

Section 7: Client Rights and Responsibilities

This section includes:

- A statement of client rights and responsibilities
- The Client Handbook
- Policy on client complaints
- Complaints Record Form
- Policy on client advocates

Rights and Responsibilities of Clients

Clients are the focus of Moree Family Support Inc's operations and it is important that their rights are acknowledged and promoted at every opportunity. As service users, however, clients also have responsibilities to the agency which they should be aware of.

Clients of Moree Family Support Inc. have the following rights and responsibilities:

Client Rights

- The client has access to all information about themselves held by Moree Family Support Inc.;
- In cases where a client has a legal guardian or advocate appointed to act on their behalf, the rights of the guardian or advocate are to be acknowledged and respected to the extent stipulated in the guardianship or advocacy arrangements;
- The client should be involved in decisions about their assessment and Case Plan. They should be aware of all the options available;
- Clients should be made aware of the standard of service which they can expect. Services should be provided in a safe manner which respects the dignity and independence of the client, is responsive to the social, cultural and physical needs of the client and the needs of the carer;
- Clients' access to services should be decided only on the basis of need and the capacity of the service to meet that need. Clients have the right to refuse a service and refusal should not prejudice their future access to services;
- Clients have a right to complain about the service they are receiving without fear of retribution;
- Complaints by clients should be dealt with fairly, promptly and without retribution. The client may involve an advocate of their choice to represent his/her interests;
- Clients' views should be taken into account in the planning and evaluation of the service;
- Clients' have a right to privacy and confidentiality.

Client Responsibilities

- Clients should let the agency know if he/she is not going to be at home when a staff member is due to visit;
- Clients should act in a way which respects the rights of other clients and Moree Family Support Inc. staff;
- Clients need to take responsibility for the results of any decisions they make;
- Clients are to play their part in helping Moree Family Support Inc. to provide them with services.

Information on the rights and responsibilities of clients is included in the Client Handbook. *A copy of the Handbook is included in the Original Forms File (see Form 6.3.)*

Clients Right to Access Information

Clients of Moree Family Support Inc. have a right to read any personal information kept about them.

Request from clients to access information should be referred to the Manager who should ensure that assistance is provided to the client to access their information within two weeks.

A staff member should be made available to explain any terminology to the client.

Clients do not have the right to destroy or remove their file from the Moree Family Support office.

Any reference to child protection notifications can be removed prior to the client reading their file to ensure staff are protected in their right to remain anonymous.

Clients will be made aware of this right through the Client's Handbook (*see Original Forms File Form 6.3*).

Client's Handbook

The Manager is responsible for producing and maintaining a Client's Handbook and making sure that all clients are given a copy at their initial contact with Moree Family Support Inc. or at their initial assessment. Additionally, the contents of the Handbook should be explained verbally to the client at their initial assessment and all subsequent reviews.

The Handbook will include details of how services are provided, the complaints procedure and the use of advocates.

The Telephone Interpreter Service should be used with clients who do not speak English, to ensure that they understand all the information contained in the Client's Handbook, and in particular, information about client advocates.

A copy of the current Client's Handbook is included in the Original Forms File (see Form 6.3).

Client Reviews

Reviews

Case plan reviews will take place at regularly scheduled interviews, at least every 3 months or as requested by the client and/or as the clients circumstances change.

Where possible case plans are reviewed with the client and also include other service providers, family members or support person.

The case plan review will evaluate the effectiveness of supports, resources and services meeting the clients goals.

The review process will focus on celebrating achievements, reviewing support strategies to meet changing needs, identify and emerging or ongoing barriers to achievement and identifying alternate or new service and supports to achieve positive outcomes for the client.

A new Case Plan should be completed (if required) and fully explained to the client after a review. A copy of the Case Plan should be provided to the client.

A copy of the Case Plan is included in the Original Forms File (see Form 6.4).

Complaints

The client should be made aware that they can lodge a complaint should they have any concerns regarding their assessment, Case Plan or review. This should be emphasized to them at the time of review when the information in the Client's Handbook is being explained.

If a client is not happy with the service provider the Manager, where possible, should arrange for an alternative staff member to provide services.

(See also Client Complaints in this section.)

Coordination With Other Services

If other agencies are involved in providing services, they should all be involved in the review of client services. If appropriate, a joint review could occur or alternatively, a case discussion following the review.

Remember! The client must be advised of the proposed discussion and the permission obtained before any information is shared.

Client Complaints

Moree Family Support Inc. welcomes information and feedback from clients that will enable it to improve the quality of our services. All clients should be made aware of their right to complain, and should fully understand the complaints procedure and the use and availability of advocates.

Clients have a right to complain about the service they are receiving without fear of retribution and can expect complaints to be dealt with fairly and promptly. The Manager should take steps to ensure that clients feel comfortable to continue accessing the service after making a complaint.

Information on the complaints procedure of Moree Family Support Inc. is to be included in the Client's Handbook and presented to and explained to clients at the time of assessment.

The client has the right to use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf with the staff and/or management of Moree Family Support Inc.. This may be a family member or friend, or an agency such as the NSW Ombudsmen's Department.

All complaints are to be recorded on the Complaints Record Form which is to be completed by the Manager. *A copy of the Complaints Form is included in the Original Forms File (see Form 7.1).*

Person/s affected by the complaint should be fully informed of all facts and given the opportunity to put their case.

Complaints Procedure

1. Clients are encouraged to raise their complaint with the staff member concerned in the first instance.
2. If the client is not satisfied with the outcome, or not happy to discuss the issue with the staff member concerned, they should contact the Manager, or use an advocate to negotiate on their behalf.
3. If the issue is still not satisfactorily resolved, the client should raise the issue with a member of the Management Committee.
4. If after approaching the above people, the issue is still not resolved, the client can complain to the Department of Family & Community Services or the NSW Ombudsmen Department
5. The client should be informed of the outcome of their complaint and asked for their feedback on the complaints procedure.

Confidentiality of Complaints

As far as possible, the fact that a client has lodged a complaint and the details of that complaint should be kept confidential amongst staff and manager directly concerned with its resolution. The client's permission should be obtained prior to any information being given to other parties which it may be desirable to involve in order to satisfactorily resolve the complaint.

Client Advocates

What is an Advocate?

An advocate is a person who, with the authority of the client, represents the client's interests.

Clients may use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf. This may be a family member, friend or advocacy service.

Advocates will be accepted by Moree Family Support Inc. as representing the interests of the client.

Advocates may be used during assessments, reviews, complaints or for any other communication between the client and Moree Family Support Inc. *'Guidelines for Advocates'* are included in the Original Forms File (see Form 7.2).

Procedure for Appointing an Advocate

Clients wishing to use an advocate should inform Moree Family Support Inc. in writing of the name of the person they wish to negotiate on their behalf. The client has the right to change their advocate at any time and should inform Moree Family Support Inc. in writing of any change. *A form for notification of appointing/changing an advocate is included in the Original Forms File (see Form 7.2).*

Staff should make sure clients are aware of their right to use an advocate, and should regularly remind clients of this option. This information is available in the Client's Handbook and should be explained at formal assessments and reviews and through informal discussion.

Moree Family Support Inc. staff will receive training in the use of advocates.