

Information Regarding Participation by Service Users/Consumers in the Audit Process

A requirement of funding by State and Commonwealth Governments is that Organisations are certified under or meet relevant quality standards with the aim of enhancing the quality of services for service users/consumers and giving them a greater say in the services they receive. These include access to services, confidentiality, privacy, management of complaints without fear of retribution, access to advocacy support services, decision-making and choice, individual needs and goals are met, support and encouragement to participate and play a valued role in the life of the community and service management.

To achieve and maintain certification or compliance with the relevant quality standards, Organisations must implement and maintain effective policies and practices that meet the required standards.

The Institute for Healthy Communities Australia Certification Pty Ltd (IHCAC) is a non-government, not for profit organisation with charitable status. It is not funded by Governments and is completely impartial. All IHCAC staff and personnel, including audit teams, must ensure the confidentiality of all information, written and verbal, gained during an appraisal/review/audit relating to an organisation about its management, services and feedback from staff, consumers, families, carers and advocates, unless explicitly exempted.

The audit undertaken by IHCAC is to ensure Organisations are meeting the required Standards and that service users/consumers are receiving supportive and quality services. The process entails: meetings with board members, senior management, staff, service user/consumer interviews; site inspection; and a documentation review of policies, procedures and other relevant documentation including service user/consumer files.

Participation by service users/consumers is at all times voluntary and based on the principle of informed consent and, where possible, includes permission for the Audit Team to review the service user's/consumer's file.

The Organisation from which the service user/consumer receives services will be in contact to seek the agreement of the service user/consumer to participate in the process. However, prior to providing consent, the service user/consumer may wish to contact an independent advocacy support person or organisation of their choice that can provide support in making a choice to consent, and support during the interview process. Information regarding independent advocacy support can be obtained through the organisation from which service users/consumers receive services or through contacting IHCAC on (07) 3844 2222.

This participation may include meeting the Audit Team in a face to face interview, via telephone, group interview and/or consent to the service users/consumers file being reviewed by the team. Consent must be obtained.

There are many options. These include:

- interviewed face to face, or as part of a group and a file review;
- interview over the telephone and a file review;
- not be interviewed but agreeable to a file review; or
- do not wish to be interviewed nor a file review.

Service users/consumers wishing to participate in the audit process and who have communication issues such as requiring the use of an interpreter, should contact the Organisation so that this can be organised for the interview.

Service users/consumers may also attend both the opening and closing meetings of all audits. Participation by the service user/consumer is highly valued by the Audit Team in understanding the services provided by the Organisation, whether services could be improved and the level of involvement by service users/consumers within the Organisation.

Please note: In the case of Queensland Child Safety Services, children and young people, or their families, in the care of the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women and receiving care from care services or foster carers or kinship carers are not approached to participate in the audit process. The Department provides consent to the audit team to review the files of children and young people.