

GUIDE TO CHOICE AND SELF-RELIANCE POLICY TEMPLATE

ABOUT THIS POLICY AREA

This policy guides how the organisation enables clients to exercise choice in the service relationship and how the organisation fosters client self-reliance.

A written choice and self-reliance policy is required as part of meeting Standard 3 (Participation and choice).

Standard 3 – participation and choice

The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures that provide opportunities for clients to make choices regarding services and participate in the development and review of services to meet their individual needs.

Policy checklist

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

The policy should:

- explain how information is provided to clients about choices they have in the way that the services are delivered to them
- encourage and enable client participation in the development, implementation and review of the services they receive
- describe ways that the preferences of people using services are heard and recorded
- identify ways to use client skills and motivation to enhance their self-reliance, and to foster other opportunities for moving towards greater self-reliance
- suggest ways to avoid imposing in an unsolicited way the organisation's own philosophy or values base onto the client
- provide for a support person where required to assist clients to participate in decisions and planning that affect them
- contain clear procedures and actions
- indicate the timing of any actions
- show when it was approved
- show when it was last reviewed.

COMPLETING YOUR CHOICE AND SELF-RELIANCE 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 choice and self-reliance 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?
- Will the policy apply differently to any specific client group where there are legal or other limitations on their capacity — for example, children, people involved in the criminal justice system?
- Would it be helpful to define the meaning of the terms 'choice' and 'self-reliance' in the particular context of your service and activities?

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:

- how you inform clients about the opportunities for choice available to them
- how you support clients to take advantage of opportunities for choice
- how you enable and build self-reliance and social-inclusion.

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 Information strategies to ensure understanding of our services

Describe the opportunities for choice that clients have to access to receive a service.

Choices available to clients include:

- **service access** — types of service available, the days and times a service can be accessed, frequency of attendance, the location, how the service is provided to ensure that it meets individual needs (particularly in terms of physical, cultural or communication needs)

- **involvement in individual service** — expressing preferences for the level or intensity of service, which other services are involved, the ways that personal goals will be achieved, how progress reviews are conducted, and decisions about changes or exiting the service
- **involvement in the organisation** — opportunities for participation and feedback
- **involvement in the community** — opportunities for developing skills and motivation, and applying these within the community.

4.2 Support to make choices and participate in decision making

Describe the ways that the organisation actively helps a client to make informed choices and to exercise their opportunities for choice in the service, the organisation and the broader community. Explain how you support clients in making choices and participating in decision making about their own lives. This should include specific assistance to clients who may experience cultural or language barriers, or who may need specialised advocacy or support to actively participate.

4.3 Other strategies to build self-reliance and social-inclusion

Describe your service strategies that build on the personal strengths, skills and motivation of your clients to enhance their self-reliance and social-inclusion.

5. Other related policies and documents

List the other policies related to the choice and self-reliance policy. This may include:

- client service charter
- participation policy.

6. Review processes

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

- **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 choice and self-reliance 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 coordinator or manager. 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?

