



A3	Appropriate Services	Involvement of Family and Advocates Policy and Procedures
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What this policy aims to do	Ensure that service users are able to advocate for themselves or receive advocacy services where they are unable or unwilling to advocate for themselves
Who this policy applies to	All people who use MASS services and all staff and volunteers involved in service delivery
Who is responsible for carrying out this policy	The Director or responsible managers and service delivery staff
What words used in this policy mean	' <i>Advocacy</i> ' in this context is an expression of support for a person who may find it difficult to speak for himself or herself
Legislation this policy is based on	National Disability Service Standards Victorian Human Services Standards UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Other relevant policies	A2 Decision-making and Choice HS13 Duty of Care A1 Person-centred Planning MS3 Staff Code of Conduct

Version	Date	Author/Editor	Approved by	Notes
1.0	26/8/2016	Peter Lane		
1.1	31/5/2018	D Stephenson		Update format
1.2	9/6/2020	D Stephenson	S. Reeves	Review for NDIS compliance

Involvement of Families and Advocates Policy

MASS is committed to delivering services and supports in an ethical and transparent manner to ensure all service users' rights and decisions are being upheld and appropriately represented.

MASS will respect the right of all service users and/or families to have an independent advocate and will respond positively to that person's choice of advocate. Often, but not always, the advocate will be a family member.

Where MASS becomes aware of service users who do not have personal support networks and who need assistance to speak up, it will actively seek the involvement of an independent advocate on that person's behalf. MASS staff will ensure that information regarding advocacy, including formal advocacy services and self-advocacy groups in the region, are made available to service users. This will include legal services that support disability rights.

MASS managers and staff will, where possible, cooperate with and provide support to the advocates of service users to carry out their function. This may require the provision of information relating to MASS' complaints process, the specific needs of the service users and/or access to the service user's individual plan.

Involvement of Families and Advocates Procedures

- ☑ MASS will encourage and assist service users to speak on their own behalf or to identify advocacy options
- ☑ Where a person we support already has an appointed advocate, MASS will work with that advocate to ensure that the rights and interests of the person are properly represented at all times
- ☑ Where no advocates or advocacy services are available, staff must ensure that service users are provided with information regarding other options
- ☑ MASS will be sensitive to the person's cultural and linguistic diversity and knowledge of human rights when assisting him/her to identify advocates or advocacy groups
- ☑ MASS will also respect the right of service users to change their advocates at any time and will assist service users to identify and access a new advocate as requested
- ☑ MASS staff members will ensure that information regarding advocacy, including formal advocacy services and self-advocacy groups in the region are made available to all service users. This will include legal services that support disability rights
- ☑ When an advocate has been appointed, the advocate should confirm the appointment in writing and the contact details of the advocate should be clearly displayed in the client file
- ☑ Advocates should be independent of MASS. If a conflict of interest arises, the Director or responsible manager should notify the advocate of the matters of concern, put them in writing and request a meeting in order to resolve the conflict
- ☑ MASS staff may provide advocacy for a person we support, at the request of the person or guardian, and providing there is no conflict of interest in the advocacy role
- ☑ The Director or responsible managers should ensure that advocates are advised of any crisis situations where the services of an advocate would be of assistance to the service user
- ☑ MASS managers and staff should foster positive relationships between themselves and advocates to maximize the potential for positive outcomes to be achieved
- ☑ Appointed advocates will normally be involved at all levels of planning in relation to meeting the needs of the service user. This means that advocates should be invited to all meetings which are directly related to the service user
- ☑ Staff should maintain records of contact between the service user and advocate. MASS' policies on confidentiality, access and secure storage should be observed at all times in relation to these records.
- ☑ The Director or responsible managers should ensure that all staff members are provided with training in relation to advocacy. Such training should include:
 - the roles and responsibilities of advocates and family members
 - managing potential conflicts of interest
 - regional advocacy services available and resource materials.