

NDIS Core module POLICY AND PROCEDURe MANUAL

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# DIVISION 1 - RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

# DECISION MAKING AND CHOICE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The intent of this policy and procedure is to describe Branch Out Support’s method of empowering and facilitating participants to make informed choices regarding their state of risk. Which covers all Branch Out Support’s employees or visitors and applies to all future and existing participants, members of their families, carers, and other stakeholders of the organisation.

The policy and procedure comply with appropriate laws, regulations, and standards.

**Definitions**

**Advocate** – a person who assists a participant in expressing their needs or speaking on their behalf. Advocates can be family members, friends, or an Independent Advocate. They are not substitute decision-makers who are there to ensure the participant’s needs and wants are listened to.

**Independent advocate** - means a person who is independent of the NDIA, the NDIS Commission and any NDIS providers providing support or services to the person; the person offers independent advocacy to assist them in exercising choice and control and having their voice heard in matters that affect them.

**Child’s representative** – a person responsible for undertaking acts and making decisions about the NDIS Act 2013 on behalf of a child. A child’s representative is usually a person with parental responsibility. However, it may sometimes be a legal guardian, a state or territory government agency, or a person appointed by the NDIA.

**Court-appointed decision-maker** – a person who, under the law of the Commonwealth or a State or Territory, has guardianship of a participant or is appointed by a court, tribunal, board, or panel to make decisions for the participant.

**Decision-making capacity is** a person’s ability to make decisions about things that affect their daily life. This usually means they can understand the situation and the decision required, understand what the choices are, weigh up the consequences of the options, understand how the consequences affect them, and communicate their decision.

**Dignity of risk** - the right of an individual to choose to take some risk in engaging in life experiences.

**Nominee** – a person appointed in writing, at the request of a participant or their guardian, or on the initiative of the NDIA, to act on behalf of or make decisions on behalf of a participant. Under the NDIS, there are two types of nominees: a plan nominee and a correspondence nominee. One person can be appointed as both and either type can be set indefinitely or for a specified term.

**Participant-appointed decision-maker** – someone who can decide on the participant’s behalf under a formal arrangement between that person and the participant (e.g., a power of attorney, an advance health directive or an enduring guardian under State or Territory law).

## Policy

Participants have the right to make their own decisions.

Participants have the right to maintain their attributes and preferences and the right to dignity.

Branch Out Support will allow participants to make informed decisions and choices daily according to their needs.

Branch Out Support will encourage participants to make informed decisions and choices regarding themselves and the services they receive.

If the participant cannot make decisions because of disability or impairment, an authorised representative or administrator can be legally appointed to make decisions on their behalf.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support will provide the participant or their representatives with access to information to enable them to participate in the decision-making process affecting the participant’s needs.
* Information provided to a participant is in clear and concise language, and if necessary, interpreting and translation services can be used.
* Branch Out Support will provide information in its participants’ Handbook about independent bodies and agencies that can assist the participant.
* Branch Out Support will respect and act upon the outcomes of a participant and/or their representative’s input into decision-making on the participant’s needs.
* Branch Out Support will respond to participants' changing needs, goals, aspirations and choices and facilitate and support their informed decision-making and choice.
* If a participant can make decisions, risks and consequences must be communicated to the participant and all relevant stakeholders.
* The participant's safety is essential to Branch Out Support.
* If a decision does not place anyone at risk of harm, staff must comply with the participant’s decision.

**Informal substitute decision-making**

Informal decision-making is when a person decides on behalf of another person and has not been legally appointed. People who can make everyday decisions include the person’s family, friends, carer or nominated support.

Most decisions can be made informally, including who a person wishes to see, their work, leisure, recreation, holidays or accessing services.

Staff must ensure that all informal decision-making arrangements are recorded in the participant’s file and communicated to other relevant staff. Decisions can then be pursued through the agreed casual arrangements.

**Formal substitute decision-making**

Formal decision-making arrangements must be implemented within Branch Out Support when informal decision-making is insufficient, such as when there is conflict over decisions being made about the person, where specific legislative requirements exist (e.g., consent to medical treatment), or where the person has a guardian or appointed nominee or decision maker.

