



Client Information Handbook

Community Options
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About Community Options

About Us

Community Options is a local ACT community based non-profit organisation with more than 30 years' experience in providing services to older people, people with disabilities and their families and carers.

We specialise in providing intense and complex coordination services to people with complex needs to enable them to improve their quality of life and achieve a greater degree of independence in the community.

We offer a range of in-home and community-based support services under ACT Health-funded programs and services and; Care Partnering services for Aged Care - Support at Home.

Our Mission

Community Options is a not-for-profit community-based organisation that provides support to people in the Canberra region, their families and friends. Our mission is to provide excellence in support services to our clients that will enable them to achieve a greater degree of independence and continue living quality lives in the community.

Our Vision

Community Options' vision is for all the people we serve, their families and friends to live good and full lives. We believe that this can be achieved through the person continuing to be a contributing and valued member of their community. To do this we aim to support people to maintain relationships, roles and connections to enhance the opportunities for people to enjoy life.

Our Values

Commitment: We are committed to providing high quality support services to our clients in a manner that respects individual choices, enhances our clients' self-determination and promotes their dignity and meaningful and valued social roles.

Excellence: We strive for excellence and quality in everything we do.

Professionalism and integrity: At all times we act with integrity, aim to provide quality service that is reliable and responsive to individual client needs and take pride in what we do.

Good working relationships and teamwork: We work with one another with enthusiasm, appreciation and respect.

Personal development: We value and actively pursue opportunities for staff professional growth and development.

What happens if I do not respond to a scheduled visit?

To ensure clients' safety and to meet duty of care responsibilities, Community Options has a standard protocol to follow in a case of client's nonresponse to a scheduled visit. The protocol below which details steps we will take in case you are not answering the door when your support worker or a Case Manager arrives for a scheduled visit are outlined below. If you wish to give us any specific instructions different from the steps outlined below for us to follow in case of non-response to a scheduled visit or if you do not wish for us to take any action in response to non-response, please discuss this with the Case Manager. The Case Manager will record your specific instructions in your Community Options client record. Please be advised that in some cases your instruction for us not take any action in response to you not responding to a scheduled visit may be overridden particularly in emergency cases and where action is required under Community Options' statutory obligations.

Detailed Protocol:

- Community Options will collect and regularly update information on your nominated contact person or persons who can be contacted in the event that you are not responding to an agreed scheduled visit or in case of an emergency.
- If Community Options suspects the client does not respond to a scheduled visit due to an emergency situation, Community Options will follow the steps outlined below or follow an individualised emergency plan agreed with the client and/or authorised representative.
- Where the client does not respond to a scheduled visit and where no issues of concern are suspected due to client's individual circumstances, a number of response strategies may be taken:
 - Contacting the client at home and/or mobile, as applicable
 - Calling nominated emergency contact(s)
 - Leaving a note under the door to advise that the support worker or Case Manager visited as arranged and requesting a telephone call back
- If it is suspected that non-response is due to an emergency, the following standard emergency protocol will be applied:
 - Case Manager will call emergency contact(s)
 - If there is a key safe in place and the client has provided Community Options with the details of access in case of emergency (or suspected emergency), we will use the key safe to gain access to the client's home.
 - Case Manager may call hospitals to find out if the client was admitted

- Where there are a number of agencies providing services to the client, the Case Manager may contact other service providers to find out when the last service occurred.
- The Case Manager and/or relevant manager may visit the client's home to talk to the client's neighbours to enquire when the client was last seen.
- The Case Manager will call the Police where all strategies listed above have been exhausted.

What are my rights and responsibilities as a client of Community Options?

When you use the services provided by Community Options you can expect us to recognise your rights as a care recipient. The wording of your rights varies based on age and funding source (e.g. National Disability Insurance Scheme, or Aged Care) regardless, you can expect Community Options to at a minimum recognise and respect the below Statement of Rights (Aged Care Act 2024 – Effective date: 1 November 2025).

Statement of Rights

Independence, autonomy, empowerment, and freedom of choice

- (1) An individual has a right to:
- a. Exercise choice and make decisions that affect the individual's life, including relation to the following:
 - i. The funded aged care services the individual has been approved to access;
 - ii. How, when and by whom those services are delivered to the individual;
 - iii. The individual's financial affairs and personal possessions; and
 - b. Be supported (if necessary) to make those decisions, and have those decisions respected; and
 - c. Take personal risks, including pursuit of the individual's quality of life, social participation, and intimate relationships.

