ACD

Advocating for children with disability

Client handbook

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Welcome to ACD

Welcome to ACD. This handbook will provide you with information about ACD, our policies and procedures, the services we provide, and your rights and responsibilities.

Quality of service you can expect

Our years of experience mean that we have systems in place to provde high quality services to meet your individual needs. Services are planned to complement your strengths, needs and current supports.

We follow our legislative and funding agreement requirements to ensure we meet your expectations and provide a high level of service. We continuously work to meet the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) which include supporting people with a disability to achieve:

- Empowerment
- Access and engagement
- Wellbeing
- Participation

If you would like more information on these Standards please don't hesitate to ask one of our team members.

We look forward to working with you - welcome!

Organisation overview

About ACD

We are the Victorian advocacy service for children with disability and their families.

We are a not-for-profit organisation led by and for families of children with a disability. For over 45 years we have supported families across Victoria and advocated for children with all types of disabilities.

We help families gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate for their children. We support families, and professionals working with families, with children with any disability from birth to 18.

Our services are free and include:

- Information
- Workshops and peer support
- ACD Support Line, a telephone advocacy service

Our work means we hear directly from thousands of families every year. We amplify their voices and experiences through systemic advocacy to improve the lives of children with disability.

Read more in our Strategic Plan.
acd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ACD_Strategic_Plan_2023-2027_23102023.pdf

Our services

Support Line

Our Support Line is a free advocacy service for families of children with disability in Victoria. We can help you to understand your child's rights and support you to advocate for your child and family.

We assist you by:

- Listening and supporting you with issues related to your child with disability
- Providing information about your child's rights
- Supporting you to be the best possible advocate for your child
- Prioritising and discussing possible and appropriate next steps
- Connecting you with a wide range of information

The Support Line is unable to provide assistance with issues related to: legal matters, financial, counselling, case management, parental disputes or recommending service providers. We may refer you to other services to get assistance in these areas.

You can call the Support Line on 03 9880 7000 or 1800 654 013 (regional) or you can text 0475 577 997 to request a call back.

Support Line hours are Monday to Friday, 9 am - 5 pm.

If you need support after-hours, please contact either Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 which is available 24hours per day, 7 days per week or Lifeline 13 11 14 which is a 24-hour crisis support line for assistance.

Workshops and peer support

Our workshops and peer support groups are a good way to meet other families, learn new skills and get up-to-date information for your child and family.

Connecting with other families through peer support groups can help you feel more confident, capable, and less isolated. Peer groups offer the opportunity to meet other families, share experiences, information, ideas, and support each other in a facilitated group meeting.

For more information about our workshops and peer support groups visit www.acd.org.au.

Information

ACD produced its first guide for families in 1986 and has continued to provide up-to-date, free and independent information ever since.

All our information is written by our staff who have children with disability. It's based on their own practical experience, as well as from the feedback we receive from thousands of families each year.

You can find all our information about the NDIS, school and help for families at www.acd.org.au.

To provide you with up-to-date information you will receive our free monthly email newsletter NoticeBoard. You are able to unsubscribe at any time.

Eligibility criteria

ACD can provide information, support and advocacy assistance to individuals and families who:

- Live in Victoria
- Have children with disablity or developmental delay
- Have a child 0 - 18 years

Our staff

We employ experienced and qualified staff. We assess each person's suitability for this type of work through our rigorous recruitment and induction process which includes screening, verification of experience, and a detailed orientation program.

It is desirable for our skilled and committed staff to have lived experience with children with disability, collaboration skills and access to professional development. All staff are required to undergo police checks and Working with Children checks.

Speaking up for children

Assessment and planning

Once you access our services you may be involved in an assessment. This will help you to communicate your needs and strengths to us. Assessment processes are in place to support you and us to find information or services to meet your needs.

You will be fully involved in the assessment process and have the option to include others if you wish. When assessments identify needs that are not within our service provision, we will provide you with information about other service providers.

Cultural and communication needs will be considered as part of the assessment process. Communication needs and additional supports (such as an interpreting service) are available.

Review

You are not required to advise ACD of the outcome of using our service. You may access our services multiple times or you may attend a one-off workshop or call the Support Line once. If you are unable to resolve an issue relating to your child with disability, you are encouraged to reconnect with our services to discuss further options.

Exiting services

You can leave our services at any time and we will support you to find other services if you require. If you wish to return to us, we will be happy to support you through the intake process.

