useful contacts and services

Disability Advocacy Finder

[Disability Advocacy Finder \(askizzy.org.au\)](http://askizzy.org.au)

Or email: disabilityadvocacy@dss.gov.au

Definition

Advocate: a person who supports a client to protect and promote their rights and interests. An advocate can, with the client's permission, negotiate on a client's behalf or support the client to negotiate for him or herself. An advocate does not conciliate or arbitrate between an organisation and client. An advocate 'stands beside' a client to support them to make their own decisions.

An advocate is an important resource for a client in situations where a client feels confused, overwhelmed, intimidated or under confident. An advocate can be a family member, friend, or outside organisation.

Responsibilities

For the purpose of this policy, the Management Team includes the Director, Executive Team Leader and Human Resources Manager.

Management is responsible for:

- Approving and maintaining this policy and its related procedures and associated documents.
- Ensuring the policy is effectively implemented across the service.
- Monitor staff compliance with the requirements of the policy.
- Ensure training and information is provided to staff to ensure clients are supported to self-advocate and access advocates as required.

The Shift Managers, and staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring they have the skills, knowledge, and ability to support client advocacy requirements.
- Advising management if a client has sought access to an advocacy service regarding Play Grow Flourish.

Related policies and documents

- Individual Planning and Outcomes Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure
- Freedom from Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy and Procedure



- Incident Management Policy and Procedure
- Intake and Transition Policy and Procedure
- Client Welcome Pack
- Induction training

Review

Play Grow Flourish will review each policy through internal audit processes, client feedback or as contextual drivers determine the need for a review.

Release Date:	Version No:	Approved By:	Amendments:
January 2024	1.0	Director	Nil
Review Date:	Version No:	Approval By:	Amendments:
February 2025	2.0	Director	Updated terminology for Responsibilities