



Service Access Policy

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| Policy Type | Service Delivery |
| Version | 4.0 |
| Development Date | February 2013 |
| Revision Date | July 2023 |
| Date for Review | July 2028 |
| Person/Body Responsible | Leadership Team |
| Approved By | Chief Executive Officer |

Purpose

Mental Health Foundation ACT (MHF) believes that people living with a mental illness and their families have the right to access the services they need to ensure they can achieve a good quality of life. It is essential that each person living with a mental illness, or their carers, who are seeking a service has access to the services they need through a co-design process, supported decision making, and a trauma informed approach to choice and control of services the person accesses.

MHF is committed to maximising access to its services for everyone and ensuring equity of access to all potential service users. MHF will work to optimise access for people to engage its services and activities.

It is not the intent of this policy to label a person, but it is recognised that this can be an unintended consequence of being determined eligible for mental health support services. The purpose of defining access is to enable people with a mental health issue to access supports and services, and to ensure that services are directed towards the target group.

Scope

This policy applies to all existing and potential future MHF participants and their carers who have requested or are currently receiving MHF services.

Definitions

Access – ability and capacity to acquire entry to an MHF provided service or program.

Eligibility – predetermined selection criteria required for entry to an MHF provided service or program.

Individual Service Agreement – contract between MHF and the participant receiving services funded through an NDIS plan.

NDIS – means the Commonwealth funded National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Referral – a formal request for assistance.

Policy

MHF will make services available to anyone who is eligible under program and funding guidelines, such as the NDIS, or who otherwise has the capacity to pay for the services being requested.

MHF will provide access to services free of any form of discrimination based on a participant's ethnicity, country of birth, spoken language, age, gender, marital status, political or religious beliefs, sexual preference or disability.

MHF staff will use a range of strategies to ensure they can meet participant needs via the services available, or direct people toward other suitable providers to obtain them.

MHF will:

- Identify and address barriers to access for people in relevant target groups,
- Use service planning to maximise accessibility for people in the target groups, ensuring that all services, activities, facilities and premises are co-designed to maximise physical and cultural accessibility for service users,

- Use proactive supportive decision-making information strategies for potential service user groups to increase knowledge of and understanding about the organisation and the services offered, and
- Regularly review, with MHF participants, how accessible services are and use this information to improve access wherever possible.

Referral

MHF programs will accept referrals from a range of avenues, including, but not limited to, prospective participants, carers, family members, advocates, health and allied health professionals, government or non-government agencies.

Where specific referral pathways are identified in program models or service funding agreements, MHF staff will direct or refer potentially eligible persons to the appropriate pathway for services and support service funding.

Eligibility

MHF offers services aimed at meeting the diverse needs of people living with mental illness and their carers. Some eligibility criteria apply for accessing MHF services. These may include:

- The person being an NDIS participant,
- The person's ability to pay on a fee for service basis,
- Meeting the criteria of a non-NDIS government funded program being delivered by MHF, or
- Meeting the criteria of the funding source for another specific program.

Prioritisation of need – waiting lists

Where MHF has capacity to offer a service to an eligible person and/or their family, they will be contacted to commence intake and assessment processes.

Where demand for services within a program exceeds capacity, priority criteria will be applied to the intake and assessment process. Priority access criteria are aimed at ensuring that people who have acute needs receive services within an appropriate timeframe. Any reprioritisation will be negotiated with the person receiving the service.

The MHF Program Manager will ensure regular and timely contact is maintained with each person on the program waiting list.

Refusal of service

MHF will only refuse to provide services under the following circumstances:

- The person is not eligible for or does not have a current NDIS plan.
- The person and/or family do not have the financial resources to cover the cost on a fee-for-service basis,
- The person and/or family do not meet the eligibility criteria of a non-NDIS government funded program (if relevant),
- MHF has no current capacity to provide services,
- The support requested is not something that MHF provides, and/or
- The needs of the person are such that MHF cannot safely provide support.

MHF will provide people and/or families who are refused a service with an explanation of the reason for that refusal, and information and where possible, referral to a range of alternative options for appropriate services, supports and strategies.

References

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| ACT Government | <i>Raising the Standards 2002</i> |
| Australian Government | <i>National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010</i> |
| Lift up Voices | <i>Service Access Policy 2021</i> |



National Disability Insurance *Terms of Business for Registered Support Providers, June 2013*

Northcott *Service Access Policy, n.d.*

| Distribution and location list | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Electronic | SharePoint.../Admin /Admin /Library and reference material /Policies and Procedures/ Service Delivery. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MHF Website |

| Document History | | | | |
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| Author | Version | Amendment | Owner | Date of Effect |
| Policy Manager | 1.0 | Document Created | EO | 26/3/2013 |
| Corporate Support Manager | 2.0 | <p>Document reviewed against NDIS Terms of Business for Service Providers.</p> <p>Revised purpose statement to eliminate references to available resources and program target groups.</p> <p>Revised definition of Service Funding agreement to include agreements with individuals.</p> <p>Broadened capacity for individuals to access services rather than programs based on capacity to pay.</p> <p>Expanded minority groups re discrimination.</p> <p>Added refusal and termination of services where there is no capacity to cover the cost.</p> | EO | 15/8/2014 |

| Document History | | | | |
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| Author | Version | Amendment | Owner | Date of Effect |
| Corporate Services Manager | 3.0 | <p>Reviewed for currency.</p> <p>Included in 'purpose' 'that it is not intended for the policy to label a person'.</p> <p>Added in 'Scope'.</p> <p>Inclusion of NDIS plan and fee for service as eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Minor grammatical changes.</p> <p>Changed reference to 'consumer' to 'participant'.</p> <p>Changed Executive Officer to Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Added that services can be ceased at any time in line with the cancellation policy set out in the Individual Service Agreement.</p> | CEO | 16/11/2020 |
| Corporate Services Manager | 4.0 | <p>Updated to incorporate new logo and branding guidelines.</p> <p>Added 'spoken' in relation to discrimination and participant's language.</p> <p>Under referral included wording 'a range of avenues, including, but not limited to', so it is clear that referrals can come from other sources.</p> <p>In eligibility added in 'Australian Capital' before Territory.</p> <p>Removed paragraphs about MHF not having the resources to take on an eligible new participant. We should strive to be able to take all eligible and appropriate referrals received.</p> <p>Removed information on cessation of services as that is already in the Service Exit and Re-Entry Procedures.</p> <p>Update reference list.</p> | CEO | July 2023 |