

Policy 14	INFORMATION PROVISION
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Record of policy development		
Version	Date approved	Date for review
2.3	December 2020	December 2022
2.2	May 2019	January 2021
2.1	January 2018	July 2018

Policy purpose: Coastlink ensures that each client, or prospective client, is provided with information (initially and on an ongoing basis) in a format appropriate to their needs to assist them to make support choices and gain an understanding of the support available to them and their rights and responsibilities.

Policy:

COASTLINK ensures that information about the organisation’s services and activities is made available to current and prospective clients, referral and partner agencies, other stakeholders and the general community.

Accurate and up to date service information will be made available to enable:

- new or prospective clients to make informed decisions about their use of the service
- referring agencies to make appropriate referrals
- staff to discuss and negotiate the expectations of clients or referring agencies
- clients to understand their rights when accessing services
- clients to understand services they will receive, any costs associated with services, the use of their information, and how to make a complaint

Relevant Standards

NSW Disability Service Standards:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Rights | 4. Feedback & Complaints |
| 2. Participation & inclusion | 5. Service Access |
| 3. Individual outcomes | 6. Service Management |

NDIS Practice Standards:

1. Rights and Responsibilities
2. Provider Governance and Operational Management
3. Provision of Supports
4. Support Provision Environment
5. High Intensity Daily Personal Activities
6. Specialist Behaviour Support
7. Implementing Behaviour Support Plans

8. Early Childhood Supports
9. Specialised Support Coordination
10. Specialist Disability Accommodation

Aged Care Quality Standards

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Consumer dignity and choice | 5. Organisation's service environment |
| 2. Ongoing assessment and planning with consumers | 6. Feedback and complaints |
| 3. Personal care and clinical care | 7. Human resources |
| 4. Services and supports for daily living | 8. Organisational governance |

Related Legislation & References

[Aged Care Act 1997 \(Cth\), Schedule 2 User Rights Principles 2014. Charter of Rights and Responsibilities – Home Care](#)

[Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission](#)

[Better Practice Guide to Complaints Handling in Aged Care Services \(2013\)](#)

[Charter of Aged Care Rights 2019](#)

[Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)

[Commonwealth Home Support Programme Guidelines](#)

[Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988](#)

[National Disability Insurance Scheme \(Provider Registration and Practice Standards\) Rules 2018](#)

[National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013](#)

[National Disability Insurance Scheme Code of Conduct](#)

[NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Related Procedures	
Documents/Forms	
Client Handbook	Shared Drive
Program Information Leaflets	Shared Drive

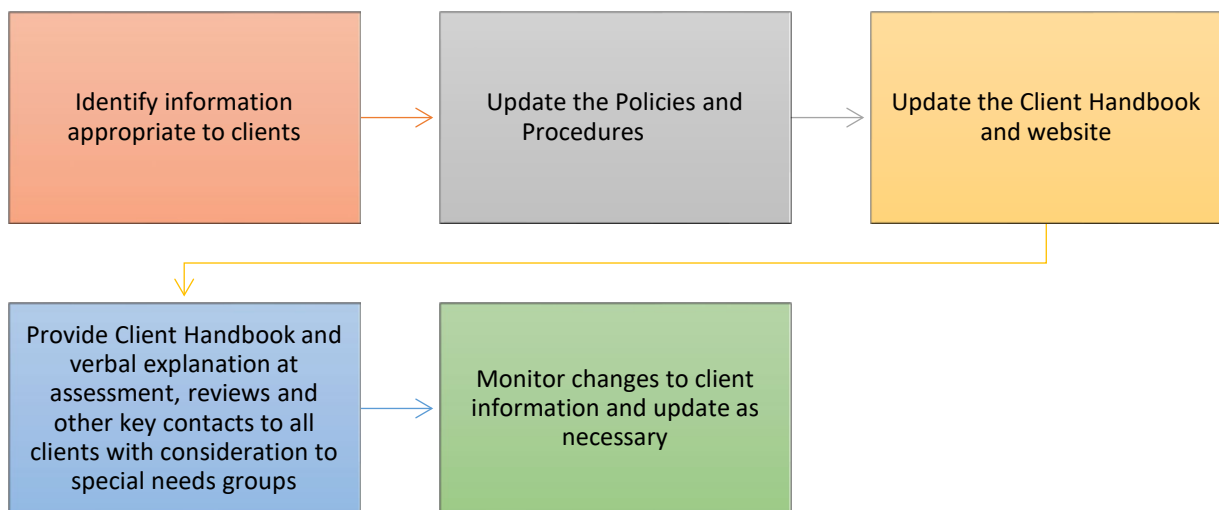
Responsibilities and delegations

This policy applies to: Clients Employees/volunteers	It will be distributed through: Client handbook, Coastlink website, Coastlink brochures Employee/volunteer handbook, shared drive
Policy approval	Board

