

# **STANDARD NINE: FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Each person with a disability receives a service, where the importance of preserving family relationships and informal social networks is recognised and is sensitive to their cultural and linguistic environments.**

# **Standard 9.1**

## **FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

### **9.1.1 Purpose and Scope**

This policy guides staff and management in mechanisms to promote the maintenance of family relationships.

### **9.1.2 Definitions**

**Family:** refers to the immediate relatives and other people who have a significant relationship with strong emotional ties to the person with a disability. In Aboriginal communities family covers a wider range of relationships including tribal elders.

### **9.1.3 Principles**

Samaritans recognises the importance, contribution and significance of family relationships in each person's support network.

### **9.1.4 Policy**

Samaritans actively supports and encourages people using its services to maintain family relationships. Samaritans provides support to the person and their family to promote positive and effective relationships. This support recognises issues such as:

- a) effects on the functioning of a family with a member with a disability
- b) occasions where there are differences of opinion and attitude between the person and their family
- c) respecting the person's right to form mutual networks and relationships of their choice.

## 9.1.5 Procedures

- People using the service are supported and assisted to make informed decisions about the level and type of contact they wish to have with their family. They are also supported and assisted to consider the consequences of these decisions.
- The frequency and the form of family contact is mutually agreed-upon by the person and their family. These decisions are documented as part of the individual support planning process.
- At all times the person's informed choice with regard to the maintenance of relationships and networks with their family, friends or advocates is respected.
- The service promotes positive relationships with families by implementing a range of regular communication approaches.
- Samaritans is sensitive to the age, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of individual families.
- Where a person using the service does not have family involvement Samaritans supports the person to make decisions about being linked to an advocacy service.
- Staff members actively encourage and support people to identify members and significant others in their support network who are to be involved in the individual support planning process. The family member, guardian or advocate is encouraged to have a role in the development, implementation and monitoring of these plans.
- Families, advocates and friends, are provided, as is appropriate, with information to aid in continuing education regarding general issues such as independence training, personal relationship building and financial management.
- Families, guardians, advocates and friends, with the informed consent of the person, are welcome to be involved in significant events within the life of the person. Samaritans minimises any impediment to contact and involvement.
- Families, advocates and friends are encouraged to have involvement in the service's activities. They are directly consulted on service development, provision and evaluation including the procedures outlined in **8.1 Policy Development and Review**.

- Families are provided with clear information and communication about the service by the key worker, including internal and external complaint mechanisms. This occurs through direct communication and distributed literature.
- Where a conflict arises between the person and their family, the service provides support to both parties to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome. The rights and wellbeing of the person using the service are ensured.
- In the event of an emergency it may be necessary for the service to contact the family to advise them of the situation.
- Families are advised by the key worker and Coordinator of their rights to access the Guardianship Tribunal and Protective Commission. This occurs through direct communication and distributed literature. They are advised of any action Samaritans takes in this regard.

#### **Raising Issues with Families or Carers**

- It is important for staff to advocate on behalf of a person and to inform the family or carer of relevant issues and encourage them to work with the service to address the situation.
- Where there are conflicting views this may be a difficult task requiring information and counselling for the family. The staff member's role is to reassure the family while establishing what the person wants. All approaches to the family are to be positive, aiming to promote respect and harmony.
- Issues are raised with families or carers using the communication diary, telephone contact or in person. The key worker follows up the initial communication within two weeks.
- If the issue remains unresolved, the key worker and Coordinator meet with the family or carer and discuss the relevant issue within four weeks of the original contact.
- If no resolution has been found from the meeting the Coordinator writes to the family or carer and requests a meeting between the Disability Services Manager, family member or carer, and the person.
- At this time if there is no resolution the Disability Services Manager refers the matter to the Director Client Services.

- If no resolution has occurred a referral is made to an independent external body who may appoint a mediator between the family and the service.
- In cases where there is no resolution and there are serious concerns for the person an application to the Guardianship Tribunal is made.
- The family member or carer is advised of all actions being taken and is offered support and information, with respect to their right to use an independent advocate or to refer the matter to an external body of their choice.

## 9.1.6 References

Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Act 1986 Schedule 4 &5

NSW Disability Services Act 1993 -Principles 1(d, e & g) & Applications of Principles 2 (b & m)

NSW Disability Services Standards - Standards 2 & 9

Samaritans Disability Services Policy and Standards

**Advocacy**

**Complaints and Dispute Management**

**Consent and Guardianship**

**Decision Making and Choice**

**Individual Support Planning and Review**

**Key Worker Role in Individual Support Planning**

**Policy Development and Review**

**Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality**

## 9.1.7 Person Responsible

It is the responsibility of staff members to:

- support people using the service to make informed choices regarding the level of contact with their family
- maintain the rights of the person using the service in the event of a conflict between the person and their family
- support the person to maintain contact with their family.

It is the responsibility of the Coordinator to:

- manage complaints according to the complaint management process
- ensure communication occurs freely between the service and the person's family and support networks.

## 9.1.8 Implementation and Evaluation

The service regularly communicates with the family or carer. The family or carer is invited and involved in the individual support planning process.

## 9.1.9 Documentation

Decisions regarding level of contact are documented in the Individual Support Plan. Correspondence to and from the family or carer is kept on the individual file.