Equitable access

- (2) An individual has a right to equitable access:
- a. Have the individual's need for funded aged care services assessed, or re-assessed, in a manner which is:
 - i. Respectful of cultural background, personal experience and trauma, and cognitive conditions.
 - b. Palliative Care and End of Life Care when required.

Quality and Safe Funded Care Services

- (3) An individual has the right to:
- a. Be treated with dignity and respect; and
 - b. Safe, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory treatment; and
 - c. Have the individual's identity, culture, spirituality and diversity valued and supported; and
 - d. Funded aged care services being delivered to the individual:
 - i. In a way that is culturally safe, culturally appropriate, trauma aware and healing informed; and
 - ii. In an accessible manner; and
 - iii. By aged care workers of registered providers/businesses who have appropriate qualifications, skills and experience.
- (4) An individual has a right to:
- a. Be free from all forms of violence, degrading or inhumane treatment, exploitation, neglect, coercion or abuse; and
 - b. Have quality and safe funded aged care services delivered consistently with the requirements imposed on registered providers under this Act.

Note: Division 1 of Part 4 of Chapter 3 deals with conditions on registered providers, including requirements in relation to the use of restrictive practices and management of incidents.

Respect for privacy and information

- (5) An individual has a right to have their:
- a. Personal privacy respected; and
 - b. Personal information protected.
- (6) An individual has a right to seek, and be provided with, records and information about the individual's rights under this section and the funded aged care services the individual accesses, including the costs of those services.

Person centred communication and ability to raise issues without reprisal

- (7) An individual has the right to:

- a. Be informed, in a way the individual understands, about the funded aged care services the individual accesses; and
 - b. Express opinions about the funded aged care services the individual accesses and be heard.
- (8) An individual has a right to communicate in the individual's preferred language or method of communication, with access to interpreters and communication aids as required.
- (9) An individual has a right to:
- a. Open communication and support from registered providers when issues arise in the delivery of funded aged care services; and
 - b. Make complaints using an accessible mechanism, without fear of reprisal, about the delivery of funded aged care services to the individual; and
 - c. Have the individual's complaints dealt with fairly and promptly.

Advocates, significant persons and social connections

- (10) An individual has a right to be supported by an advocate or other person of the individual's choice, including when exercising or seeking to understand the individual's life and making complaints or giving feedback.
- (11) An individual has a right to have the role of persons who are significant to the individual, including carers, visitors and volunteers, be acknowledged and respected.
- (12) An individual has a right to opportunities, and assistance, to stay connected (if the individual so chooses) with:
- a. Significant persons in the individual's life and pet, including through safe visitation by family members, friends, volunteers or other visitors where the individual lives and visits to family members or friends; and
 - b. The individual's community, including by participating in public life and leisure, cultural, spiritual and lifestyle activities; and
 - c. If the individual is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person – community, Country and Island Home.
- (13) An individual has a right to access, at any time the individual chooses, a person designated by the individual, or person designated by an appropriate authority.

Comments and Complaints

- To be given information on how to make comments and complaints about the care and services you receive
- To complain about the care and services you receive, without fear of losing the care or being disadvantaged in any other way.
- To have complaints investigated fairly and confidentially, and to have appropriate steps taken to resolve issues of concern

Fees

- To have your fees determined in a way that is transparent, accessible and fair
- To receive invoices that are clear and in a format that is understandable
- To have your fees reviewed periodically and on request when there are changes to your financial circumstances
- Not to be denied care and services because of your inability to pay a fee for reasons beyond your control.

Responsibilities

General

- To respect the rights of care workers to their human, legal and industrial rights including the right to work in a safe environment
- To treat care workers without exploitation, abuse, discrimination or harassment

Care and Services

- To abide by the terms of the written agreement
- To acknowledge that your needs may change and to negotiate modifications of care and services when your care needs do change
- To accept responsibility for your own actions and choices even though some actions and choices may involve an element of risk

Communication

- To give enough information to assist Community Options to develop and review a care plan
- To tell Community Options and our staff about any problems with the care and services

Access

- To allow safe and reasonable access for care workers at the times specified in your care plan or otherwise by agreement
- To provide reasonable notice if you do not require a service

Fee

- Fees may be charged to a client by Community Options, and will be discussed with the client prior to commencement of services
- To pay any fee as specified in the agreement or negotiate an alternative arrangement with us if any changes occur in your financial circumstances
- To provide enough information for us to determine an appropriate level of fee

Privacy and Confidentiality Requirements

Ensuring Client Privacy and Confidentiality

To provide required services, Community Options needs to collect highly personal client information including your name, address, demographic details and health particulars.

