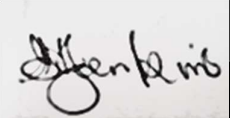


COMMUNICATING WITH CLIENTS POLICY

Date approved	27/6/22	Signature by Management representative	
Previous titles	Internal & External Communication Policy 2015		Chairperson, Suzanne Jenkins
Previous versions	Access to Services Policy 21/9/18, 27/9/21		



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Internal ECS References	
<i>In S:\0 CURRENT POLICY & PROCEDURES:</i>	<i>In S:\1 CURRENT FORMS:</i>
<i>Aged Services: Access to Services Policy</i>	<i>Aged Services Client Information Form</i>
<i>Aged Services: Rights & Responsibilities Policy</i>	<i>Playgroup Client Information Form</i>
<i>Aged Services: Support Planning Policy</i>	<i>Toy Library Client Information Form</i>
<i>Aged Services: Providing Supports Policy</i>	<i>Wellness and Reablement Support Plan</i>
<i>Aged Services: Client Files Policy</i>	<i>S:\2 NEWSLETTERS</i>
<i>Planning & Evaluation Policy</i>	<i>Information About ECS Activities in S:\2 OFFICE SYSTEMS</i>
<i>Complaints Policy</i>	<i>S:\2 current AGED SERVICES TEAM</i>
<i>People & Communities Policy</i>	<i>S:\0 current data base</i>
<i>Aged Services: CHSP Compliances Policy</i>	
<i>Duty of Care Policy</i>	

External References	
<i>Child Safe Standards at https://ocq.nsw.gov.au/resources</i>	<i>Aged Care Quality Standards at https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/standards</i>
<i>Aged Care Diversity Framework 2017</i>	

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

ECS is committed to communicating clearly with all clients and stakeholders to ensure quality community services.

1.1 Definitions

client = term used across ECS programs and policy documents instead of “consumer”, which is specific to Aged Care
My Aged Care = gateway to Australian Government Aged Care services, comprising of a call centre, website and assessors, using standardised tools and client records and linked to providers through an online Service Provider Portal

1.2 Acronyms

ECS = Engadine Community Services

NAATI = the national standards and certifying body for translators and interpreters in Australia

2. GENERAL POLICY

All ECS workers are inducted and trained in working with a range of people respectfully and so that they are understood. ECS is also committed to clients having access to their own information, information about ECS including fees and contributions and information about community supports. All workers must support information access.

ECS policies specific to Aged Services and Child & Family Services also detail the processes through which clients should be provided with information about:

- what ECS and others in the community provide (including My Aged Care)
- client rights and responsibilities
- the kinds of information and records ECS keeps
- how clients manage or withdraw consent around the information they have provided to ECS

Interpreters/translators and advocates are welcomed and seen as key partners in communicating with ECS clients, including when a client wishes to communicate feedback and complaints. Client feedback and complaints are taken seriously, acted upon in a timely fashion, and used to inform ECS continuous quality improvement [see ***Complaints Policy, Planning & Evaluation Policy***].

3. CLIENT INFORMATION PROVISION

3.1 General Principles

Informed by the ***People & Communities Policy***, ECS workers will adhere to the below general principles when communicating with clients:

- Use plain English, avoid jargon and sarcasm
- Speak clearly and slowly, avoiding an over-loud voice and a patronising manner
- Never assume knowledge of what the client needs or wants
- Give the client time to answer questions
- Check that the information given has been understood; ask specific questions, give information in small amounts, paraphrase and clarify information when you repeat it to the client
- Learn to pronounce the client’s name properly, and ask the client what they would prefer to be called
- Use pictures, symbols and hand gestures where appropriate
- Be aware of possible conflicting non-verbal cues
- Arrange for the assistance of a language aid, advocate or interpreter if communication is not satisfactory for either party
- Written information to be in a clear font [Arial or Calibri] and no smaller than 10 pt in size

