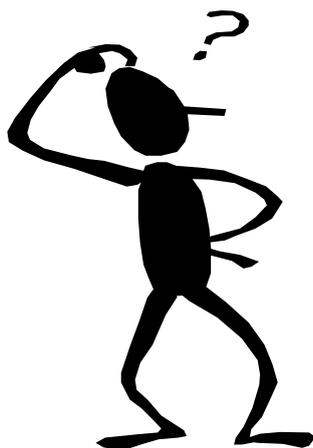


AMIDA

Action for More Independence and
Dignity in Accommodation

Decision Making & Choice



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Reviewed...30.11.15

Amended...1.12.15

Approved 8.12.15

What is this policy about?

This policy is about ensuring AMIDA maximises **Consumer Participation** in decision making at an individual and service level. **Consumer participation** means that the people who use a service have a say in how that service is run and are supported to decide about the service they receive.

AMIDA believes people with disabilities should have a real say in running AMIDA, in making decisions about the advocacy work we do and in checking up on how we are going with this work. In our advocacy work we respect the wishes of the people we are working with and ensure, where possible, that our actions are directed by people with a disability.

We have spent a lot of time talking to people with disabilities to find out what their needs and wants are. This has helped us to work out what improvements we should be advocating for.

Meetings of AMIDA members, including people with disabilities have worked out:

- a Statement of Rights and Beliefs
- a list of what 'Good Housing' means
- a Housing Know Your Rights education kit

AMIDA is continuing this process of working for, and with people with disabilities, to help us make good decisions about what we will work on in the future.

AMIDA supports the seven decision making principles developed by the Victorian Department of Human Services in their document,

“Supporting Decision Making” 2012
Published by Disability Services Division
Also published on www.dhs.vic.gov.au

The seven Principles are:

- 1. Everyone has the right to make decisions about the things that affect them.**
- 2. Capacity to make decisions must be assumed.**
- 3. Every effort should be made to support people to make their decisions.**
- 4. Capacity is decision specific.**
- 5. People have the right to learn from experience.**
- 6. People have the right to change their minds.**
- 7. People have the right to make decisions others might not agree with.**

AMIDA will also follow the Disability Advocacy Code of Conduct published by the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) 2008.

www.daru.org.au

This means we will not:

- impose our own opinion or values to restrict, deny or unduly influence the choices of people with a disability
- abuse our position of authority or
- make decisions on behalf of a person with a disability

We will:

- remind people with a disability (and their supporters) that they have a right to make decisions
- encourage people with a disability to make decisions about what they want to happen in their lives and the advocacy we will provide
- respect the wishes of the person or people we are working with
- support the person to involve the important people in their life to support them in their decision making where required
- give clear and consistent messages to family members and supporters about discussing advocacy action with the person with a disability
- meet with the person several times to get to know them and so they get to know us and feel comfortable with us
- minimise any conflicts of interest
- gather and present all relevant information in a way that the person is most likely to understand
- find out about how the person communicates and use this method

- support people to use experts if they require specific help or assistance with communication e.g. interpreters or facilitators
- provide additional time and discussion of options, thoughts and feelings and understand that it's normal not to have an answer straight away
- take into account knowledge about the person's preferences that has been gathered over time
- take the time to ask people their opinions and not assume what they want
- consider what other factors may affect a person's decision making temporarily such as stress, health, timing, familiarity with the subject, physical environment and any distractions
- find out how the person makes and communicates decisions, their decision making experience and supports that may be required
- take care to avoid foreseeable risks without unduly limiting the ability of each person we work with to take responsibility for his or her own decisions
- be open and non-judgemental with regard to decisions made by people with a disability
- explore both the good and bad things that may come from the advocacy actions we might take and ensure, where possible, the course of action is directed by the person with a disability
- respond to any changed views and decisions by people with a disability with respect and without prejudice on future advocacy support
- assume a person has capacity to make decisions in the first instance but understand the concepts of decision making capacity, take a considered view of a person's decision making capacity based on documented evidence and ensure staff have discussed and explored all avenues of support before seeking substitute decision making
- where people have a guardian, administrator, co-decision maker, or an automatically authorised person with regard to health we will work with this person while still encouraging the person with a disability to make their own decisions where possible
- take into account the mandate of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability, the Disability Act and the Guardianship and Administration Act 1986

- encourage service users to have their say about our policies and ways of working at AMIDA

How do we make sure People with Disabilities have a Real Say about AMIDA's activities and the Advocacy we provide?

In 1987 AMIDA did research into **Consumer Participation** and wrote a report called 'Having a Real Say'.

Consumer participation means that the people who use a service have a say in how that service is run. We found there are practical things groups can do to make sure people with disabilities are involved.

The things AMIDA will do are:

- **encourage** people with a disability to be involved
- **value** the things done by people
- have **personal contact** with people so that they know what's going on
- **share information** so everyone knows what's going on
- give people **opportunities** to work on things that interest them
- give people the **power** and opportunity to have a real say in the group

HAVE A REAL SAY!

There are many ways people with disabilities can get involved with AMIDA and have a real say in what happens at AMIDA.

Some of the ways people can get involved are:

- become a member of AMIDA
- members can join the Committee of Management

- use opportunities to tell us what you think about AMIDA's services - you could do this by answering a questionnaire or taking part in a review of the service and our policies
- ask to see our Housing Know Your Rights DVD or Training and tell us what you think of it
- listen to "Raising Our Voices" and let us know what you thought of our radio program
- get involved in making our Radio Program, "Raising Our Voices"
- write or speak to the Committee of Management or a worker to let them know what you think about the service
- make a complaint if you are not happy about the service
- ring us and let us know what you think of the newsletter
- contribute to our Newsletter
- come to general meetings, workshops or social functions and talk about your opinions
- come to a Planning Day
- give us feedback on this policy or any of our other policies

Contact AMIDA by phone: 03 9650 2722

Fax: 03 9654 8575

Email: amida@amida.org.au

Write to us or come to our office at:

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