Formal arrangements should take a rights-based approach and consider the participant’s wishes as much as possible, regardless of their impaired decision-making capacity.

Staff must record and maintain information about formal decision-making arrangements on participant files. Any amendments to a person’s decision-making arrangements must be documented and communicated to relevant staff as soon as practicable.

Staff must refer any issues relating to formal decision-making to the Case Manager or Operations Manager.

Staff will undergo training and continuous professional development in responding to the needs of participants, maintaining and promoting participant’s independence and decision-making.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to demonstrate Branch Out Support’s commitment to participants’ rights and set out how these rights will be communicated Branch Out Support.

## Policy

Branch Out Support commits to upholding the human rights of all participants.

Branch Out Support requires that people with disabilities have the same human rights as other community members.

Branch Out Support will comply with all relevant legislation and standards.

Branch Out Support ensures its participants are made aware of their rights and responsibilities during the onboarding process and each plan review.

The NDIS Participant Charter sets out participant responsibilities, which contribute to ensuring the rights of all participants and staff are upheld.

## Procedures

Participants have a right to:

* Have recognition as a person and equal opportunity against discrimination.
* Have the right to life.
* Have protection from torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.
* Have freedom from slavery or forced work.
* Have freedom of movement.
* Have the right not to have one’s privacy, family, home, or correspondence arbitrarily or unlawfully interfered with, and one’s reputation unlawfully attacked.
* Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.
* Freedom of expression.
* Peaceful assembly and freedom of association.
* Right to take part in public life.
* Practice and enjoy culture, religion, and language.
* To not be deprived of property other than by law.
* Liberty and security of person.
* Humane treatment when deprived of liberty.
* Detained children to be segregated from detained adults.
* Fair hearing.
* Presumption of innocence when charged with a criminal offence.
* Not to be tried or punished more than once for an offence already been finally convicted or acquitted by the law; and
* Concerning the operation of specific retrospective criminal laws.

Branch Out Support will provide all prospective and existing participants with information about their rights.

Branch Out Support will consider the requirements of individuals when ensuring participants fully understand their rights by providing information in a format that suits their individual communication needs (e.g., in clear and concise English).

Staff will undergo training in participants’ rights and responsibilities during inductions.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Branch Out Support wishes to recognise the Traditional Owners of the Land and the Aboriginal Communities served by Branch Out Support’s service.

Branch Out Support will provide services and support that meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Branch Out Support is committed to working cohesively with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Branch Out Support to ensure staff are trained in culturally appropriate actions and requirements.

This policy applies to all people who may have contact with Branch Out Support’s participants.

## Policy

It is the policy of Branch Out Support to create a safe and welcoming environment for all people. This policy intends to ensure that individuals have the right to engage with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and access the support required to meet their individual needs. If required, frontline workers will collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to support participants in developing and reviewing their Support Plans and activities.

## Procedure

Branch Out Support’s inclusive approach will promote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People's cultural safety by engaging with the participants, their community and relevant stakeholders. Processes are designed to meet the needs and requirements of the participant.

A variety of procedures may be implemented as per the list below:

* Designing and using images that reflect indigenous symbols or pictures in brochures, on the website or in the environment.
* Displaying a Statement of Traditional Owners.
* Clarify if participants identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
* Contacting and maintaining networks with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
* Working with community networks for the benefit and support of the participant.
* Contact the participant’s family, extended family, and community.
* Establishing communication processes for maintaining an individual’s Indigenous support.
* Work with other coordinated services to enhance support for the participant.
* Planning will include actions that promote cultural safety and connectedness and respect the cultural and spiritual identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
* Encouraging and researching community events for the participants, then sharing this information with staff.
* Work with the local communities to provide services, referrals, consortia involvement, and memorandums of understanding.

**Advocacy information**

All files of participants who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander will be reviewed to ensure that Branch Out Support meets the organisation’s inclusive approach obligations. The review will determine if:

* Service access and support strategies are relevant for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.
* Service involvement and links with the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal services are being provided as relevant.
* Their cultural needs are being documented in their Support Plans.
* Strategies and supports are being implemented as per their plan.
* Feedback is gathered from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and frontline workers. Feedback will be related to the cultural competence of Branch Out Support’s service provision.