In addition to these general principles, ECS workers will ensure they maintain culturally appropriate professional standards when working with clients by:

- Attempting to identify individual cultural values
- Showing willingness to learn from other cultures

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- Avoiding ethnocentrism and stereotyping
- Never assuming or judging an individual's intellectual ability or emotional status based on how s/he uses English
- Appreciating the need to sometimes change or adapt communication techniques eg. reducing eye contact and body contact
- Communicating clearly and correctly, avoiding the use of slang and abstract terminology when talking to people who speak little or no English
- Admitting when they don't understand the full content of a client's communication and involving alternative services as appropriate, such as interpreters

The ECS Manager is responsible for ensuring all workers are inducted and trained in these principles. Supervisors in each area of ECS are responsible for monitoring their use by workers in daily practice.

3.2 Access To Information – Client's Own Information

ECS is required by government funders to report on every episode of service delivery [see DEX details in **Aged Services: CHSP Compliances Policy**]. Services are provided by ECS to clients who are either de-identified [attendance numbers only] or identified [with personal details]; this will be done via a *Client Information Form* specific to each program area [see Relevant Documents, above].

By completing the forms/s, the client gives consent for ECS to:

- Collect information about the client
- Report to the Department or any other relevant parties for compliance and quality monitoring
- Communicate any of the information gathered to relevant workers who may work with the client as part of ECS service provision
- Contact their nominated 'emergency contacts'
- Be photo graphed [optional]

Once an identified client (for example a client through the Aged Services program) is registered with ECS, intake paperwork is completed (as per the **Aged Services: Support Planning** and **Aged Services: Providing Support Policy**) and a client file is created (as per the **Aged Services: Client Files Policy**).

If a client does not consent to share some of their information, and ECS service provision is possible without obtaining consent to share that information, the client's wishes must be respected. Coordinators will arrange interpreter services, advocate presence, or any other formal or informal supports presence as requested by the client when seeking consent to share information.

The kinds of information ECS will collect about a client while they continue to be active ECS clients is outlined in the relevant policies for each program area of ECS (eg. **Aged Services: Client Files Policy**).

Clients may request access to their information at any time. This request should be made in writing and always acted upon within 48 hours by the relevant Coordinator or the ECS Manager. If a family member or other community member requests information about an ECS client, the relevant Coordinator must obtain consent in writing from the client to share this information with the third party and the documented consent should be placed in the client's file. The only exception to this is if a client has already nominated a person to have access to their ECS held information or where ECS is required to share information with third parties by law (eg. in the case of a subpoena or situations involving abuse and neglect per **Duty of Care Policy**).

Under Australian law, ECS is required to keep client information for seven years. After this time, any client records and/or files will be destroyed.

3.3 Access To Information – Information About ECS

ECS has an open and transparent information sharing policy. ECS maintains a website, brochures, flyers and other marketing collateral and inducts and trains workers in all areas of ECS community supports provision to ensure this occurs. All ECS workers should be able to explain to anyone who asks the role of ECS in the community and the range of supports ECS provides. The ECS Manager will ensure induction and training facilitates this. The ECS Manager also ensures all ECS communications are maintained and kept up to date by the relevant coordinators, with any changes communicated to relevant workers within seven (7) days of an update.

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Individual program areas will have their own communication plans; for instance, Aged Services clients receive quarterly written correspondence which includes an Activities Calendar for the next three months.

It is the responsibility of the ECS Manager to monitor client demographics in the ECS footprint and direct Coordinators to adjust communications as needed. Where translations into other languages are created, the translation should be carried out by a NAATI qualified translator. All translations are checked by a community worker with local knowledge and understanding of the relevant service prior to distribution.

3.4 Access To Information – External Referrals & Community Connections

ECS has a policy of connecting clients to other services and local networks where appropriate. All ECS office workers should be inducted and trained in this approach to service provision. If a worker is asked a question by a client which they do not know the answer to, they should explain they will get back to the client and approach the relevant program coordinator or ECS Manager to obtain the information sought.

