

## Diversity Policy

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Scope**

- 1.1.1. This Policy applies to the provision of all services and supports at Early Autism Services.
- 1.1.2. All permanent, fixed term and casual staff, contractors and volunteers are required to take full responsibility for ensuring a full understanding of the commitments outlined in this Policy.
- 1.1.3. The relevant persons specified in the column corresponding to a procedure described in this Policy have the responsibility to implement the relevant systems, procedures, workflows and other strategies referred to in the relevant procedure.

### **1.2. Purpose**

- 1.2.1. This Policy and the Policies and Procedures and related documentation set out in section 5.2 below (Related Documentation) supports Early Autism Services to apply the Individual values and beliefs NDIS Practice Standard.
- 1.2.2. Early Autism Services is committed to ensuring each Client is treated with dignity and respect, can maintain their identity, make informed choices about their or care and services, and live the life they choose.  
In this regard, Early Autism Services is committed to ensuring it:
  - a. has a culture of inclusion and respect for consumers; and
  - b. supports consumers to exercise choice and independence, and
  - c. respects consumers' privacy.

### **1.3. NDIS Quality Indicators**

- 1.3.1. In this regard, Early Autism Services aims to demonstrate each of the following quality indicators through the application of this Policy and the relevant systems, procedures, workflows and other strategies referred to in this Policy and the Related Documentation:
- 1.3.2. At the direction of the participant, the culture, diversity, values and beliefs of that participant are identified and sensitively responded to.
- 1.3.3. Each participant's right to practice their culture, values and beliefs while accessing support is supported.

## **2. Policy Statement**

### **2.1. General**

- 2.1.1. The people of Australia come from a wide range of backgrounds. Early Autism Services creates an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, where traditions and histories of different groups are valued and appreciated. Early Autism Services acknowledges and respects the traditional owners of the land – Indigenous Australians.
- 2.1.2. Early Autism Services supports diversity and by extension Workers and Clients from diverse languages, religions, ethnicity, cultures, abilities, sexual orientations, personal characteristics, backgrounds and situations.
- 2.1.3. Early Autism Services will:
- a. treat everyone uniquely, ensuring individual needs are met;
  - b. create a welcoming, ability-friendly, confidential and culturally appropriate environment;
  - c. recognise, value and respect the diversity of Early Autism Services' Workers, Clients and the families and communities in which they live;
  - d. ensure Clients with diverse needs can access Early Autism Services' services and are free from stigma, discrimination and stereotyping;
  - e. ensure Early Autism Services' services and supports are culturally appropriate and sensitive to the confidentiality of personal diversity as determined by the Client;
  - f. at the direction of the Client, identify and respond to the culture, diversity, values and beliefs of the Client;
  - g. support each Client's right to practice their culture, values and beliefs while accessing supports;
  - h. be responsive, inclusive and sensitive to Clients who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex;
  - i. holistically acknowledge and respect a person's individual needs, unique history, life experiences and personal choices; and
  - j. ensure the Early Autism Services Work Health and Safety Policy and Risk Management Policy includes strategies to identify and manage potential risks to diversity and equality.
- 2.1.4. Early Autism Services will:
- a. ensure all Workers are skilled in inclusive practice and service delivery.

- b. keep service delivery free of inappropriate conduct that detracts from principles of diversity and equality, including discrimination (including indirect discrimination) and harassment (including bullying, victimisation and vilification); and
- c. expect Workers to respect local culture etiquette, protocol and communication techniques to ensure that their conduct, as a representative of Early Autism Services, is appropriate and culturally sensitive.

### **3. Procedures**

#### **3.1. General**

- 3.1.1. The Policy is supported by the following Procedures which are intended to clarify the responsibilities of the board, Principal, Key Management Personnel and other Workers and make explicit the underlying principles of the Policy. The Procedures work together dynamically and are relevant to all parts of Early Autism Services. The Procedures are not ordered in priority and all are important to achieving the aims of the Policy Statement.

