

GUIDE TO ACCESS POLICY TEMPLATE

ABOUT THIS POLICY AREA

This policy guides how the organisation identifies and deals with any barriers to access and provides equality of access for service users.

A written access policy is required as part of meeting Standard 1 (Accessibility of services).

Standard 1 – access

The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures that deal with access, so that any barriers to access can be identified and removed.

Policy checklist

The following checklist will help you check that an existing policy covers this area adequately.

The policy should:

- outline who your services are for and specify known groups within your agreed target group — for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australian South Sea Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability
- describe the ways your organisation will attempt to make services available to clients when and where they need them
- explain how the varied needs of groups of people within your target group are considered in making services and activities accessible
- outline how your organisation uses service records to monitor the success of your access strategies
- say how staff will achieve the necessary cross-cultural competencies
- contain clear procedures and actions
- indicate the timing of any actions
- show when it was approved
- show when it was last reviewed.

COMPLETING YOUR ACCESS POLICY

Using the policy template

The template provides some example statements. You can adapt these statements and include them in your policy or write your own statements to better suit the operations and services of your organisation.

To customise the policy template, click on the shaded sections <<Insert text>> and insert the information that is specific to your organisation.

When you have completed the policy template, delete the shaded instruction sections such as: [Refer to the access policy template guide for questions and/or examples to consider when customising this section.](#)

For further information on using the policy guides, refer to the information in *Using the policy templates and guides*.

Guidelines for each section of your policy

1. Purpose

When identifying the purpose of the policy, consider how it might apply to your client group/s and other agencies you work with. Do you need to make specific statements to ensure you are inclusive of particular groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australian South Sea Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability?

2. Scope

To determine the scope of the policy, consider the following questions:

- Does this policy apply to all your organisation's services and to all clients and agencies?
- Do you have specific access strategies for specific client groups?
- Which staff will be involved in identifying and planning to minimise access issues?

3. Policy statement

If you are adopting the policy statement in the template, consider whether there are any additional commitments your organisation wants to make.

In identifying the actions your organisation will take to implement this policy, you should include the following:

- barriers to access for people in the target groups
- service planning to maximise accessibility for people in the target groups
- proactive information strategies for potential client groups to increase knowledge and understanding of the organisation and its services.

4. Procedures

The procedures describe how your organisation achieves the aims and goals you have outlined in your purpose, scope, and policy statement.

4.1 Identifying barriers to access for our target group

Define each group within your overall target group and describe how you identify their particular access needs. Your target groups may include geographic, demographic, cultural and socioeconomic communities and groups of people with common experiences or issues.

Strategies for identifying barriers to access include:

- conducting an annual review of records of service use compared with local population data or past service records
- reviewing relevant literature and practice experience
- asking clients and local and specialist agencies
- seeking feedback from staff.

4.2 Service planning to maximise accessibility

Describe how you plan services to maximise the physical and cultural accessibility of your activities, facilities and premises for all clients, and to meet any particular access needs you have identified.

Aspects of your service to consider could include:

- **physical** — for example, ramped access to the premises; welcoming waiting area with comfortable chairs; proximity to public transport; phone service reliably available during advertised opening hours; prayer space in accommodation service
- **cultural** — for example, phone and on-site interpreters; bilingual staff; Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander staff; cross-cultural awareness training; information displayed in community languages; dietary differences considered when catering for social events.

Ways to monitor physical and cultural accessibility include:

- annual accessibility audit
- questions about access in the client satisfaction survey.

4.3 Client information strategies

Pamphlets, press releases, posters, service profiles, websites and entries in resource manuals are examples of information resources you might produce. When listing these resources in your policy, indicate where they are located, which ones are targeted at specific groups, when they were last updated and how they are to be updated.

Ways of promoting and providing information about your services include:

- signage
- distribution and display of printed resources
- development and implementation of a media strategy
- involvement in community events
- involvement in agency networks and groups
- contributions to conferences, workshops, training sessions etc.
- public speaking opportunities
- service open days.

5. Other related policies and documents

List the other policies related to the access policy. This may include:

- eligibility policy
- service requests and referrals policy.

Also list the forms and other organisational documents related to your access policy.

6. Review processes

Consider how often the policy should be reviewed and the process for doing this:

- **frequency of review:** Most policies benefit from an annual review. The experience of implementing the policy is used to decide which changes are necessary. Consider reviewing your access policy as part of an annual review of your organisation's policies or, if your organisation is small, perhaps over a three-year period. Critical incidents may prompt you to review the policy ahead of schedule.

- **responsibility for the review:** In most organisations, the person accountable for client service would be responsible for reviewing this policy. In small organisations, this may be the manager or service coordinator. In larger organisations, this may be a client service manager.
- **process for the review:** Decide which particular staff, volunteers, external people and organisations will provide input to the policy review, and whether clients will be involved.
- **decision-making process:** Who will review draft changes to the policy and approve changes? What will be the timeframe for the review process?
- **documentation and communication:** What records of the policy review process are needed? How will changes to the policy be communicated to staff implementing the policy? In a small organisation, this may be as simple as noting the changes at a staff meeting. In a larger organisation, an email memo may be needed.
- **key questions for the review:** Is the policy being implemented? Are procedures being followed? Is the policy clear? What has changed that may prompt a change to the policy? Have particular stakeholders had difficulty with any aspect of the policy? Can their concerns be resolved? How does the policy compare with that of similar organisations?