From time to time, we may need to advise you after assessment that we are no longer able to provide you with our services. This may be because our services do not meet your needs, or you no longer meet the eligibility criteria. If this does occur, we will work with you to find and access a service provider who may be able to support you.

Interpreters

We are more than happy to arrange a culturally appropriate and qualified interpreter if needed. This is a free service.

National Relay Service

For people who are Deaf or hearing impaired, please call the National Relay Service on 1800 555 660.
For more information, please go to
www.accesshub.gov.au

Your rights and responsibilities

What you can expect from us:

- Your child's safety is protected and promoted
- For Aboriginal children and families your culture is valued
- Be treated with respect
- Not encounter racism or discrimination
- Experience a safe and secure environment
- Have your privacy maintained
- Be provided with clear and accessible information about services
- Contribute to decision making for services and issues that affect you
- To be able to give feedback or make a complaint and be supported by an external advocate if desired

When we work together we ask that you:

- Are respectful
- Act safely
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality in group settings
- Give us feedback about our services

Your safety

We aim to provide a safe environment for you and a safe workplace for our staff. We do not tolerate any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination in the workplace. Any form of physical, verbal, sexual or threatening behaviour, intentional or unintentional, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Our incident reporting process will be used to manage these situations if they arise.

We encourage an environment where clients and staff are treated with dignity and respect and where staff conduct themselves professionally at all times.

As a person using our services you have a right to feel safe and be free from abuse and neglect. We have a complaints process which you should use if you feel unsafe. If you feel you need an external advocate to make a complaint or report any inappropriate behaviour, we can support you to access an external advocate of your choice.

Child safety

ACD is committed to being a child safe organisation and complying with Victorian Child Safe Standards 2022.

We protect and promote the safety of children and value and promote Aboriginal culture when working with Aboriginal children and families.

ACD primarily works with families with children with disability and professionals who support families. We have very limited and ad hoc direct contact with children.

Our commitment:

- We have zero tolerance of child abuse and racism by our staff, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policy and procedures
- We only work with children when parents/carers are present
- We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and all staff are screened with Working with Children Checks and police checks
- All staff are given an induction into their child safety responsibilities and our policies and procedures
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, in their home, school, or any other setting, which we follow rigorously
- We provide information to families about empowering children to self-advocate

Privacy

We acknowledge and respect your rights to privacy and are committed to maintaining the confidentiality of your personal information. We use information in line with legislative requirements.

To provide services, we are required to collect a range of personal information. We collect information to assess, plan, and provide quality services to meet your individual needs. If you provide incomplete or inaccurate information to us, we may not be able to provide you with the services you require.

Your personal information supports our work to ensure health and safety, risk management, account keeping, staff training, quality assurance, and to meet government and regulatory requirements where there is a threat to public health.

ACD only discloses your personal information to third parties with prior consent, or to meet legal, regulatory, auditing, or funding obligations. Information about accessing or correcting your personal information or making a privacy complaint is available in our **Privacy Policy on our website**.

We take all reasonable steps to safeguard the security of personal information from unauthorised use, access, modification or disclosure. ACD staff who handle personal information have a duty to protect that information and are granted access on a need-to-know basis. Personal information no longer required is disposed of appropriately.

You have the right to request access to the personal information that ACD holds about you and to update/change as required. To exercise this right please contact the appropriate team manager on 03 9880 7000 or 1800 654 013 (regional).

You can read our full privacy policy on our website. **www.acd.org.au/terms-and-conditions.**

Complaints and appeals

ACD welcomes feedback from you, or your representatives, as it enables us to improve our services. We encourage you to bring to our attention anything that concerns you about any aspect of the services provided or anything you think we may be able to improve.

If you wish to make a complaint or make an appeal about a decision we have made please contact ACD on 9880 7000 or email feedback@acd.org.au

Your complaint will be addressed by the relevant manager.

Your access to our services will not be affected if you make a complaint. A response to your complaint will be provided in a timely manner.

If you are not satisfied with the response, you can ask for the complaint to be addressed by the ACD Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

You can also complain to the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC). The DSC works to resolve complaints about disability advocacy services funded in Victoria by DFFH. (See list).
https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au disability-advocacy-organisations
Telephone: 1800 677 342
Email: complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au
Website www.odsc.vic.gov.au

Advocacy

If you wish to make a complaint about ACD, you can use an external advocate of your choice at any point during the complaints process. We will support you to access one if necessary, or you can contact the Disability Services Commissioner.

Thank you for choosing ACD