Definitions

Refer to Definitions list at front of Coastlink Policy and Procedure Manual

INFORMATION PROVISION PROCEDURE OVERVIEW



INFORMATION PROVISION PROCEDURE

14.1 Client Handbook

The Leadership Team is responsible for producing and maintaining the Client Handbook and the Coordinators/Assessors ensure that any clients or carers/family are given a copy at their initial assessment, review and when information changes. In addition, the Coordinators/Assessors ensure that the information in the Handbook is reviewed with clients at their reassessment.

Where a client is not able to understand and/or read English, a family member, staff person or the Telephone Interpreter Service is used to ensure that they understand the information contained in the Client Handbook and in particular, information about client advocates and complaints.

A copy of the Client Handbook is also provided to all support workers to ensure they are familiar with the information.

14.1.1 Changing the Client Handbook

When information in the Client Handbook changes, the Leadership Team:

- Updates the Client Handbook
- Decides if it is necessary to advise existing clients of the changes and how to do so. Options include providing a copy of the updated Handbook, verbal advice or a letter advising of changes.
- Advises staff of the changes through meetings.

14.2 Content of the Client Handbook

The Client Handbook includes the following information:

- Overview of COASTLINK (see 1.1 About Us)
- Available support (see 3.4 Recording Service Delivery Information)
- Who is eligible? (see 9.1.1 Summary of Eligibility Criteria for Funded Programs)
- How to access support and the intake process (see 9.1 Accessing Services)
- Assessment including promoting independence (see Section 10: Assessment)
- Support planning (see Section 11: Support Planning and Delivery)
- Reviews (see Section 12: Client Reassessment)
- Changes to support (see 9.4.3 Change in Client Circumstances)
- Fees, fee reductions and options for paying (Pricing refers to the NDIS Pricing in the Disability Handbook)(see 14.4 Client Fees)
- Privacy of information including rights and requirements of the Australian Privacy Principles (see Section 15: Privacy and Confidentiality)
- Making a complaint or providing feedback (see Section 16: Complaints and Client Feedback)
- Right to an advocate (see Section 17: Advocacy)
- Incident management (see policy 5.4).
- Rights and responsibilities of clients (see 14.5 Rights and Responsibilities of Clients).

14.3 Range of Support Services

Details of the support services provided by COASTLINK are provided in 11.3 Range of Services.

14.3.1 Keeping Appointments

Support Workers work to a very tight schedule which makes it difficult to accommodate short notice changes to appointments. Every effort will be made to accommodate any changes of time where possible. In some cases the client is informed that they may have to change their day of services for this week or wait for the next scheduled visit if appointments are cancelled (as appropriate to need and services delivered).

If the client is not home when the support worker arrives, payment for that visit may be requested as we still need to pay the Support Worker for the time. Clients are advised to ring the office if they are not able to keep an appointment.

Clients are advised that whilst every effort is made to deliver services to the timeframes provided, staff may arrive up to half an hour before or after the scheduled time due to factors beyond scheduling control.

14.4 Client Contributions

14.4.1 CLIENTS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – CLIENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Clients have the right:

- To have their fees determined in a way that is transparent, accessible and fair.
- To receive invoices that are clear and in a format that is understandable.
- To have their fees reviewed periodically and on request when there are changes to their financial circumstances.
- Not to be denied care and services because of their inability to pay a fee for reasons beyond their control.

Clients have the responsibility:

- To pay any fee as specified in the agreement or negotiate an alternative arrangement with the provider if any changes occur in their financial circumstances
- To provide enough information for the approved provider to determine an appropriate level of fee.

