



MDAA Services: Getting In and Out (Previously Entry and Exit)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the areas of MDAA's work and the processes involved in getting a service from MDAA and getting out of a service from MDAA.

2. Policy

MDAA supports all people with disability, and their families and carers in NSW, with a focus on people from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) / non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability. MDAA does this by providing information and advocacy.

MDAA aims to provide information and advocacy in a fair and equitable way to the most disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and communities.

MDAA gets money from both State & Federal governments.

- State government money is specifically to help all people with disability, and their families and carers in NSW, with a focus on people from a CALD / NESB with disability. These services, including Wollongong, Newcastle and Griffith and some workers at Granville, are funded specifically to assist people from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) / non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability.
- Federal government money enables MDAA to fund services such as the City & Inner West; South East Sydney; Bega and some parts of Granville, to help all people with disability, families and carers within the geographic area covered by the service.

3. Definitions:

Disability means having issues with learning, remembering, thinking through things, seeing, hearing, moving around, and so on.

CALD means culturally and linguistically diverse. This term:

- includes individuals who identify as having a specific cultural or linguistic affiliation because of their religion, spirituality, race, language and ethnicity;
- includes individuals from a non-English speaking background, including people whose parents' first language was not English; and
- does not include individuals whose ancestry is Anglo-Saxon, Anglo Celtic, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

NESB means a person, or their mother or father were born in a non-English speaking country.

4. Practice

4.1 Getting a service from MDAA

This policy explains the rules for getting a service from MDAA. Specific offices of MDAA provide support to either all people with disability or only people from a CALD/NESB with disability. Please refer to Part 1 of this policy for specific details. MDAA can provide the following services:

- 1. Information**
- 2. Advocacy information**
- 3. Individual advocacy support**
- 4. Systemic Advocacy or group advocacy**

1. Information

Anyone can contact MDAA for information. People do not have to be from a CALD / NESB or have disability. We try to find the information they need. We also try to get information they can understand, for example, information in their language, or on tape, CD or DVD.

People can call us, write to us or come to the office and ask questions. We will record the question, and make sure that nobody from outside MDAA knows about the question. (Please see the *Privacy Dignity & Confidentiality Policy*)

2. Advocacy information

Depending on the MDAA office, if a person has disability and/or is from a CALD / NESB and has disability, they can ask MDAA for advocacy information. A family member or carer can also do this.

For example they may want to know:

- what their rights are
- what to do if they are unhappy about a decision that someone else made for them
- what they can do if they are not happy about something

We give detailed information about what they can do to get their problem solved.

We will record the request, and make sure that nobody from outside MDAA knows about it. (Please see the *Privacy Dignity & Confidentiality Policy*)

3. Individual advocacy support

Depending on the MDAA office, if a person has disability and/or is from a CALD / NESB and has disability, they can ask MDAA for advocacy information and support. A family member or carer can also do this.

For example:

- The person may want to complain about something and need someone to help them
- someone may have treated a person wrongly because of their disability or because they are from a CALD / NESB with disability, and they want to do something about it
- a person may be unhappy with what is happening to them and they would like someone to help them work out how they can make some changes.

We will keep a file about the consumer, and make sure that only the consumer and necessary staff at MDAA read the file. The consumer can stop MDAA's support any time they wish.

4. Systemic or Group Advocacy

As a collective voice for people with disability, in particular those from a CALD / NESB with disability. MDAA also will work to:

- effect positive change in legislation and protecting existing legislation
- work towards positive changes in service and government departments policies, procedures and practices.
- develop and participate in effective networks and coalitions.

This is done through oral/written submissions, representations in advisory committees, reference groups to government and non-government organisations etc.

Do you have to wait to get individual advocacy support?

A waiting list may exist at the Granville Office because of the number of people needing help and MDAA's capacity to meet that need. The waiting time is kept to a minimum. Regional offices very rarely have waiting lists.

If MDAA needs to start a waiting list, people who will get the service first are:

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- **it's urgent:** a person who is being abused or who needs support straight away (e.g. if there is a time limit to respond), to make them safe or to protect the safety of other people.
 - **cannot speak up:** a person who cannot speak much English, or understand what is happening, or who does not know about services and cannot speak up for themselves.

Information MDAA collects from consumers

MDAA asks consumers for information about themselves so we can do the best advocacy job for consumers. We keep up to date information and we destroy consumer files (including hard and electronic copies) after they have been closed for 7 years, or as legally required. Our policy on 'Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality' explains the information we keep and how we protect consumer privacy.

Conflicts of interest about entry to MDAA's services

A conflict of interest happens when a person cannot do their job properly because their own interests get in the way of doing a good job. For example, a friend with disability may ask an MDAA advocate for their individual advocacy support even though they haven't gone through the proper intake process. The advocate may feel uncomfortable because they want to help their friend, but they know that MDAA has certain policies and procedures that need to be followed. The advocate would be able to explain this to their friend, because it is clear how you can get individual advocacy support services from MDAA. If the rules were not so clear, the advocate may have a conflict of interest.

If there is a conflict of interest with a particular consumer, MDAA will get a person from outside to help in deciding what to do or a change of advocate maybe required.

Referring people to other services

If it is clear that another service could get a better result for a consumer and could increase the consumer's skills, MDAA will refer the consumer to that service.

Telling consumers about their rights and responsibilities

MDAA gives each consumer information about their rights and responsibilities as MDAA consumers. Details are in MDAA's policies on 'Individual Needs'; 'Decision-making and Choice'; 'Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality'; 'Participation and Integration'; 'Valued Status'; 'Complaints Resolution/ Feedback'; and 'Anti-discrimination: Access, Consumer Rights and Accountability'.

Individual planning

MDAA discusses with each consumer their particular needs: whether they need information, advocacy information, individual advocacy support or advocacy development. MDAA responds to the consumer's needs. Details about how we meet individual consumer needs are in MDAA's policy on 'Individual Needs'.

Making policies available to consumers

MDAA keeps copies of all our policies. Consumers are told they can get a copy of any policy they want.

Giving reasons for not giving a person MDAA's services

If a person fits the rules for any of MDAA's services we would usually give the service to the person. If we decided not to give the service, we would write the person a letter setting out the reasons.

4.2 Getting out of a service at MDAA

Getting out of a service at MDAA can happen in different ways. Consumers can stop MDAA services at any time they wish.

1. Information

When MDAA gives the information needed, the information service stops.

2. Advocacy Information

When MDAA has given the information and the consumer has resolved their problem or says that they no longer wish to proceed, the advocacy inquiry service stops. We may refer the consumer to another service which may better suit their needs.

3. Individual Advocacy Support

MDAA has a formal procedure when closing files or ending advocacy support services:

- When the consumer, their family or carer and the advocate agree that the problem has been resolved, MDAA tells them that they no longer need advocacy support.
- The advocate tells the consumer how their personal information and file will be handled, in line with MDAA's privacy and confidentiality policy.
- a volunteer will contact the consumers at least once per year after their file is closed. If the consumer agrees, they will ask some set questions about the consumer's experience of MDAA and what results they got from using MDAA's services.

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- If the consumer agrees in writing, MDAA keeps their name, address and telephone number, to send them information, newsletters, invitations to meetings, etc. If the consumer does not want MDAA to keep these details they are destroyed with the consumer's file 7 years or as legally required after the file has been closed.
 - MDAA tells each consumer that they can contact MDAA at any time in the future if they need our services.

Office Use Only:

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Signed off by: Zhila Hasanloo

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