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**Advocacy Support Policy and Procedure**

**Purpose**

CAPS understands the importance of supporting participants right to an advocate, to allow their freedom of choice. Participants can acquire an advocate or representative at any point.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all participants and staff.

**Definition**

Advocacy: The active support for a cause or position, and, in this context, it is an expression of support for a person who may find it difficult to speak for him or herself. It may include matters such as achieving social justice, improving a person’s wellbeing, prevention of abusive and discriminatory treatment or stopping unjust and unfair treatment so that a person’s fundamental needs and interests are met.

Types of advocacies:

1. Individual advocacy: A one-on-one approach, aiming to prevent or address instances of discrimination or abuse
2. Systemic advocacy: Working to influence or secure long-term changes to ensure the collective rights and interests of people with disabilities
3. Family advocacy: A parent or family member advocates with, and on behalf of, a family member with a disability
4. Citizen advocacy: Matches people with disabilities to volunteers
5. Legal advocacy: Upholds the rights and interests of individual people with disabilities by addressing the legal aspects of discrimination, abuse, and neglect
6. Self-advocacy: Supports people with disabilities to advocate for themselves, or as a group

**Policy**

Participants have the right to access an advocate to represent them by acting in their interest and speaking on their behalf regarding supports and services.

CAPS will work with participants advocates and show them respect. If a participant is unable to advocate for themselves, CAPS will ensure that their interests are represented and supported through a substitute decision maker.

Advocacy principles

* Staff will have adequate knowledge on the use of advocates
* The use of an advocate will be sufficiently documented and kept in the participant’s personal file
* Several advocacy resources and groups will be provided to participants
* Cooperation and respect will be displayed when working with a participants advocate
* Government systems will be used when identifying when a participant needs an advocate

**Procedure**

Initial assessment (participant without an advocate)

* Inform the participant of their right to access an advocate and to have the advocate speak of their behalf
* Provide the participant with information on advocacy
* Inform the participant of their rights regarding advocacy
* Inform the participant of how CAPS can assist them in accessing an advocate if they wish to do so
* If the participant choses to utilize the support of an advocate, have them complete the NDIS Consent Third Party to Act form. Store the form in the participant’s personal file
* Explain to the participant that they can withdraw approval for an advocate at any time

Initial assessment (participant with advocate/representative)

Before initial assessment:

* Inform the participant of their right to access an advocate and document the advocates details
* Inform the participant of the need to complete the Consent Third Party to Act form
* Contact the advocate to ensure they are aware of all information
* Include the NDIS Consent Third Party to Act form and place all related information in the participants’ file
* Inform the participant about all their rights surrounding advocacy
* Schedule the participant’s assessment at a time the advocate is available
* Make sure that the assessment only goes ahead when the advocate is present

Initial assessment:

* If the participant has not yet completed the NDIS Consent Third Party to Act form, request that they do so. Explain the need to complete so that their advocate can be recognized by CAPS
* Gather all necessary information on the participant’s chosen advocate
* Explain to the participant that they can withdraw their consent for an advocate or change their advocate at any time. Changes will be made on their NDIS Consent Third Party to Act form.

Working with advocates

* Identify the participants use of an advocate from their file
* Document and discuss with the advocate any specific communication issues or requirements
* Involve the participant’s advocate in the participants assessments and support planning process
* Provide the advocate with all information about the participant that has been agreed upon and consented to by the participant
* Ensure workers associated to the participant are aware of the advocate

Continuing work with advocates

* Provide participants with written information on their rights surrounding advocacy. Ensure that they are verbally reminded of their rights
* Ensure quality communication and cooperation with advocates
* If a participant is deemed unable to manage their services and does not have an advocate, refer them to the appropriate organisations and/or departments