



<b>Section</b>	<b>Client</b>
<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Choice and Advocacy</b>

## 1. LEGISLATION

- a) Disability Act 2006 – VIC
- b) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 – Commonwealth
- c) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities
- d) National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
- e) Guardianship and Administration Act 1986

## 2. STANDARD/S

- a) Department of Human Services (DHS) Standard – 2011
  - i. Standard 1 – Empowerment
  - ii. Standard 2 – Access and Engagement
  - iii. Standard 3 – Wellbeing
  - iv. Standard 4 – Participation
- b) National Standards for Disability Services (DSS) – 2012
  - i. Standard 1 – Rights
  - ii. Standard 2 – Participation and Inclusion
  - iii. Standard 3 – Individual Outcomes
  - iv. Standard 4 – Feedback and Complaints
- c) NDIS Practice Standards
  - i. Rights and responsibility for participant
  - ii. Governance and operational management
  - iii. The provision of supports, and
  - iv. The support provision environment
- d) NDIS Code of Conduct

## 3. PURPOSE

ConnectGV recognises that all clients have individual goals, aspirations and support needs. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that every client participates and has control in making decisions about their daily lives and the services they receive.

ConnectGV acknowledges the importance of The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In accordance with the fundamental human rights of The Convention, ConnectGV work hard to ensure that clients have the right to provide feedback and raise concerns regarding services they receive in order for ConnectGV to learn from the feedback and improve its services and practice. ConnectGV provides clients with options to self-advocate, influence systemic issues to affect long term positive changes. Clients can use or have access to an external advocate of their choice who may play a critical role in ensuring their rights and interests are respected and realised.



<b>Section</b>	<b>Client</b>
<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Choice and Advocacy</b>

ConnectGV Choice and Advocacy policy supports client decision-making and should be read in conjunction with Rights and Responsibilities Charter and Policy on Human Rights.

The policy on Choice and Advocacy:

- a) focusses on the rights of people with disabilities and those who need assistance in a supported decision-making process;
- b) ensures clients, their family members/carers and support person are at the centre of practice and service delivery;
- c) increases client participation in making choices and empowering people to exercise their rights, including their dignity to take calculated risks;
- d) strengthens self-advocacy of people with disabilities so they can speak up for their rights
- e) facilitates any assistance to clients if they so choose to have an advocate or a person within their network to enable supported decision-making

#### **4. POLICY STATEMENT**

Clients of ConnectGV are the primary decision makers about the services they receive.

The outcome to client decision making, choice and advocacy are supported by:

- a) person centred approach in service delivery; placing the client's right to self determination at the centre of decision making processes; including keeping the client informed of choices, opportunities and potential limitations so they can make informed choices, including a dignity or risk decision;
- b) collaboration with and support for the individual client/s to participate in decisions that affect their lives through their involvement in the planning, provision, management and evaluation of service/s they receive;
- c) making sure the decision making and choice processes support the client's right to involve family members/carers and other elected supports including an advocate;
- d) considering the cultural/language needs of clients, their families/carers and support networks;
- e) Facilitating access to advocacy within ConnectGV as requested or when necessary. Where ConnectGV is unable to provide advocacy, clients are provided with information or referred to alternative service options; and
- f) providing information to clients in accessible communication formats

ConnectGV provides advocacy primarily in the form of:



<b>Section</b>	<b>Client</b>
<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Choice and Advocacy</b>

- a) individual advocacy to uphold the rights and interest of clients on a one-to-one basis in addressing instances of discrimination, abuse and neglect and providing feedback to ConnectGV for improved services and practice. This may take the form of peer support, leadership mentoring or coaching, training and development, counselling and occasional case-work
- b) systemic advocacy to influence positive, long term changes, that remove barriers and address discriminatory practices to ensure the dignity of clients are upheld

Advocacy and empowerment support for ConnectGV clients is provided across all services.

In individual advocacy, clients receive non-legal, issue-based advocacy support, including advice on care concerns relating to discrimination, access, and resources. ConnectGV takes direction from the client and works together to resolve any issues that may arise. In instances where advocacy and empowerment support cannot be responded to, the client is offered the option to be referred externally.

ConnectGV clients are also engaged in systemic advocacy through their participation in client meetings. Within this context clients seek to introduce and influence longer term changes to ensure best outcomes that impact on their quality of life.

## **5. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION, COMPLIANCE MONITORING, MEASURING AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT**

These positions are responsible for implementation and compliance monitoring of this policy in their work areas:

- a) **General Managers** have the responsibility to monitor, check and ensure all elements of the policy are implemented within their area of responsibility. Managers are responsible for ensuring staff attend and participate in training and development in the area of client engagement, participation and feedback.
- b) **Managers/Supervisors/Co-ordinators** need to role model ConnectGV's values to the staff they support to ensure clients are empowered to self advocate through day to day activities and planning.
- c) **Staff** are responsible for ensuring that the principles and components within this policy are applied in their daily work. Staff members are to attend and participate in training and development in this area.
- d) **Individuals, families and other stakeholders** are encouraged to provide feedback to the organisation regarding its processes and practices to ensure best practice.



<b>Section</b>	<b>Client</b>
<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Choice and Advocacy</b>

**6. SCOPE OF POLICY**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, agency staff and contractors in relation to all clients.

**7. DEFINITIONS**

- **Advocate** – an advocate is a person who, with explicit authority, represents another’s interests; an informal advocate however can be a friend, family member or neighbour. Such arrangements are informal. There are also a number of formal decision makers that are noted below:
  - **Nominated Person** – a nominee is a person who is appointed in writing, at the request of a client, or on the initiative of the NDIA, to act on behalf of, or make decisions on behalf of a client for the purposes of the NDIS Act.
  - **Guardian** – appointed under state guardianship laws. A guardian may be appointed where there are different views between family members.
  - **Administrator / financial manager** – Under state laws an administrator / financial manager has the power to make decisions about legal or financial matters.
- **Community** – refers to the immediate local environment and the broader society.
- **Client advocacy** – the process of standing beside an individual or group and speaking out on their behalf to protect and promote their rights and interests.
- **Clients** – person or persons receiving products and/or services from ConnectGV, including their family and carers. Clients may be engaged as individuals, groups, client representatives or communities.
- **Individual needs** – includes both the needs of an individual person and the collective needs of people with disability.
- **Valued status** – reflects a service that is delivered by way of advocacy that enables the client, as far as possible, to live and work in ways that are valued by the community.

**8. RELATED DOCUMENTS/LINKS**

- Human Rights Policy
- Client Engagement and Participation Policy
- Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Recognising and responding to changing support needs.
- Human Rights Charter
- Service Delivery Policy
- Office of the Public Advocate Website

Accountable	Chief Executive Officer
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<b>Section</b>	<b>Client</b>
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Responsible	General Managers – Managers – Co-ordinators - Supervisors
Review Date	31/12/2021

### REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved/ Amended/ Rescinded	Approval Date	Management	Committee/ Board	Document Reference
V1	Approved	27/04/2016	CEO		Client
V2	Reviewed	31 Dec 2018	CEO	Management Operations	Client