

Access and Equity Policy

1. Purpose

Community Engagement (CE) is committed to providing equitable and accessible services to stakeholders inclusive of age, culture, religion, gender and ability.

CE values diversity and aims to move beyond focusing on legislative responsibilities to an approach that focuses on recognising, respecting and valuing a range of social and cultural differences amongst service user groups which allows increased access, participation and empowerment.

CE recognises that achieving access and equity requires an ongoing evaluation process which is responsive to community needs.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Community Engagement staff, contractors and volunteers. For the purposes of this policy these persons should be referred to as workers.

3. Definitions

Access: is the process of ensuring equality of opportunity irrespective of race, language, culture, religion, gender, age and ability.

Equity: is the process of allocating resources fairly, regardless of age, race, language, culture, religion, gender, ability or disability. Equity ensures that all people have support to access, achieve and participate at the same level.

4. Policy

4.1 Principles

Principles have been sourced from the Australian Governments Access and Equity Plan 1999-2001.

Access - Programs will be available to everyone who is entitled to the services and will be free from any form of discrimination, irrespective of a person's country of birth, gender, age, language, culture, race or religion.

Equity - Programs will be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of all people who are eligible to receive them.

Communication - Programs will use different strategies to inform eligible users of services, their entitlements and of how they can obtain them. Providers should also consult with their service users regularly about the adequacy, design and standard of services.

Responsiveness - Programs will be sensitive to the needs and requirements of service users from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals.

Effectiveness - Programs will be 'results-oriented' and focused on meeting the needs of service users from all backgrounds.

Efficiency - Programs will optimise the use of available public resources through a user-responsive approach to service delivery that meets the needs of service users.

Accountability - Programs will have reporting mechanisms in place that are accountable.

4.2 Access and Equity Strategies

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all people are able to access the program and will be treated equitably. This includes access to the provision of services, the provision of information and inclusion in events hosted.

CE adopts a human rights based approach which acknowledges the importance of principals such as non-discrimination, equality, participation and inclusion. A human rights based approach informs service delivery, reduces inequality and discrimination, and recognises the inherent dignity of all human beings. CE seeks to promote participation of people and utilises human rights principals to empower individuals and communities.

All people accessing the service, regardless of race, linguistic and cultural background, religion, age, gender, identity, sexuality and abilities, have the right to safe, inclusive and equitable access to the full range of services provided. CE recognises that some service users may experience some challenges with accessing services and CE will seek to mitigate this through consultation with service users and their support networks, in consultation with community partners.

All services provided will be conducted in a respectful, responsive and inclusive manner, taking into account each individuals needs and circumstances. All service users have the right to and will be supported to practice their culture, values and beliefs while accessing and receiving supports. CE have strategies in place to assist service users to access and participate in services, to promote inclusion, and provide support and resources relevant to service user needs. CE will, where appropriate, connect service users with relevant services and activities which share their culture, values, interests and identity in accordance with service user preferences.

CE has strategies and procedures in place to promote access and equitable treatment for all persons utilising the services. These strategies and procedures seek

to integrate a set of service delivery principles concerning diversity into service level planning, policy development, budgeting and reporting processes of service delivery.

If the program reaches maximum capacity, service users may be placed on a waitlist. Waitlisting shall occur only where the service user cannot or chooses not to be referred to another appropriate organisation. Service users who are waitlisted will be prioritised by consideration of any human rights issues or harm.

Feedback and complaint mechanisms are in place in order to improve services offered to service users and their families and are communicated to the relevant stakeholders. These are in place to ensure that CE remains responsive to service user needs.

5. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every 2 years.

This policy remains in effect unless otherwise determined by resolution of the Board of Directors.

6. Related Documents

Policies

ICH Discrimination Policy
ICH Human Rights Policy
CE Feedback and Complaints Policy
CE Case Management Policy

Procedures

CE Working in a Cross Cultural Context Procedure
CE Feedback and Complaints Procedure
CE Case Management Procedure
NDIS Service Delivery Procedure

Legislation

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992
Human Rights Act 2019
Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1977 (Cth)
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth)
Disability Discrimination Act 1993 (Cth)
Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

Other Sources

Commonwealth Policy of Multiculturalism and its inherent Access and Equity
Strategy
Queensland Ethnic Affairs Policy