**staff and Volunteer Training**

Branch Out Support will train all staff and volunteers (if applicable) to ensure that all frontline workers can competently implement Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural competence strategies. The training aims to increase access to the service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# VIOLENCE, ABUSE, NEGLECT, EXPLOITATION AND DISCRIMINATION

Branch Out Support recognises the right of all participants to feel safe and to live in an environment that protects them from assault, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, or any other form of abuse. People with disabilities, children and young people are some of the most vulnerable groups in Branch Out Support’s community. Branch Out Support must identify, consult, and respond to instances where persons with disabilities, children or young people are at risk of significant harm.

Common reasons for people with disabilities, children, and young people to be at risk of significant harm include:

* Domestic and family violence.
* Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.
* Neglect.

The impact of violence, abuse and neglect can span across all domains of a person’s development and life experiences. People who experience violence, abuse and neglect are more likely to have problems with:

* Learning and development.
* Physical and mental health.
* Behaviour.

The purpose of this policy is to prevent and mitigate the effects of violence, abuse, and neglect on participants through training and implementing processes to inform staff and protect participants who are at risk of significant harm.

**Scope**

Branch Out Support will encourage and support any person who has witnessed the abuse of a service user or who suspects that abuse has occurred to make a report and be confident of doing so without fear of retribution.

**Definition**

**Abuse and Neglect:** Any behaviour outside the norms of conduct entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission (i.e., abuse).

**Discrimination:** Treating or proposing to treat someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by the law. Discrimination includes bullying someone because of a protected characteristic.

**Exploitation** is the action or fact of mistreating someone to benefit from their work—the action of making use of and benefiting from resources.

**Violence** Violent behaviour by one person towards another can include abusive behaviour that is physical, sexual, intimidating, and forceful. People with a disability are more likely to experience violence from a carer or family member.

## Policy

This policy aims to:

* Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to participant safety.
* Value and empower the participant to contribute to decisions which affect their lives.
* Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons in disclosing the risks of harm to participant safety.
* Respect diversity in cultures and child-rearing practices while keeping the participant's safety paramount.
* Provide training to staff on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards participants.
* Engage only the most suitable people to work with participants and ensure.
* Superior quality staff, volunteer supervision and professional development.
* Ensure participants know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise any issues.
* Report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities.
* Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and well-being of the participant are at risk.
* Value the input of families and advocates and communicate regularly with them.

If the situation meets the criteria of a reportable incident, then the 'Reportable Incident, Accident and Emergency Policy and Procedure' will apply.

**Statement of commitment to safety**

Branch Out Support is committed to the safety and well-being of all participants. This commitment is the primary focus of Branch Out Support’s support and decision-making. Branch Out Support is committed to providing a safe environment where participants feel safe; their voices are heard and included in decisions that affect their lives. Attention is paid to the cultural safety of participants from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Staff members are responsible for understanding the critical and specific role they play, individually and collectively, to ensure the well-being and safety of all participants, and young people are at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

**Safe Code of Conduct**

Branch Out Support is committed to the safety and well-being of participants. Branch Out Support’s business recognises the importance of, and responsibility for, ensuring Branch Out Support’s environment is a safe, supportive, and enriching environment that respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of all people, enabling them to thrive.

This code of conduct aims to protect staff and participants and reduce opportunities for abuse or harm. It also assists in understanding how to avoid risky behaviours and situations or better manage them. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, disability legislation, policies and procedures and professional standards, codes, or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

Branch Out Support’s management supports implementing and monitoring the Code of Conduct. Branch Out Support will plan, implement, and monitor arrangements for inclusive and safe environments.

All staff, volunteers, and other community members involved in participant-related work must comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate and acceptable behaviour (see '4.3 Acceptable behaviours’ below). The Code of Conduct applies in all situations, including planned activities, digital technology, and social media.

