

Access to Advocacy

Rationale

Life Skills Victoria (LSV) expects that all employees will treat each client with dignity and respect as an individual and value their unique contribution. We believe that each client should be encouraged and supported to exercise 'choice and control' and fully participate in their community to the extent that they wish. LSV acknowledges that our clients have the right to involve an advocate of their choice to represent them at any time. LSV promotes the use of families and significant others to represent the views of people with disability who have difficulties in representing their own individual needs. LSV recognises that people with disability also have the right to decide to self-advocate or change their advocate if the need arises. LSV advocacy is guided by the values and ethos of the organisation, and the principles of the Disability Act 2006 and the Victorian Government Disability Action Plan Framework 2019-2022.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline LSV's commitment to respecting and protecting the legal and human rights of our clients, including their right to have a say in how their services are delivered. To ensure this occurs, LSV endeavours to involve the people who use our services (to the best of their ability) in all decisions and choices that affect them and have access to advocacy support when they require it. This policy provides a framework for employees to use to ensure that our employees have the attitude and capability to provide information about advocacy supports to clients and to when providing access to advocacy supports.

Scope

This policy applies to LSV clients and all employees including permanent and casual employees, contract workers, temporary agency workers, and volunteers. Anyone working with or for LSV is expected to be familiar with this policy and use the approved procedures.

Policy Statement

LSV' employees encourage advocacy support to ensure that our clients can use an advocate to negotiate on their behalf, are empowered to speak, understand their rights, and can fully participate in the community.

LSV' employees will inform clients of their right to advocacy supports when undertaking assessments, reviews, incidents, complaints etc.

LSV 'employees will work cooperatively with and participant's advocate.

Human Rights

All citizens of Australia have fundamental rights, which are underpinned by the principles of social justice. These fundamental rights are embedded in the values of LSV. Accordingly, people with disabilities are entitled to express their views and uphold their rights.

People with disabilities are entitled, as a minimum, to the following: -

- The right to privacy and confidentiality.
- The right to access personal information held by LSV.
- The right to be treated with respect and dignity.
- The right to recognition and respect of cultural, religious, and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The right to receive a good quality service that meets their specific needs and to be advised of the limits of the provided service.
- The right to accurate information about available services to assist the person to make an informed decision about the most appropriate service for their needs.
- The right to provide direct and honest feedback about the service provided without fear of retribution.
- The right to the assistance of an interpreter if English is not the person's first language, and/or information in other formats if required.
- The right to express opinions and to be supported by an advocate who may be a friend or relative or an advocacy agency to speak out on the person's behalf to protect and promote their rights and interests.

Procedure

Disability advocacy agencies provide a critical role in ensuring the rights and interests of people with a disability are respected and realised.

LSV believes that:

- Any user of its services has a right to seek the support of an advocacy agency to help deal with a disagreement with the organisation.
- It has a responsibility to work together in a co-operative manner with workers from such agencies.
- It has the responsibility to make sure that users of its services are aware of how to access and use an advocate / advocacy agency of their choice, as outlined in the LSV handbook.

All LSV staff are required to integrate into their regular activities, practices that are consistent with the Advocacy Policy. To this end, links with formal advocacy services will be maintained and staff orientation and training will recognise needs of people who use services and include information about:

- The role of an advocate.
- Assisting a person to use and engage an advocate.
- How to work with people who choose to use an advocate.
- How and where to document the person's choice of advocate.

- The process for the use of interpreters and/or information in alternative formats when required.
- Information regarding formal advocacy service agencies, including how to facilitate understanding of a person's right to obtain access and how to use an advocate of their choice.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Advocacy	Advocacy is defined as any action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports, or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.
Client	A person who accesses services from LSV either directly or through a third party.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 defines an independent advocate, in relation to a person with disability, to mean a person who:

- Is independent of the Agency, the Commission and any NDIS providers providing supports or services to the person with disability.
- Provides independent advocacy for the person with disability, to assist the person with disability to exercise choice and control and to have their voice heard in matters that affect them.
- Acts at the direction of the person with disability, reflecting the person with disability's expressed wishes, will, preferences and rights.
- Is free of relevant conflicts of interest.

Document Information - References or Related Documents

Description	Location
LSV Access, Eligibility and Equity Policy	LSV Policy and Procedure Manual
LSV Conflict of Interest Policy	LSV Policy and Procedure Manual
Advocacy services links	https://valid.org.au/
Advocacy services links	http://www.saru.net.au/
Advocacy services links	http://www.daru.org.au/
Advocacy services links	https://www.gdai.com.au/

Approval and Review	Responsible
---------------------	-------------

Lead Author	CEO
Approver	LSV Policy Committee
Date Endorsed	February 2018
Date Reviewed	February 2022
Timeframe for next renewal	February 2025

Version History

Version No.	Date	Summary of amendment(s)
1		Created
2	February 2002	Reviewed and amendments included: Change to new policy template Organisation name change