14.4.2 COASTLINK CLIENT CONTRIBUTION Policy – Principles

The following Client Contribution Policy principles address the issues of access, equity, affordability, user rights and privacy and ensure that fees generated by programs and services are used efficiently and for the benefit of clients:

1. Inability to pay cannot be used as a basis for refusing a service to people who are assessed as requiring a service.
2. All clients assessed as having the capacity to pay are charged fees.
3. We will charge the full cost of the service where clients are receiving, or have received, compensation payments intended to cover the cost of community care.
4. Clients with similar levels of income and service usage patterns should be charged equivalent fees for equivalent services.
5. Client contributions charged will not exceed the actual cost of service provision.
6. Fees are not to be charged in respect of services such as information, advocacy and friendly visiting.
7. The revenue from client contributions is used to enhance and/or expand services.
8. Procedures for the determination of client contributions, including assessment criteria, are clearly documented (in these policies and procedures) and publicly available (in the Client Handbook).
9. Procedures for the determination and collection of fees take into account the situation of special needs groups.
10. Assessment of a person's capacity to pay fees is as simple and unobtrusive as possible, with any information obtained treated confidentially.
11. Consumers and their advocates have the right of appeal against a given client contribution determination.
12. Services users will be able to negotiate a payment plan if they find themselves temporarily financially disadvantaged. If financial disadvantage continues, negotiations can take place leading to lower fees.

The CEO and senior management are responsible for monitoring fee and fee policy changes and for revising the information in this section of the Policies and Procedures and advising clients of the revisions.

CHSP fee guidelines

Clients in receipt of other CHSP support services

Where a client is in receipt of support from other CHSP funded services and their total income is less than twice the Age Pension, negotiations with the Manager(s) of the other service(s) occur (with the client's permission) to ensure that the client is not required to pay more than 20% of their income for the support provided.

Compensable client

Clients who are applying for a compensation payment that may cover all or part of their community care costs, follow the usual fee assessment process and are charged the appropriate fees for their level of compensation. We liaise with the client's legal representative regarding the unit cost of services up to the point of a compensation settlement. At the point of settlement, any monies designated for community care costs will be recovered directly by us, less fees already paid. Support delivered after compensation settlement is charged at the amount determined in the compensation package. If no specific amount has been identified, clients are charged as per their assessed income.

Support with a partial or full exemption from the CHSP fees policy

Fees are not charged for information, advisory and advocacy services, carer support, assessment and review services, or social support services. Social support services include volunteer home visits and telephone based monitoring services. Carer support services include counselling, training and information for carers and carer support groups.

Standard fees apply to meals (home or day centre), podiatry and transport services. Where clients only receive these supports, an income assessment is not required.

14.4.3 Client contributions Schedule

Client contributions charged for support services provided by our organisation are set in accordance with the relevant fees policy (as above) and are revised from time to time with Board approval.

Current fee levels are shown in our organisation's Fee Schedule.

14.4.4 CHSP Fee Reduction

Our organisation recognises that some clients have a limited capacity to pay for support; however, the payment of a fee for service by clients who have the capacity to pay is endorsed. People who are assessed as being in need of support are eligible to receive support, regardless of their capacity to pay. Clients are informed of fee reductions in the Client Handbook.

In assessing clients' ability to pay for support the following applies:

- CHSP Clients can nominate whether they wish to be considered for a fee reduction at assessment or at any time.
- COASTLINK does not investigate any applicant's financial position. The Coordinator will state the usual client contribution for the services to be provided and asks if the services user/family is able to afford these costs.
- If the person says that they cannot, through financial disadvantage, the Coordinator will negotiate a lower fee with the person and will notify senior management of the results of these negotiations for invoicing purposes.
- Clients allocated a package may elect to have their client contributions deducted from their package which will reduce the amount of service they receive via the package;
- Information obtained about a client's income is treated as private and confidential.
- Clients are asked to advise us within 30 days of any significant changes in circumstances which may alter their status in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees.
- In cases of hardship or where clients request assistance, the fee can be waived. Clients are advised and reassured that support will not be refused or withdrawn if they are unable to pay the fee.

14.4.5 Refusal/INABILITY to Pay

Clients are sent reminders if they do not pay as arranged or if invoices are not paid in a timely manner. If a client is identified as being in arrears without prior arrangement, the relevant Coordinator contacts the client or their representative to discuss the matter. A payment plan or

other arrangements are made to assist the client to meet their responsibilities regarding fee payment. Client financial circumstances are reassessed at this time.

