

Advocacy

Record of Policy Development

Version	Date approved	Date of last review	Date for next review
3.0	May 2020	March 2022	May 2025

Responsibilities and Delegations

This policy applies to:	Board, CEO, Executive Team, Human Resources, Staff
Policy Approval	Policy Committee

Policy Context – this policy relates to:

Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Standards for Disability Services (Standards 1, 2, 5) ● National Disability Advocacy Program
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guardianship and Administration Act 1990 (WA)
Contractual obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NDIS ● Department of Communities
Organisation policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback and Complaints ● Families and Carers ● Service Entry & Exit ● Customer Service Charter
Forms, record keeping, other documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer Needs Assessment Form ● Advocacy Guide

Policy

Interchange is committed to the principles of respecting and protecting the legal and human rights of individuals and their right to services. Interchange supports the right of customers to use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf. This may be in relation to assessment, reviews, complaints or any other communication between the customer and Interchange.

Interchange will work co-operatively with any advocate nominated by a customer and treat them with respect. Interchange is also committed to providing customers with advocacy and support when it is requested.

Definitions

Enduring Power of Attorney is a legal document that allows you (the donor) to choose someone else (the attorney) to make property and financial decisions on your behalf, even when you no longer have the mental capacity to make those decisions yourself. Your attorney can do anything you can lawfully do, such as operate your bank account or sell your house and other assets.

Types of Advocacies:

- **Citizen advocacy:** matches people with disability with volunteers.
- **Family advocacy:** helps parents and family members advocate on behalf of the person with disability for a particular issue.
- **Individual advocacy:** upholds the rights of individual people with disability by working on discrimination, abuse, and neglect.
- **Legal advocacy:** accessing skilled professionals to represent and uphold the rights and interests of individual people with disability by addressing the legal aspects of discrimination, abuse, and neglect.
- **Self-advocacy:** supports people with disability to advocate for themselves, or as a group. Encourages and promotes independence and self-representation.
- **Systemic advocacy:** seeks to advocate for change in systems to remove barriers and address discrimination to ensure the rights of people with disability.

Procedure

Supporting Advocacy

The People and Culture Executive Manager and Coaches will be responsible for ensuring:

- all staff receive training in the use of advocates
- ensure services/programs maintain printed material on relevant advocacy and advocacy services
- maintain local advocacy resource/contact lists

Providing Customers with Information

Interchange will ensure customers and potential advocates are informed verbally and/or in writing about their right to use an advocate and the role of an advocate when:

- the customer is signing a Service Agreement
- the customer is refused services
- the customer wants to make a complaint about the service
- a staff member believes an advocate may be beneficial to the customer
- a customer requests advocate for assistance

Interchange is required to ensure that customers are aware of their rights to use an advocate in relation to the service, including having their advocate present for all assessments, meetings and communication between themselves and the organisation.

It is the responsibility of Community Engager at the time of first contact with the customer to discuss any communication issues or requirements.

If a customer has an advocate, it is Community Engager's responsibility to discuss and document any specific communication issues or protocols to be used between the service and the customer's advocate. The name and contact details of the advocate are to be included in the customer's personal record on the customer record management system.

If the customer is unsure whether they may want to nominate a person as an advocate, they are to be provided with information (in an appropriate format) on various specialist advocacy organisations that may be able to assist them.

Staff will not disclose any information about the customer to an advocate, when the customer is not present, unless the customer has provided their express consent to do so.

Working with Advocates (when a customer has nominated an advocate)

Where a customer has nominated an advocate the Interchange representative communicating with the customer must:

- record the advocates details in the customer's personal record on the customer record system
- ensure the customer is aware of their advocacy rights including the right to have an advocate present for all assessments, meetings and communication between themselves and the organisation
- communicate and work co-operatively with the advocate
- communicate comprehensively with a customer's advocate and involve them in the care and service planning
- not disclose any information to the advocate when the customer is not present unless permission has been granted
- ensure that the customer knows they have the right to change their advocate at any time. Any changes should be documented with written confirmation from the customer using the customer record system.

If an authorised representative is acting on behalf of a client, the organisation will require proof of representative authority.

Authorised representatives include:

- Guardians
- Attorneys under enduring powers of attorney
- Agents under the Medical Treatment Act 1988
- Administrators under the Guardianship and Administration Act 1986

A person otherwise empowered by the consumers to act or make decisions in their best interests

Proof of representative authority will be requested, and where possible a copy of document placed in the clients file. Proof of authority includes Guardianship or Administration order or Enduring/ Medical Power of Attorney.

Providing Advocacy and Support

Where a customer does not have an identified or nominated advocate and they request assistance from Interchange the request will be considered by a Community Engager or Team Leader and if necessary, escalated to the People and Culture Coach.

Equity and Access Considerations

Interchange is committed to ensuring fair and equal access to physical environments, information, communication, and services. For the communication and implementation of this policy, this may include:

- considering the suitability of physical environments
- the use of augmentative and alternative communication methods to supplement or replace speech or writing for those with impairments in the production or comprehension of spoken or written language. These methods include the display of text, large print, tactile communication, easy English, accessible multimedia and accessible information and communications technology.

Cultural Diversity

Employees are to ensure that services are provided with sensitivity to and an awareness of the cultural beliefs and practices of customers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This includes an awareness of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their families and communities.

Communication about this policy should be done in a way that suits each individual with regard to their cultural background, e.g., if required, the use of an interpreter or easy English documents.

Interchange will develop connections with culturally appropriate organisations and groups to influence the meaningful participation of people with disability.

Where relevant, when attempting to strengthen relationships with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, Interchange will firstly utilise the advice and influence of key community members and organisations.