P024 – Advocacy

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| Applies to: |
| All staff |

# PURPOSE

We recognise, encourage and support a client’s right to use an advocate when dealing with First Call Nursing.

# POLICY

Whenever possible, we will facilitate a client to access an advocate should a client wish us to do so.

**Advocate**

An advocate is a person who supports and represents another person in their dealings with others.

**Advocacy Services**

An Advocacy Service is an independent, confidential service provided free of charge in each state and territory. If you receive Australian Government-subsidised aged care services, Advocacy Services can help you to exercise your rights by representing you and providing information, advice and support to you, your carer, your family or your friends. (Glossary Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing)

An advocate is an important resource for a client in situations where a client feels confused, overwhelmed, intimidated or under confident. An advocate can be a family member, friend or an outside organisation.

Staff are provided with information and training on the use of advocacy services. First Call Nursing understand the role of advocates, will work with the appointed advocate and continue to provide support services as required to meet a client’s needs. It is important for staff and advocates to work together effectively to ensure that clients’ rights to control and choice are maintained.

First Call Nursing will ensure clients understand the role of an advocate as well as their right to use an advocate in relation to First Call Nursing. The client will be informed, both verbally and in writing (Clients Rights and Responsibilities), about their right to use an advocate and the role of an advocate when the client is:

* Assessed and reassessed for services.
* Refused service.

Or if:

* They wish to make a complaint about the service.
* A Staff member believes an advocate may be beneficial to the client.
* Staff members within First Call Nursing will not become a client’s advocate in relation to First Call Nursing and/or their contract funder.
* If a client chooses to use an advocate, the advocate’s name and contact details will be recorded in Client’s file (the database).

If a client wishes to change their advocate or no longer requires their advocate, the advocate’s details will be amended in client’s file (the database).

PROCEDURE

If a client of First Call Nursing has asked you to be their advocate, this means they would like you to act on their behalf in their dealings with the service. You may be a family member or friend of the client or a member of an advocacy service.

Staff members of First Call Nursing are excluded from being advocates for clients receiving support services from First Call Nursing.

Reasons for accessing advocacy services may include, but are not limited to:

* Understanding financial and contract arrangements.
* Assistance with understanding or communication needs.
* Explaining rights and responsibilities.
* Facilitating complaints and feedback.
* Communicating decisions, choices and arrangements for goal setting and care planning.
* Supporting independence.

Being an advocate may require your attendance or involvement during assessments and reviews of the client’s situation and services received, or if the client wishes to communicate or negotiate anything with the service or lodge a complaint about the service.

First Call Nursing ask our clients to complete an *Authority to Act as an Advocate* form when they wish to appoint or change their advocate. Clients are free to choose an advocate of their choice and to change their advocates whenever they wish, however, we request a new Authority *to Act as an Advocate* form to be completed each time so that First Call Nursing staff are always clear on who the client’s advocate is.

**As an advocate of the consumer, we ask you to be aware of the following and to ensure that:**

* The client has given their written authority for you to act as their advocate.
* The service is aware that you are acting as the client’s advocate.
* You always act in the best interest of the client.
* The client is aware of any issues and developments in relation to the service they receive and which you, as their advocate, may be involved in.
* The client is kept informed of any developments.
* You are familiar with the details of the client’s care plan/individual service plan.
* You encourage the client to provide feedback to you about the services they are receiving.
* Advise First Call Nursing about any changes in client circumstances and any concerns about changing client needs.
* You are prepared to relinquish the role of advocate should the client wish this.

**To contact an advocate:**

First Call Nursing will:

* Provide clients with assistance to access and use an advocate.
* Identify advocacy services and make this information available to clients, their representatives and staff.

The National Aged Care Advocacy Line is **1800 700 600**. Please note that the number may not be available from mobile phones and in some capital cities. For alternative contact details see below:

***New South Wales***

The Aged-care Rights Service Inc.
Level 4
418a Elizabeth Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Phone: **(02) 9281 3600** or **1800 424 079** (free call)

Email: tars@tars.com.au

Website: [www.tars.com.au](http://www.tars.com.au/)

Check [D005](file:///G%3A%5CFC%20P%20%26%20P%5CDocuments%5CD005%20Advocacy%20Services_contact%20details%20V2.docx) Advocacy Services Contact Details for details of various advocacy services. Consideration is given to clients with special needs, including:

* Clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
* LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) clients.
* Indigenous Australians.
* Clients with dementia.
* Clients with learning difficulties.
* Clients with disabilities.

First Call Nursing is aware that a number of groups may have special needs and requirements that may require the services of specialist advocacy agencies.

**Public Guardian**

Where a client no longer has the capacity to maintain control over their decision-making, a public guardian may be required to advocate for the consumer’s rights. Where required, a guardian makes decisions on behalf of the client in relation to personal matters such as healthcare or accommodation. Clients may have already made future plans for who should act on their behalf if they lose the capacity to make their own decisions, including appointing an enduring guardian.

Assessments should include a cognitive assessment or referral to an agency with specialist knowledge to undertake the assessment. Referral should be made to the Guardianship Tribunal where appropriate.

The Australian Guardianship and Administration Committee provides links to adult guardianship agencies in each state and territory. These can be found at: <http://www.agac.org.au/links>

**References and resources**

New South Wales Government Department of Family & Community Services - Ageing, Disability and Home Care

(2013) – Planning for the future:

<http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/individuals/ageing_well/planning_for_the_future>

# DOCUMENTS

F031 Authority to act as an advocate

**F031 - AUTHORITY TO ACT AS AN ADVOCATE**

**CLIENT DETAILS**

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I authorise the person named below to act as an advocate on my behalf and represent my interests in relation to my involvement with:

 FIRST CALL NURSING

I understand that First Call Nursing may discuss details of my care plan and the service it provides with my advocate if the need arises.

This authority takes effect from: DATE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and replaces any previously advised arrangements. I understand that I can change my choice of advocate at any time and undertake to advise First Call Nursing of any such change in writing.

CLIENT’S SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DATE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**ADVOCATE DETAILS**

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I have read the *Guidelines for Advocates* and agree to act as an advocate for the above named consumer.

ADVOCATE SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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