If, after consultation, the client refuses to pay or is unable to do so, they are provided with a letter outlining the action that will be taken by us.

14.4.6 Appeals on CLIENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Clients can advise management that they wish to appeal a fee determination. Management explores and documents the reasons for the appeal. Clients are also encouraged to provide written information to support their appeal. Management reviews the documentation and may meet with the client and/or their representative to discuss the appeal.

The Coordinator discusses the appeal with management. The decision of management is final and is communicated to the client in writing within 30 days of the date of appeal. If the client or representative wishes to further appeal the decision, they may refer to the matter to an Independent Appeals Tribunal for decision.

No client will be disadvantaged or penalised as a result of lodging an appeal and if appropriate, fees will be reduced while the appeal is being considered.

14.4.7 Paying Fees

Invoices

Invoices are issued at the end of each month by each program team. The teams also follow up on outstanding invoices in consultation with Finance. Clients unable to pay can request a fee reduction or waiver (see 14.4 Client Fees).

Any bad debts incurred through the non-payment of client contributions over \$500 which need to be written off, will be reported to the Board for approval. The CFO has been given the delegation to write off bad debts of \$500 or under.

Client contribution payments

Clients can pay their contribution for services by cheque, cash, and money order or directly into Coastlink's bank account.

Clients can pay their fees:

1. To our office staff;
 2. By post;
 3. By EFT; or
 4. Direct bank deposit.
- The necessary information for fee payments is included on each invoice.

Fees processing

Fees are processed as follows:

1. A member of the Finance team will accept payment at the front desk and will provide a receipt if cash is the preferred payment method.
2. Fees paid directly to our office are recorded on the “next banking schedule”.
3. Fees paid by cheque, Money Order, over the Internet or directly into the bank account, are entered into MYOB and banked once a week by the Finance team.

End of month check

At the end of each month, Finance provides the CEO and the Board with a list of Aged Receivables out to 90 days which shows a list of people who have not paid fees.

14.5 Rights and Responsibilities of Clients

Clients are the focus of COASTLINK operations and it is important that their rights are acknowledged and promoted at every opportunity and that they are aware of their responsibilities as clients. Information on rights and responsibilities is included in the Client Handbook.

Frail aged clients funded by CHSP through the Commonwealth Government are also provided with a copy of the [Charter of Aged Care Rights 2019](#) for Home Care.

All staff involved in the delivery of services receive training in client rights and the necessity of respecting their rights (see 7.12.1 Mandatory Training).

The COASTLINK embraces the following client rights principles in all we do:

- All people have the right to respect for their human worth and dignity.
- People with disability have the rights of freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making.
- Coastlink actively prevents abuse, harm, neglect and violence.
- People with disability have the same right as other people to be able to determine their own best interests, and make decisions that will affect their lives.
- People with disability have the right to full participation in society equal to other people, according to their individual and cultural needs and preferences.
- Coastlink is committed to providing each individual using a service with information and support to understand and exercise their legal and human rights.
- All people have the right to privacy of their personal information.
- Coastlink employs skilled staff and has systems and processes in place to support staff to promote and protect human rights.
- People with disability have the same right as other people to raise concerns and be supported to formalise complaints.
- People with disability have access to support when abuse or harm occurs
- Coastlink will take all allegations of abuse, harm and neglect seriously and respond according to best practice.

14.5.1 Client Rights

(see section 11.1.1)

The rights of clients include:

General

- To be treated and accepted as an individual, and to have their individual preferences respected.
- To be accorded the same rights and freedoms as all other people and to have their best interests taken into account in the provision of support regardless of age, disability or other factors.
- To be treated with dignity.
- To receive support without being obliged to feel grateful to those providing the support.
- To be accorded full and effective use of all their human, legal and consumer rights, including the right to freedom of speech.
- To be treated without exploitation, discrimination, harassment, neglect or financial, sexual, physical and emotional abuse.
- To have the same rights as other people to raise concerns and be supported to formalise complaints
- To have access to support when abuse or harm occurs
- Coastlink takes all allegations of abuse, harm and neglect seriously and respond to best practice

Participation

- To participate in making decisions that affect them.
- To be involved in identifying the support most appropriate for their needs.
- To choose the support and services that best meet their assessed needs, from the support able to be provided and within the limits of the resources available.
- To have their representative participate in decisions relating to their support if they do not have capacity.

