



Advocacy Policy

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	Title	Name	Date
Owner:	CEO	Jane Forward	December 2021

Revision	Date	Amended By	Details of Amendment
0	Dec-21	Karen Reid	Update to New Template

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1. Policy Outline

This policy outlines Valued Lives Foundation's (Valued Lives) commitment to the principles of respecting and protecting the legal and human rights of individuals and families and their right to access supports and services to achieve their goals.

Valued Lives is also committed to providing individuals and/or their family member/representative with access to advocacy and support, when requested.

2. Objectives

Valued Lives supports the right of individuals and/or their family member/representative to engage an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf, where requested. This may be in relation to supports and services provided, reviews, assessments undertaken, complaints or any other communication between the individual and/or their family member/representative and Valued Lives.

Valued Lives will work co-operatively with the nominated advocate and treat them with respect. Valued Lives respects the individual's right to change their advocate or change their mind about having an advocate involved.

Valued Lives understands that the right of individuals to informal and formal advocacy, including their family member/representative, is linked to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Valued Lives promotes and embraces this human rights philosophy.

3. Definitions

Advocacy is a process that supports an individual's voice, including but not limited to:

- Promoting and protecting legal and human rights
- Empowering disadvantaged individuals and groups
- Increasing an individual's control over supports and services
- Being responsive to, and emphasising, an individual's needs and wishes
- Challenging stereotypes and stigma
- Overcoming barriers that restrict opportunities
- Supporting an appropriate societal and service delivery response to individuals/families; and
- Supporting the individual's/family's quality of life.

An **advocate** is a person nominated by the individual and/or their family member/representative to promote their rights and communicate his or her views and preferences. An advocate may attend meetings with the individual and/or their family member/representative and help them raise issues or complaints/concerns. The advocate takes direction from the individual and/or their family member/representative and does not override their choices or decisions.

4. Responsibilities

Supporting advocacy

Valued Lives will ensure:

- all staff understand the advocacy process and how to work collaboratively with an advocate chosen by the individual and/or their family member/representative
- current information on advocacy, including processes and services, will be made available to individuals and/or their family member/representative, as required
- the individual is referred to an advocacy service, when requested
- advocacy resources are maintained and current.

Providing individuals with information

Valued Lives will ensure individuals and/or their family member/representative are informed (including verbally and/or in writing) about their right to engage an advocate and the role of an advocate when:

- the individual commences accessing supports and services
- Valued Lives declines to provide supports and services
- the individual and/or their family member/representative wants to make a complaint about the supports and services
- a Valued Lives employee believes an advocate may be beneficial.

Working with advocates (when an individual has nominated an advocate)

Where an individual and/or their family member/representative has nominated an advocate, Valued Lives will:

- ensure the advocate knows they have been nominated as an advocate and agrees to this
- record the advocates details in the individual's personal record
- ensure specific communication issues or protocols used with the individual's advocate are discussed and documented
- ensure information about the individual is not disclosed to the advocate unless the individual or their family member/representative has provided their permission to do so
- ascertain the areas or life domains in which the individual requests the advocate to be involved with and will respect their wishes
- ensure the individual is aware of their advocacy rights including the right to have an advocate present for meetings, reviews, assessments, complaints and communication between themselves and Valued Lives
- ensure the nominated advocate is present at meetings
- communicate and work co-operatively with the advocate
- ensure the individual knows they have the right to change their advocate at any time and will document any changes
- request proof of authority if an authorised representative is acting on behalf of an individual.

If an **Authorised representative** is acting on behalf of an individual, Valued Lives will request 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 individual to act or make decisions in their best interests.

Proof of representative authority will be sighted and a copy will be placed in the individual's record. Proof of representative authority includes a Guardianship or Administration order, or Enduring/Medical Power of Attorney.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis. However, if at any time the legislative, policy or funding environment is so altered that the policy is no longer appropriate in its current form, the policy shall be reviewed immediately and amended accordingly.

6. Related Documents

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)