**Acceptable behaviours**

staff or any other persons involved with participant-related work are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of participants by:

* Upholding Branch Out Support's Statement of Commitment for the participant's safety.
* Treat the participants and their families and advocate with respect within the environment and during outside activities as part of everyday social and community activities.
* Listening and responding to the views and concerns of the participants, mainly if they are reporting that they or another person have been abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another participant.
* Promoting cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through interactions with their community leaders and members.
* Promoting cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of people with culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds through engagement with the community accessing the service.
* Promoting the safety, participation, and empowerment of people with disabilities.
* Reporting any allegations of abuse or any personal safety concerns to management.
* Understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including state mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting the participant from harm or abuse
* Maintaining the right to live in a safe environment by promoting and informing the participants of their rights.
* Ensuring participants are safe and protected from harm as quickly as possible once abuse is suspected.
* Identifying themselves to the participant upon entering the premises and showing any required identification.

**Unacceptable behaviours**

As front-line workers, volunteers and community members involved in participant-related work, Branch Out Support must not:

* Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of abuse.
* Develop a relationship with any participant that could be viewed as favouritism or grooming behaviour, e.g., Offering gifts.
* Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with participants that can be interpreted as abusive and unjustifiable in an educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context.
* Ignore behaviours by other adults towards young participants when they're overly familiar or inappropriate.
* Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with participants, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental/advocate guidance or a therapeutic setting.
* Treat a participant unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, or ethnicity.
* Communicate directly with an underage participant through personal or private contact channels, e.g., social media, email, instant messaging or texting, except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to work or activities, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter.

**Screening, supervising, training, and human resource practices to reduce risk**

The staff must undertake disability worker checks, relevant police, working with children checks and the mandatory NDIS Worker Orientation Module. All records will be maintained in their personnel file.

## Procedure

**Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of harm**

Branch Out Support recognise that creating a safe organisation begins with a clear understanding of the potential risks to the participant and staff in an organisation’s setting. Branch Out Support will identify issues and problems and plan to reduce or remove these risks.

To reduce the likelihood of harm, Branch Out Support will consider, define and act against its organisational risks.

These strategies include:

* Think about the organisation, its activities, and services to participants.
* Planning how to make all activities as safe as possible.
* Develop a safety plan for participants who require additional support.
* Support participants with disabilities in understanding plans and safety procedures using appropriate communication methods. Inform participants that they have the right to live in a safe environment.
* Acting proactively to reduce the likelihood of any risks.

**Reporting violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination**

A report must be made if:

* A participant shows a change in behaviour or mood, which may indicate they're being abused.
* Someone behaves towards a participant in a way that makes others uncomfortable.
* A participant advises another person is abusing them.
* A person advises that they're abusing another participant.
* A participant or visitor informs that they've observed abusive acts.
* A participant advises that they feel discriminated against, e.g., Language and actions.
* A participant presents as unkempt or seeking food.
* There is evidence of unexplained bruising or similar.
* An action or inaction is witnessed that may be considered abusive.
* When an individual, for any reason, believes a participant is being abused.

Failure to report an abusive situation may result in a criminal offence.

The reporting procedure below relates to the following:

* Abuse or neglect of a person with a disability.
* Unlawful sexual or physical contact with, or assault of, a person with a disability.
* Sexual misconduct, committed against, or in the presence of, a person with a disability, including grooming of the person with a disability for sexual activity.
* Unauthorised use of restrictive practices about a person with a disability.

**Reporting Roles**

The organisation will establish the following roles and ensure that allocated staff are aware of their responsibilities:

1. Approved Reportable Incident Approver responsibilities.
* Have the authority to review reports before submission to the NDIS Commission.
* Submit new Reportable Incidents.
* View previous Reportable Incidents submitted by their organisation.
1. Authorised Reportable Incidents Notifier responsibilities:
* Supports the ‘Authorised Reportable Incidents Approver’ to collate and report the required information.
* Creates new Reportable Incident notifications to be saved as a draft for review and submission by the authorised approver.

**How to report**

Management Team will review the information and contact the police immediately to inform them of the suspected abuse.

