



# **A Guide For Services - How to Include Family/Carers Using a Self-Directed Approach**

*Dear Service Provider,*

Government, non-government and community organisations are moving towards individuals who use services and their families/carers having the option of “self – directed” services (SDS). This means that the people who use services will have more choice and control over who provides the services, when and where it is provided, and how the money is spent.

In delivering SDS the focus of a service provider is naturally on individuals who need supports, but often families/ carers are also heavily involved. Family/Carers require inclusion, particularly as self-direction may often demand the involvement and support of the family and may in some circumstances impact heavily on them. This guide is focused on the supports family/ carers need and what service providers must consider when fostering a self-directed approach. This will also help services ensure that they comply with the Carers Recognition Act (2004), which requires services to consider the role, needs and views of carers in all aspects of providing support services.

This package contains two guide sheets that will assist you in engaging with and ensuring you work in partnership with family/carers as you provide services in a self-directed way. The Guide Sheets are focused on:

**1) Working in Partnership with Family/Carers**

**2) Considering Family /Carer Needs in Services**

Self-direction is mainly about the relationship between the service providers and the individuals and family/carers who access services; it’s about planning, negotiating, deciding and monitoring services together with family/carers as well as the individuals they service. More engagement with carers to implement this self – directed approach will mean better outcomes in service delivery for all parties. We hope you find these guide sheets useful in the evolving journey of working to better lives for people who need support services and their family/carers.

## **Guiding Principles For Working in Partnerships with Family /Carers**

Here are some ways you can engage family/carers in providing Self Directed Services:

- 1. Spend time getting to know each of your families/carers well** – individuals' and family/carer preferences and interests, important relationships in families, family dynamics, resources and resilience.
- 2. Provide family/carers with information** – about how your service works, key personnel, options and other services available, and what services cost.
- 3. Flexibility is the key** – Work together on “what would it take to assist this individual and family in this way?”
- 4. Tell families what they can and can't spend their money on.**
- 5. Welcome carers** and allow them plenty of opportunity to work with your staff.
- 6. Listen to and acknowledge the experience and knowledge of family/carers in supporting their loved one.** Most family/carers have a wealth of knowledge about the needs and desires of their loved one, as well as what works best for them. They can be a wonderful resource to you in helping your service facilitate the best service outcomes.
- 7. Develop a mutually respectful working relationship with family/carers** from the outset - earn their trust, be open and honest and do what you say you will do.
- 8. Assist family/carers in their role** of managing services and supports to the extent they choose.
- 9. Introduce family/carers to your finance department personnel**, so they can have a working relationship.
- 10. Keep talking with carers** – to monitor their views on how things are going for their loved one, and encourage feedback or suggestions they may have to improve outcomes.
- 11. Provide training for your staff** in the carer's perspective, carer needs and the Carers Recognition Act.
- 12. Take care not to judge** the choices carers and individuals make about services.
- 13. Provide opportunities for families to get together** and share information and support.
- 14. Acknowledge family achievements and milestones** and celebrate with individuals and families/carers if that's what they want.

## Considering Family/Carer Needs in Services

When working directly with families/carers, you will also need to consider:

- 1. The needs and preferences of family/carers** – Find out their most pressing needs, their preferences (likes/dislikes), what would be helpful to them, and any family issues or dynamics that need to be considered in working out supports with them.
- 2. All family/carers are different** – Support family/carers who may need encouragement, and assistance in knowing their options and making decisions about the services they want to receive. Some carers are very aware of their rights, the service options, and are assertive in describing their needs; others are exhausted, overwhelmed, or demoralised by rejections they have experienced in the system, and will need support to be self-directed.
- 3. Circumstances change** – Be flexible in providing services. Typically families will go through periods of good resilience and periods of exhaustion. The levels of support they are able to provide will vary and this impacts on the services that the individual needs. It is in your interest to ensure the family maintain resilience and is supported when this is low, to make the provision of services smoother and more effective.
- 4. How much and how often family/carers need support** – work with them to gauge how much contact and support they want, and respond accordingly.
- 5. Being ‘up front’ about what you *can* provide** and helping carers to find other supports or coping strategies for needs your service cannot address.
- 6. Being sensitive to carers’ past experiences** – family/carers may have experienced an accumulation of grief and stresses over time.
- 7. Family/carers knowledge and understanding of how to give feedback and make a complaint about the service**, and whether they feel comfortable to do so.
- 8. Family/Carers health and well-being** – Some family/carers who seem to be coping well may need your support and understanding, and others will have priorities such as health issues which may be more pressing.

## **Useful Resources and Links For Carers** **About Self Directed Services**

**Aged Care Australia – Consumer Directed Care** [www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au)

**Carers Recognition Act (2004) –**

<http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/serviceareas/carers/Pages/CarersRecognitionAct.aspx>

**CRU – Community Resource Unit –** [www.cru.org.au](http://www.cru.org.au)

**Disability Services Commission of WA –** [www.disability.wa.gov.au](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au) – My Way Project

**Family Advocacy NSW –** [www.family-advocacy.com](http://www.family-advocacy.com)

**Paradigm UK –** [www.paradigm-uk.org](http://www.paradigm-uk.org)

**Parent2Parent –** [www.parent2parentqld.org.au](http://www.parent2parentqld.org.au)