#### **3.2. Information to assist Early Autism Services to identify and respond to the culture, diversity, values and beliefs of the Client**

- 3.2.1. Ensure each Client and their families, carers, chosen community or advocate are provided with our Client Information Booklet, which shall include:
  - a. a statement which:
    - i. confirms Early Autism Services' commitment to respecting the Client's culture, diversity, values and beliefs; and
    - ii. includes those specific rights the Client is entitled to as a client of Early Autism Services including the right to practice their culture, values and beliefs while accessing support and the other rights set out in the Policy Statement.
  - b. a Client Intake Form which provides an opportunity for the Client to tell us about their culture, diversity, values and beliefs and how Early Autism Services can:
    - i. identify and sensitively respond to the culture, diversity, values and beliefs of the Client;
    - ii. support the Client's right to practice their culture, values and beliefs while accessing supports;
  - c. information for accessing an interpreter service or bilingual staff.
  - d. information for accessing an advocate or legal service (including an independent advocate)

### **3.3. Identify and respond to the culture, diversity, values and beliefs of the Client**

- 3.3.1. At the direction of the Client, identify and respond to the culture, diversity, values and beliefs of the Client by
- a. having an understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences.
  - b. understanding that the differences can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
  - c. providing a safe, positive, and nurturing environment.
  - d. supporting Clients to communicate about their culture, diversity, values and beliefs to ensure our services and supports are responsive to their personal needs by communicating with the Client in accordance with section 4.4.
  - e. meeting the Client to gather information about the Client's cultural background (including religious background), individual needs, unique history, life experiences and personal choices including to understand if their experiences and background may impact their ability to engage with any services and supporting and how, as a result, we may sensitively respond.
  - f. respecting, promoting and upholding the Client's rights and responsibilities including responding to and supporting each Client's right to practice their culture, values and beliefs while accessing support as well as the other rights set out in the Policy Statement
  - g. being sensitive and responsive to cultural and individual differences and providing opportunities and assistance to all people regardless of their circumstances including (but not limited to) their race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, spiritual, political or other opinions, national or social origin, or ability.
  - h. incorporating cultural needs or wishes of the Client in service provision.
  - i. in the case of services or supports provided in the Client's home, respecting cultural spaces in the home, for example, those reserved for prayer.
  - j. understanding the cultural/ language needs of our Client's Representative, where they are involved, in particular, respecting the social structure of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.
  - k. listening intently to what the Client and where appropriate their Representative has told us.
  - l. using person-centred thinking, planning and approaches when working with the Client to design the service and supports that will meet their cultural background, individual needs, diversity, values and beliefs.

- m. recognising and responding to individual differences such as age, gender, culture, heritage, language, faith, sexual identity and relationship status and other relevant factors.
- n. working with the Client and adapting to their individual needs as they change over time regardless of the frequency or cause and not being “anchored” to the information provided or preferences expressed at the client assessment or support planning stage.

### **3.4. Communicate in the language, mode of communication and terms that the Client is most likely to understand**

- 3.4.1. To ensure our services and supports are responsive to their personal needs, support Clients to communicate about their culture, diversity, values and beliefs in a manner which is responsive to their needs and in the language, mode of communication and terms that the Client is most likely to understand by:
  - a. using respectful, open, clear, and honest communication in all professional interactions (e.g., spoken, written, social media).
  - b. communicating effectively with Clients to promote their understanding of the subject matter of the conversation (e.g., active listening, use of plain language, encouraging questions).
  - c. identifying potential barriers to effective communication and making a reasonable effort to address these barriers including providing information and materials on how to access interpreter services, and legal and advocacy services.
  - d. working with bilingual assessment staff, interpreters (linguistic and/or sign), communication specialists and relevant advocacy agencies/services that can also assist Client participation, inclusion, informed choice and control.
  - e. encouraging Clients to engage with their Representative if Early Autism Services has been directed to do so (as applicable).
  - f. documenting all material communications accurately, clearly, professionally and in a timely manner and including them in the Client’s information file.
  - g. Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and all people from Cultural, linguistic and diverse backgrounds (CALD) are supported in accessing services and support in the community in an inclusive and supportive environment.

### **3.5. Supporting cultural, linguistic and diverse backgrounds**

3.5.1. Early Autism Services supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and all other people from Cultural, linguistic and diverse backgrounds (CALD) to maintain and strengthen the connection to their culture and community, which includes providing a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

3.5.2. Early Autism Services supports the rights of individuals who identify as having a specific cultural or linguistic affiliation by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry, ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, language(s) spoken at home, or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis. Early Autism Services provides a culturally safe environment for CALD children.