Community Options is committed to protecting privacy and confidentiality of clients. We will ensure that client information is collected, stored and used in accordance with statutory obligations.

Community Options will only collect information relevant to the services you require. Information you provide us or is provided to us with your consent by other parties on your behalf, will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used only for the purpose it was collected. You can also change or withdraw your consent at any time.

Your personal information will not be released to a third party without your permission except if required by law. The release of information without your consent might occur when the health or wellbeing of a person is threatened or there are other strong public interest reasons for information to be released. If these circumstances occur, we will endeavour to contact you, prior to the release of information, and advise you that such a request has been made.

As a condition of receiving Government funding to provide support services, Community Options is required to provide the Government with data in relation to the type and volume of services we provide and characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) of people who receive these services. This data is provided in a format that does not allow the individual to be identified. You can request to have your data withheld from these collections. If you have questions or concerns about these data collections, or would like further information, please discuss this with your Case Manager.

Accuracy of Information

Community Options will maintain accurate and up to date information for our records.

Storage of Client Information

Community Options will ensure the security of your personal information. Client personal information is stored electronically in our database and/or paper files. We take measures to ensure the integrity of our systems and to secure and protect client information. We safeguard client information on secure systems and have implemented appropriate security controls to protect the information. All staff employed by Community Options are also required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Access to Information We Hold About You

You can request to see the information we hold about you. If you make such a request, we will make this information available to you within 10 business days of receiving the request. If access cannot be granted as required by law, we will inform you about a reason for access denial within 10 business days. Access can be denied for a number of reasons, such as where access to the record would contravene a law or court order or access to records will constitute a significant risk to life or physical, mental or emotional health of an individual, whether a client or another person.

Complaints and Feedback

Community Options is committed to establishing an environment in which all clients feel confident and safe in their ability to express dissatisfaction or make a complaint about provided services. Community Options believes that in an open and trusting environment it is important that the people we support feel able to freely raise issues or concerns about the service they receive and have these issues responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible.

We welcome your feedback about the service we provide. Your comments or complaints help us to improve the service we offer. If you wish to make a complaint or raise any issues with the services you receive, you can contact your Case Manager, Client Services Team Leader or an Executive Manager. Your complaint will be treated respectfully, fairly and confidentially. If you wish, you can also request to view Community Options complaints policy and protocol.

ACT Human Rights Commission

You may also make a complaint directly to the ACT Human Rights Commission. The Human Rights Commission is an independent statutory body, there are three separate Commissioners within the Commission, each with different responsibilities and functions:

- Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner and Information and Privacy Commissioner
- Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner
- Victims of Crime Commissioner

The Human Rights Commission contact details are:

Address: 56 Allara Street, Canberra, ACT, 2601

Mailing Address: GPO Box 158 Canberra, ACT, 2601

Email: humanrights@act.gov.au

Telephone: (02) 6205 2222

Contact through Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS): 131 450

Website: www.hrc.act.gov.au/contact-us

Your Right to an Advocate

We are committed to empowering our clients and enhancing their capacity for self-determination and expression. We therefore seek to promote and protect your right to nominate an advocate of your choice who will be involved in the decision-making process regarding your service needs. You also have the right to self-advocate, change your advocate or decide not to use your advocate. If you wish to nominate an advocate or want more information regarding advocacy services in the ACT, please let your Case Manager at Community Options know about your decision.

Who is an Advocate?

An advocate is a person who acts in your best interest and promotes your rights by speaking, acting and writing on your behalf. An advocate can be anyone you nominate including:

- A Primary Care Giver
- A family member
- A friend or neighbour
- Another service provider
- Staff – except if there is a conflict of interest
- A person employed as an advocate with a specialised advocacy service (please see below)
- Employees of Government departments such as the Department of Fair Trading
- Employees of Statutory Bodies, such as the office of the Public Guardian

Our Commitment to You

We are committed to ensuring safety and wellbeing of all people we work with. Community Options has a zero-tolerance policy to abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination of the people we support. In an instance in which an allegation of abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination is made through the provision of your services, Community Options will:

- Contact the appropriate authority (Police, Aged Care Quality Commission, ACT Community Services, etc.)
- Encourage, support and facilitate your access to an advocacy service or regulatory body as outlined above. This could include but is not limited to:
 - Contacting them on your behalf
 - Arranging transport, support, or attendance at meetings or interviews
 - Collecting and providing information in relation to your supports to an advocacy service
 - Attending and participating in any meetings as requested
 - Supporting you to transition between advocacy services