Support

- To receive support that is respectful of them, their family and home and belongings.
- To be given before, or within 14 days after they commence receiving support, where appropriate, a written plan of the support they expect to receive.
- To receive reliable, coordinated, safe, quality support which is appropriate to their assessed needs.
- To receive support as described in the support plan that takes account of their lifestyle, other care arrangements and cultural, linguistic and religious preferences.
- To make decisions on medical treatments and interventions, and when this is not possible, assisted or substituted (alternative), decision making is in line with the person's expressed wishes, if known and if not with their best interests.
- To be supported to make decisions about how they connect with their chosen community and having their choices and plans including work, learning, leisure and their social lives respected.
- To receive support that maximises their choices for social participation and cultural inclusion.
- To ongoing review of the support they receive (both periodic and in response to changes in their personal circumstances), and modification of the support as required.

Personal information

- To privacy and confidentiality of their personal information (see Section 15: Privacy and Confidentiality)
- To access their personal information (see 15.2 Clients Right to Access Information).
- Consent will be obtained from each client to collect, use and retain their information or to disclose their information (including assessment) to other parties, including details of the purpose of collection, use and disclosure.
- Each client will be informed of what personal information is recorded, stored and how it will be used by COASTLINK.
- Each client will be informed of when and how they can access or correct their information, and withdraw or amend their prior consent.

Communication

- To be helped to understand any information they are given.
- To be given a copy of the [Charter of Aged Care Rights 2019](#) for Home Care (if receiving Commonwealth funded services).
- To be offered a written agreement that includes all agreed matters where appropriate.
- To choose a person to speak on their behalf for any purpose (see Section 17: Advocacy).

Comments and complaints

- To be given information on how to make comments and complaints about the support they receive.
- To complain about the support they receive, without fear of losing the support or being disadvantaged in any other way.
- To make a complaint to the Ombudsman or other external party.
- To be supported in making complaints or raising and pursuing allegations of discrimination, abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- To have complaints and allegations investigated fairly and confidentially, and to have appropriate steps taken to resolve issues of concern.

(See Section 16: Complaints and Client Feedback.)

Client Contributions

- To have their contributions determined in a way that is transparent, accessible and fair.
- To receive invoices that are clear and in a format that is understandable.
- To have their fees reviewed periodically and on request when there are changes to their financial circumstances.
- Not to be denied support because of their inability to pay a fee for reasons beyond their control (see 14.4 Client Fees).

14.5.2 Client Responsibilities

Clients also have the following responsibilities that they are made aware of:

General

- To respect including their human, legal and industrial rights of support workers including their right to work in a safe environment
- To treat support workers without exploitation, abuse, discrimination or harassment.

Support

- To abide by the terms of the written support agreement
- To acknowledge that their needs may change and to negotiate modifications of support when their support needs do change
- To accept responsibility for their own actions and choices even though some actions and choices may involve an element of risk.

Communication

- To give enough information to assist COASTLINK to develop, deliver and review a support plan
- To tell COASTLINK about any problems with the support.

Access

- To allow safe and reasonable access for support workers at the times specified in the support plan or otherwise by agreement.
- To provide reasonable notice if a service is not required.

Fees

- To pay any fee as specified in the agreement or negotiate an alternative arrangement with COASTLINK if any changes occur in their financial circumstances.
- To provide enough information for COASTLINK to determine an appropriate level of fee.

14.5.3 Security of Tenure

All services provided to younger people with disabilities, , are allocated on the basis of assessed need. All clients aged 64yrs and under will be re-assessed annually, or as a new NDIS plan is allocated to the client. The Coordinator will discuss service options with the client and their family or representative in accordance with client's choices, budget and goals.

People who are 65yrs and over and funded through Commonwealth Home Care Support Programs, have a right to security of tenure to their support services and can expect to continue to receive support unless their needs change significantly and our organisation is no longer able to meet their needs or if delivering support puts our staff at risk (see 9.5 Termination, Withdrawal or Change in Services).



14.6 Other Requests for Information

If a client requests support to gain further information regarding service provision, supports available or other related services, our staff will assist them to access this information.

14.7 Monitoring Client Contributions

Client contributions will be monitored at least annually. Any recommendations for increases will be forwarded to the Board for approval.