

FREEDOM OF CHOICE POLICY OPERATIONAL POLICY



POLICY TITLE:	FREEDOM OF CHOICE POLICY		
VERSION:	004	DATE EFFECTIVE:	03/09/2019
AUTHORISED BY:	Chief Executive Officer	DATE REVIEWED:	17/04/2024

SUMMARY

Ensures Participants can choose their service providers freely, supporting them with clear information and respecting their decisions throughout the process

PURPOSE

To guarantee that every Participant receives comprehensive information about their right to select their preferred service providers and to document that ARC Disability Services Inc. (ARC) has effectively communicated these choices to them.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all ARC employees, who are accountable for ensuring and respecting the freedom of choice for all Participants.

IMPLEMENTATION

ARC provides a range of services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). ARC is committed to minimising conflict of interest and maximising the Participants' ability to make informed choices about the services they receive. To achieve this goal, ARC has the following processes in place:

- *Consent with the aim of ensuring informed consent upon entry into ARC's services*
- *Freedom of Choice Declaration*
- *Areas of service delivery have been isolated to further promote independence from each other*

As part of the Onboarding into ARC's NDIS funded services, each staff member who is working with the Participant must explain that the Participant has the right to freely choose service providers; and the services **do not** need to be provided entirely by ARC. The following is an extract from the Freedom of Choice Declaration:

"As a NDIS Participant, you have the right to freely choose your service providers under your NDIS Plan. A staff member from ARC is obliged to explain how you can choose your providers for your NDIS Plan"

OUR COMMITMENT

At ARC, we are dedicated to upholding the autonomy and informed choices of our Participants through the following commitments:

- We will explain to each Participant that they can choose any service provider and provide this information in the format and language that is preferred by the Participant, ensuring it encompasses all necessary details to make an informed decision.
- Each Participant will be provided with sufficient time to consider their service options without feeling coerced, ensuring they understand the implications of their choices.
- Participants will be supported to seek advice from trusted individuals or advocacy services if requested, promoting an environment of supported decision-making.
- Where requested, we will assist the NDIS Participant to access service providers of their choice, facilitating connections and transitions.
- ARC will provide suitably qualified staff for each of the services it offers, ensuring high standards of care and support.
- We guarantee that under no circumstances will ARC engage in paying bonuses, incentives or commissions to any person or organisation for referring Participants to our service.

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FREEDOM OF CHOICE DECLARATION

If a Participant opts to engage in multiple services with ARC, they are required to complete a Freedom of Choice Declaration. This is essential for the following reasons:

- To ensure that there is documented evidence that all necessary information regarding service choices has been provided comprehensively.
 - To document the specific services the Participant has chosen to engage with at ARC, ensuring transparency and Participant-drive decision-making.

Before starting any of ARC's services, a representative will provide the declaration to the Participant and any nominated decision-makers. It is ARC's responsibility to clearly explain the concept of freedom of choice, detail any potential conflicts of interest and guide the Participant and any nominated decision-maker through the process of understanding and signing the form.

Option to Decline: Importantly, Participant are also given the option not to sign the declaration. Should they choose this path, it is crucial that ARC Services continue without disruption. In such cases, it must be formally recorded that the Freedom of Choice Declaration was offered and explained, respecting the Participant's decision to decline.

Support and Confidentiality: Throughout this process, ARC guarantees full support to the Participants in understanding the content and implications of the declaration and maintains strict confidentiality of all Participant decisions and personal information.

This declaration is not only a procedural formality but a foundation of ARC's commitment to upholding the rights and choices of the Participants we support, ensuring they are fully informed and actively involved in the decision-making processes regarding their care.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Advocacy Policy*
- *Business Practices for NDIS Policy*
- *Conflict of Interest Policy*
- *Independence, Informed Choice, and Supported Decision-Making Policy*
- *Participant Rights and Person-Centred Support Policy*
- *Support Coordination Policy*

REFERENCES

- NDIS Act 2013
- NDIS Code of Conduct Rules 2018
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

AUTHORISATION

This Policy is approved and issued by:



BENJAMIN KEAST

Chief Executive Officer

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