ECS Coordinators will maintain up-to-date knowledge of the local area through networking, training and other community events. The ECS Manager is responsible for ensuring coordinators have strong knowledge of, and connection with, the local community and will assign networking and other opportunities to facilitate this.

3.5 Communicating Fees & Contributions

ECS provides a range of community services. Many of these attract client fees and contributions. ECS is transparent about these fees and contributions in its communications. This transparency is achieved in the below ways:

- Workers must inform clients of any fees and/or contributions required before they participate in ECS services and supports [including when charges are made]
- A copy of the most up to date *ECS Schedule of Fees* is displayed in the foyer and on the ECS website
- A copy of the *ECS Schedule of Fees* is offered to new clients
- Clients are educated when they start with ECS that if they are experiencing financial hardship, they must inform their ECS Coordinator immediately so strategies can be put in place to mitigate impact on service and supports

4. USE OF INTERPRETERS & TRANSLATORS

Where the person requests or workers determine that there is a need for an interpreter at any stage of ECS service provision, the following process applies:

1. If a bilingual ECS worker is available, an appointment is set up for s/he to carry out the meeting or conversation, with the client's permission
2. If this is not possible or agreeable to the client, then an appointment is set-up between ECS, the client and a qualified interpreter, where funds are available

Family members and friends cannot be used as interpreters for assessment purposes or for discussion of confidential and/or sensitive information unless the client has given consent for this to occur in writing and the ECS Manager or relevant program Coordinator can establish informed consent has been given.

If an interpreter service is required during ECS service provision, ECS workers must follow the below procedure:

1. Prepare the interpreter by giving them information about the purpose of the meeting, any context required and any concerns ECS and/or the client may have
2. Arrange seating in an appropriate manner to facilitate visual contact with all three parties
3. If appropriate, take notes for later distribution by email to all parties
4. Maintain control of the interview
5. Speak a little more slowly than usual and pause every few sentences to allow time for the interpreter to translate
6. Limit the use of jargon and slang
7. Always conduct the interview with the client by looking at, and speaking directly to, him/her, not to the interpreter (e.g. explain the purpose of the meeting to the client first, then introduce the interpreter to the client and explain their role)
8. Avoid separate conversations with the interpreter during the interview
9. Provide the client with an opportunity to seek clarification or ask for further information

10. Document that the meeting took place, including who was present, and place a copy in the client file (electronic and physical).

5. USE OF ADVOCATES

An advocate is a person who, with the authority of the client, represents the client's interests. They may be used in a range of circumstances including to:

- Avoid discussion of personal details in front of friends, relatives and children
- Avoid misunderstanding and misinformation
- Avoid bias
- Ensure fluency of language
- Ensure confidentiality
- Comply with access and equity policies, and anti-discrimination
- Ensure CALD and Aboriginal people or people with sensory impairments have full access to services
- Support clients during complaints investigation [see **Complaints Policy**] and/or investigations of neglect and abuse etc.

Clients may use an advocate of their choice to negotiate with ECS on their behalf. This may be a family member, friend or a formal advocacy service. Clients wishing to use an advocate in their communications with ECS are asked to inform the ECS Manager or program Coordinator in writing of the name of the person they wish to have negotiate on their behalf. This documentation must be kept in the client's file. The client has the right to change their advocate at any time and is asked to inform the ECS Manager or their program coordinator in writing of any change. This change must also be documented and placed in the client's file. ECS will inform clients of their right to use an advocate and will provide information about how to contact formal advocates if requested.

As a CHSP provider, ECS will provide the details for the Older Persons Advocacy Network to CHSP clients at intake and whenever requested or required throughout ECS service provision: 1800 700 600, <https://www.opan.com.au/>. OPAN can then refer the client to the most appropriate NSW-based advocacy service for older people.