### **3.6. Providing access to advocacy**

3.6.1. Encouraging and supporting Clients to access legal or advocacy services can assist them to express their preferences with respect to their culture and diversity to Early Autism Services by providing information in relation to how to access such services

### **3.7. Maintain Clients' rights to privacy**

3.7.1. Maintain the Client's right to privacy, ensuring that records and information about them and in particular their decisions with respect to their culture and beliefs are only used in accordance with this Policy and Related Documentation or under the Client's direction for the purpose of providing services and supports and are otherwise kept confidential (and only disclosed in line with applicable legislation and Related Documentation)

### **3.8. Welcome feedback in relation to culture and diversity**

3.8.1. Create an environment where all feedback is valued including from Clients (including persons with disability), Workers and others in relation to the subject matter of this Policy and the implementation of these procedures including identifying areas where Early Autism Services can learn and improve its support of Clients with respect to their culture and beliefs.

3.8.2. Welcome feedback (including anonymously) and promptly deal with any complaints or incidents involving conduct that detracts from principles of diversity and equality, including discrimination (including indirect discrimination) and harassment (including bullying, victimisation and vilification) in accordance with Feedback and Complaints Management Policy or Incident Management Policy (as applicable).

- 3.8.3. Actively consult with Clients to continually improve in delivering best practices in service delivery.
- 3.8.4. Conduct an annual survey of all Workers, Clients, their support networks and other stakeholders and ask them to suggest areas for improvement in relation to Early Autism Services' application of this Policy including its commitment to the Client's diversity, culture and beliefs.

### **3.9. Workers to commit to Policy**

- 3.9.1. All Workers are provided with a copy of this policy in their orientation and induction materials.
- 3.9.2. Under their employment, contractor agreement or binding letter agreement, each Worker at Early Autism Services is required to take responsibility for ensuring:
  - a. full understanding of the commitments outlined in this policy as well as procedures and other strategies designed to ensure that the principles of this policy are upheld; and
  - b. ensuring that the principles and procedures and other strategies within this Policy are applied in their daily work.

### **3.10. Train Workers**

- 3.10.1. Train Workers to assist them to understand how to apply this Policy and these procedures in everyday practice during their induction, as part of ongoing refresher training and/or when processes change.
- 3.10.2. Train and support Workers to identify and report a breach of a Client's rights by any other party.

### **3.11. Policy adoption**

- 3.11.1. Adopt and maintain the Policy and Related Documentation which assists Early Autism Services to demonstrate the relevant NDIS Quality Indicators related to the Individual values and beliefs NDIS Practice Standards.



## 4. Definitions

### 4.1. Definitions

Term	Meaning
<b>Early Autism Services</b>	means Early Autism Services (Australia) Pty Ltd ABN 39 632 134 028
<b>Clients</b>	means clients of Early Autism Services (including an NDIS participant).
<b>Key Management Personnel</b>	means key management personnel involved in Early Autism Services as outlined in NDIS registration .
<b>Legislation Register</b>	means the register of legislation, regulations, rules and guidelines maintained by Early Autism Services.
<b>Policy Register</b>	means the register of policies of Early Autism Services.
<b>Principal</b>	means Chief Executive Officer.
<b>Worker</b>	means a permanent, fixed term or casual member of staff, a contractor or volunteer employed or otherwise engaged by Early Autism Services and includes the Principal.

## 5. Policy Governance

### 5.1. Relevant Legislation, Regulations, Rules and Guidelines

- 5.1.1. Legislation, Rules, Guidelines and Policies apply to this Policy and Related Documentation as set out in the Legislation Register.

## 5.2. Related Documentation

- 5.2.1. The application of the above policy by Early Autism Services is supported in part by and should be read alongside the Policies and Procedures and related documentation corresponding to this Policy in the Policy Register.

## 5.3. Inconsistency

- 5.3.1. If and to the extent that the terms of this Policy are or would be inconsistent with the requirements of any applicable law, this Policy is deemed to be amended but only to the extent required to comply with the applicable law.

## 5.4. Policy Details

<b>Policy Author</b>	Quality, Risk and Accreditation Manager
<b>Executive Owner</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Approved By</b>	The Board of Early Autism Services (Australia) Pty Ltd
<b>Approval Date</b>	August 2022
<b>Review Date</b>	August 2024
<b>Version</b>	1.0