

ACD Client Handbook



Karen Dimmock ACD ~ CEO
October 2023

Contents

Welcome to the Association for Children with a Disability	2
Quality of service you can expect	2
Access and eligibility to ACD	2
Our organisation overview.....	3
Our services.....	3
Our staff.....	4
Assessment and planning	5
Review	5
Exiting services	5
Interpreters	5
National Relay Service	5
Rights and responsibilities	6
Your safety	6
Privacy	6
Complaints and appeals	7
Advocacy	7

Welcome to the Association for Children with a Disability

Welcome to the Association for Children with a Disability (ACD). This information has been developed to give you a greater understanding about us, 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 ensure we provide high quality services to meet your individual needs. Services are planned to complement your strengths, needs and current supports.

We adhere to 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!

Access and eligibility to ACD

You can find information about us and our services on our website www.acd.org.au or if you wish to speak with someone, call our office on 03 9880 7000 or 1800 654 013 (regional).

When you contact us, we will ask some questions to enable us to decide if we are able to provide a service to meet your needs. Where appropriate, we may arrange a time to have a detailed conversation around your current needs and how best ACD can support you and your family.

We offer services based on eligibility criteria which is included in the 'Our services' section of this booklet. If we have a waiting list for services, you will be informed of the process, including how often we will contact you; how we will assess your needs; how we will prioritise your needs; and other services we may be able to refer you to with consent.

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 40 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 resources
- 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.

Our services

Support Line

Our Support Line is a free 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 resources and information

The Support Line is unable to provide assistance with issues related to: legal matters, financial, counselling, case management 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, 9am-5pm

If you need support after-hours, call Parentline Victoria on 132 289, 8am-midnight, 7 days.

Workshops and peer support

Our workshops and peer support groups are a great 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, resources, ideas; and support each other in a facilitated group meeting.

For all the details about our workshops and peer support groups visit www.acd.org.au

Information and resources

ACD produced our first guide for families in 1986. We have continued to provide up-to-date and independent information ever since. All our information is written by families for families. Our information is to help you 'through the maze' that is part of parenting a child with disability.

You can find all our resources 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 is a state-wide information, support and advocacy service providing assistance to individuals and families of children with a disability aged between 0 to 18 years living in Victoria.

Whether you're a parent, carer, sibling, family member, community member or a professional who works with children and families; we can assist you by providing information, support, advocacy, workshops and peer support.

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 criminal record checks and Working with Children checks.

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

Review

There is no requirement for you 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 maybe 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 and TTY 1800 555 630.

For more information, please go to www.relayservice.gov.au

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
- Give feedback or make a complaint and be supported by an external advocate if desired

We ask that when we work together you are:

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

Your safety

Our service strives 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.

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 primarily 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 also allows us to sustain other internal processes such as 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 may at times disclose personal information where it is necessary to deliver services or as required by law. We will not rent, trade or sell information about you to third parties. Personal information may only be disclosed outside ACD when you have consented; it is in accordance with the purpose we collected the information; and/or we have a legal obligation to do so.

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 may be a concern 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 phone ACD 9880 7000 or alternatively email feedback@acd.org.au

Your complaint will be addressed by the relevant Manager.

Services will not be affected if you make a complaint and 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 Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint and the above steps have not supported you in reaching a satisfactory resolution, you may wish to contact the following:

Disability Services Commissioner

Ph. 1800 677 342 or via 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