

ADVOCACY

Policy Statement

Burke and Beyond is committed to promoting and protecting the human and legal rights of people with a disability and respects the right of people to self advocate or access an advocate or advocacy agency to represent them.

Staff members are to encourage and assist a participant to access an advocate and/or interpreter when the participant has requested an advocate and/or interpreter, or where the need for an advocate and/or interpreter has been identified.

Objective

To ensure staff members promote the right of a participant to access an advocate where a participant is unable to effectively represent him or herself, and/or access an interpreter where a participant is unable to speak or understand English, or is hearing impaired or deaf.

Scope

All staff, management and volunteers.

Policy Details

The following definitions outline the types and roles of people involved with advocacy.

Advocate An advocate is a person who, with explicit authority, represents another person's interests.

Advocacy is speaking, acting, and writing, with minimal conflict of interest, on behalf of the best interests and rights of a disadvantaged person or group to promote, protect, and defend their welfare, rights and justice.

Informal Advocate may be parents, siblings, relatives, friends who take on advocacy roles.

Formal Advocate generally refers to an organisation that employs people to perform advocacy roles.

Interpreter is a person who provides a clear channel of communication between parties for languages other than english. Providing counselling or advice to parties is not the role of an interpreter.

Systems Advocate An organisation or professional advocate who can act for a disadvantaged individual or group of individuals in an institutional setting.

Legal Advocate a nominated advocate, whose role has legal status, for example holding an Enduring Power of Attorney.

Who can be an advocate?

Advocacy is the process of standing alongside an individual who is disadvantaged, and speaking out on their behalf in a way that represents the best interests of that person. If a participant (or someone from their immediate circle) of Burke and Beyond has requested an advocate, this means they would like someone to act on their behalf. This may be a family member, friend of the person, or a member of an advocacy service. Participants and prospective advocates should be aware that interpreters cannot be used as advocates, as they have a distinct role to play in interpreting communication between two or more parties.

Responsibilities as a participant advocate

Being an advocate may mean attendance or involvement during assessments and reviews of the persons plan. It may mean a person wishes to have a representative to communicate or negotiate with us on their behalf regarding access to personal information; lodging a complaint; or any issue related to our service performance. Participants are free to change their advocates whenever they wish.

Burke and Beyond Staff:

- Are to be vigilant and sensitive to the support needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, special needs groups, the elderly, children and young people.
- Promote people's rights at participant meetings across the organisation

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- Be a resource to access advocate and interpreter agencies available in the community
- Maintain networks and positive working partnerships with advocate and interpreter agencies
- Are to promote participants' rights, remind participants of these rights, and initiate or facilitate necessary action as needed.
- Provide information to participants on their rights and responsibilities, advocate's role and agencies, and the opportunity to choose and nominate a formal or informal advocate.
- Ensure participants are aware that they may change or withdraw a nominated advocate at any time.
- Encourage participants and their nominated advocate (interpreters should be engaged as required) opportunities to participate in decision making processes, including accessing service, individual planning, and complaints.
- Work collaboratively with all parties, with the participant's best interests being the focus of primary importance.
- Obtain participant/parent/significant other's consent to make a referral on the participant's behalf.
- Where a person is requesting any information in relation to a participant, staff members are to confirm the person has been given authority, or has a right to the information, and obtain consent before release of information.
- Where a request to obtain personal information is received, refer to Community Services Manager

ADMINISTRATION:

Continuous Improvement:	Improvements to this document can be made by completing a suggestion and improvement form, attaching any suggested amendments and forwarding to your manager and/or the Quality Advisor for review.				
Standards	Human Service Standards- Empowerment, Access and Engagement, Well Being & Participation. National Disability Standards- Rights, Participation & Inclusion, Individual Outcomes, Feedback & Complaints				
Internal reference document:	Model of Support policy. Access, Planning, Provision & Review procedures. Participant Handbook- "How things work at Burke and Beyond"				
Position Approving Document:	Chief Executive Officer				
Position Responsible for Document	Community Services Manager				
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