

A Disability-Responsive Intake Process

Tailoring service delivery to meet the needs of clients

It is a **requirement under human rights and discrimination law** that services meet the needs of people with disability. This process is designed to help you ensure your services meet the varied needs of your clients.

For people with disability, **disclosing disability may be a risk**, which is why these questions are structured to clarify their needs independently of disclosing disability status. People with disability may:

- have experienced discrimination during previous engagements,
- have had their disability status used against them as part of the violence they are experiencing, or
- be seeking to manage the risk of their children being removed.[1]

Disability is not always visible, and you will not always be able to tell. These questions are designed to help both you and your client clarify how you can modify service delivery to meet their needs. Clients may not share their disability status with you. This does not mean that they do not have disability support needs. For all of the reasons above, people with disability may require significant rapport to be developed before they will share their disability status with you.

Of all of the attributes a worker may display, **empathy is most important** to ensuring a good experience for clients. Curiosity and a lack of assumptions is vital.

For some people, this may be the first time they have had the opportunity to share their preferences about how their services should be delivered. You may be helping them find the language to articulate their needs to others (and 'self-advocate' for accessible services). If you think you may have identified a need that has not been raised by the client, you may wish to offer the support you think they need.

Please note it is **your responsibility** to ensure that your service can meet any of the needs that are disclosed through this process. Where needs cannot be met, you should take care to ensure the client does not feel shut down, rejected, or like a burden. Avoid knee-jerk reactions. Although a request may be unusual, it may not be impossible to meet that need.

You may need to find out whether a need can be met, and you should share that with the client as part of this process. As their worker, you may be able to **advocate** for a policy to be changed or suspended, or you may be able to seek alternative services that offer other choices. Where you cannot meet a need, apologise, note the deficit in your service's capacity to meet their needs, and provide that feedback to your team leader.

[1] Please note that these are well-documented risks that people with disability frequently encounter. See Report for further information.

Appendix 3

CHIFVC Disability-Responsive Intake Process (practice-ready layout)

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Suggested script for workers

We want to provide you with a service that meets your needs. I've got a series of questions here that will help us to do this. You will always be informed of how your information will be used, and we will seek to follow your wishes wherever possible. At the end of this discussion, we will have a talk about whether you want me to share this information with other workers who might work with you. You do not have to tell us anything you don't want to tell us, but whatever you can share will help us provide the kind of service that will work for you.

Meetings

How would you prefer to have meetings with us?

Offer: phone call, zoom, face to face, options about length, breaks, location (consider confidentiality), frequency, time of day, presence of children (childcare? public space?), etc.

Is there anyone you would like to be present during meetings?

Support person should be welcomed; clarify whether an interpreter is required additionally as community members should not be relied on for interpretation. Offer communications professional or communications strategies; National Relay Service? Communications app?

Online Meetings

Do you prefer to speak with your voice or type in the chat?

Do you require captions?

Yes No

Do you need to use headphones?

Yes No

Would you prefer having your video/the other persons video, on or off?

On Off

Any other preferences for an online call?

Service delivery

How are you going with remembering things at the moment?

Can we help you with reminders?

Frequency of reminders –3 weeks, 1 week, day before?

Are there any parts of service delivery that you already know you'll need help with?

Offer: help with reading, help with filling in forms, help with contacting other services, help with documenting services, workers and meetings; emphasise that you're open to amendments to service delivery – that it's OK if the client doesn't know right now; provide some context about what service delivery is likely to involve.

Communication

How do you prefer that we communicate with you?

Offer: email before or after, written notes or summary sent afterwards, recording meetings, repetition in meetings, text messages afterwards, plain language, Symbotalk?, keep checking in.

How do you prefer to communicate with us?

Offer: email, phone call, text message, Symbotalk, communication boards, communications professionals.

How would you prefer we address

miscommunications? *How best to make space for this?*

Help with trauma

How can we help you feel safe/cope if you feel overwhelmed or upset?

Offer: space, a cup of tea, distraction, a quiet presence, breathing exercises, mindfulness strategies (5 things you can see etc), fresh air, a cushion or a soft toy, option to reschedule to another time, tablet games, weighted blankets/toys available, sensory toys (slime, kinetic sand).

Physical environment (only if face to face meetings)

What would make you feel safe and comfortable on arrival at a/this service?

Offer: someone to greet them – should that be the worker? Greeted by name? Preference to be left alone until the worker is available. Offering a drink; offering to sit with them; offer volunteer; fidget toys, waiting rooms, worker ready at door; warning about wait times and nature of waiting room (perhaps images of room sent through to client).

Is there anything we should change in the physical environment?

Ground floor meeting room, space for mobility aids, guidance for low vision or Deaf/hard of hearing people, preferred seating, smaller waiting room, quiet space, sensory toys etc.

Are there any needs we should address during the meeting?

Do you need to be able to stand and move around regularly during meetings? Regular food or drink?

If things change while you're waiting, how would you like that communicated to you?

If your worker is running late; if your worker can't make it and has been replaced; if something else has changed.

What would help you feel safe as you leave the service?

Do we need to have a casual discussion to help you transition? Would it be best for someone to walk you out? Check in post-meeting/did you get home OK? Transport? Waiting with you/seeing you off?

Sharing your information

Would you prefer for us to share your story with others as you move through the system, or would you like to share your story yourself with new workers?

Ensure client is aware that although their preference will be given due weight, some information may be shared in some circumstances without their consent in alignment with the Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes.

It may be worth revisiting the Information Privacy and Consent to Share documents.

Would you prefer to talk to others about the needs we've discussed here, or would you prefer that we pass the details on to other workers or agencies?

If you would be more comfortable, we can provide these details to other services that may be working with you. Alternatively, you may prefer to discuss them with any new worker yourself.

Suggested script for workers

Great, we will implement these as discussed and I'll come back to you with any further questions. I've made a note to follow up on the queries you had about <x, y, z>. If anything changes or you have any other ideas about how our service could best meet your needs, please feel free to let me or future workers know.

Disability

Suggested script for workers

I'm now going to ask you about your disability status. This will have no impact on anything we've discussed so far. You do not have to disclose anything to me that you don't want to. If you tell us you have disability, this information will be stored on our systems, and is subject to the same consent conditions which means that there may be situations where we share it with others.

Do you want to share any information about any disability?

Do you have any support needs we should know about that we haven't discussed already?