

Supporting Consumer Relationships

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Document Control

Title	Supporting Consumer Relationships
Document Number	RAC-Clinical Care
Version	V.1
Effective Date	28.7.2022
Review Date	
Initiating service area	RAC
Release Authority	Draft For Review at September Clinical Governance Committee Meeting

Document Review

Date	Description of review	Initiated by	Version
28.7.2022	Policy Supporting Consumer Relationships	GM Quality care and Compliance	2022. V.1

Policy Commitment

Our governing body has ultimate responsibility to ensure we comply with the legal and ethical obligations of this policy in all dealings with staff, consumers, the public and other stakeholders.

Managers and team leaders must apply the policy in a practical way and incorporate its principles in all other policies and procedures. Managers must positively promote a high standard of behaviour in line with this policy.

We commit to enabling consumers to make life decisions.

If the consumer is capable, they can make decisions about when to involve family, friends, carers or others in their care. If they lack this capacity, a court or tribunal-appointed guardian makes decisions on their behalf.

It is an essential right of each consumer to have their decisions respected. We support that right for the consumers we provide care and services for.

When a consumer decides family, friends, carers or others should be involved in their care, we include this in their care plan. We include the nominated person/s as agreed with the consumer for the care and services they have chosen.

Continuing or new relationships may include intimate relationships. We respect these decisions and support all consumers to continue these relationships as long as they do not negatively affect other consumers. In this case, we work with all parties involved to resolve any difficulties.

An intimate relationship may be expressed by language, gestures, conduct, or activities that indicate desire for sexual gratification (hugging, kissing, handholding, flirting, masturbating, touch, signs of romance or companionship, viewing sexually explicit materials).

If a consumer chooses to have or continue an intimate relationship, we work with the consumer to help this relationship continue where it is appropriate to do so. For example (but not exclusively):

- Provide privacy when they need it with a closed and/or locked door, not just a screen curtain. For consumer safety, if the door is locked, it is lockable from the inside so the consumer can exit the room without needing a key. If the consumer needs help, staff can enter the room when requested using a key.
- Include appropriate, sensitive information on the consumer's care plan

- Train staff throughout their time working for us.

Process Guidance

Outcome

Following the process below, we demonstrate we can identify communicate and respect all consumer choices. The consumer can make well-informed choices that affect their life and have those decisions respected.

When service begins

- Consumers are entitled to be involved in decisions making about their care and services as much as they choose and have the capacity to do it
- They are entitled to involve other people in their care
- Who will be involved in decisions about their care and services
- Their needs, goals and preferences and how they will be met
- How we communicate to the consumer, so they understand the care and services provided
- Find out if the consumer wants to continue any intimate relationships.
- If needed, we make sure the consumer understands their choices cannot negatively affect other consumers. If it does, we work with them on an alternative to meet their preferences
- Tell the consumer and aged care provider must report any “reportable assault”, defined as unlawful sexual contact with a resident of an aged home, or unreasonable use of force on a resident of an aged home, “Aged Care Act , 1997 (sections 63-1AA)”
- We document their preferences on a care plan

Consumer Preference and Choice

- Staff and Management respect consumer preferences and choices as agreed and documented.
- Consumers have the right to refuse care or treatment offered
- Staff respect the refusal of care and respond appropriately

Liaise with Stakeholders

- If consumer refuses care, treatment or support services, staff document in their progress notes and care plan.
- If the consumer agrees and the refusal relates to medication or medical treatment, staff inform their general practitioner.
- Staff inform the consumers representative /s about the consumers refusal, if they give permission and have the cognitive ability to do so.
- Staff consult consumers and or representatives on all care needs. They comment or make changes to care planning before it is put in place.

References: Supported Decision Making in Aged Care, (2018) : [Link](#)