Important note: To find out how to report abuse against children, go to the 'Working with Children Policy and Procedure'.

Reportable Incidents are submitted via the NDIS Commission Portal, ‘My Reportable Incidents’ page.

1. Complete an Immediate Notification Form and submit it within 24 hours.
* An approved reportable incident notification will be created for approval.
* Approve Reportable Incident Approver will approve and submit.
	+ - Note: Approved Reportable Incident may be created and submitted as required by the circumstance of the incident.
1. 5-day form to be completed within five days of crucial stakeholders being informed
* An approved reportable incident notification will be created for approval.
* Approve Reportable Incident Approver will approve and submit.
	+ - Note: Approved Reportable Incident may be created and submitted as required by the circumstance of the incident.
1. The Final Report will be submitted if the NDIS Commission requests.
* An approved reportable incident notification will be created for approval.
* Approve Reportable Incident Approver will approve and submit.
	+ - Note: Approved Reportable Incident may be created and submitted as required by the circumstance of the incident.

**Details to provide**

The Management Team will give the following information to the authorities:

* Participant’s name, age, date of birth and address.
* Description of injury, abuse and neglect (outline current and previous).
* Participant’s current situation.
* Location of the participant and alleged perpetrator, if known.
* Explanation of when and how abuse was discovered and by whom.

Note: NDIS forms must be submitted to the NDIS Commission. Required police contact will use the above information.

**Investigating allegations or incident**

Management Team undertakes a review of the allegation or incident by:

* Gathering data from relevant person/s.
* Analysing the situation to determine what occurred, how it occurred, and the parties involved.
* Determining the effect on the participant/s.
* Consult with relevant stakeholders; never seek information from children, as this requires a specialist. The appropriate authorities will conduct any questioning once the incident is reported.
* Informing the participant or their family that they have access to a support advocate.
* Reviewing the outcome against practices.
* Undertaking action to prevent the incident from being repeated.

**Support the participant**

Reported allegations or incidents require the Management Team to gather all the relevant information and make a report to the appropriate authority, such as the police or via each state’s reporting process.

Support relevant to the allegation or incident will be provided to the participant. Participants will be provided with an appropriate advocate if required.

**Documentation**

* Record all allegations and incidents in the Incident Register.
* Complete the Incident Investigation Form, if required.
* Reports to be included in the participant’s file.
* Complete the Immediate Notification Form 5 Day Form, and NDIS Report as required.
* Maintain records for seven (7) years.

# PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORTS POLICY AND PARTICIPANT SERVICE CHARTER OF RIGHTS

The NDIS Commission aims to uphold the rights of people with disabilities, including the right to dignity and respect and to live free from abuse, exploitation, and violence. This is in keeping with Australia’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[.](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) The organisation has used this statement as the basis of Branch Out Support’s policy.

This policy aims to empower people with disabilities to exercise choice and control in the support services they receive while ensuring appropriate protections are in place and building the capacity of people with disabilities, their families, and their carers to make informed decisions about NDIS providers.

The policy applies to all staff and participants. It is aimed at informing participants of their rights.

## Policy

Branch Out Support will provide support that promotes, upholds and respects individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making. The Participant Service Charter outlines participants’ rights, how participants will be treated, and what participants can expect from Branch Out Support. This Charter also outlines participants’ responsibilities and how participants can give feedback on any service aspect.

Branch Out Support takes a person-centred and evidence-based approach to any services Branch Out Support provides, where the participant, family or their advocate is primary to any decisions being made.

Branch Out Support exists to work with the organisation participants, their advocates, family members and other service providers as relevant to provide the services to meet the organisation participant's needs within the scope of Branch Out Support’s services.

Branch Out Support will provide support and work with community groups or education programs directly or in partnership with other services. Participants can find information about Branch Out Support’s services on the organisation's website or by asking one of the workers.

Branch Out Support will work directly or in partnership with other groups, services and programs to provide relevant support.

Branch Out Support’s Charter of Rights will be given to participants as a Handbook, Easy Read Format using simple terminologies such as Your Rights, Your Responsibilities and Branch Out Support’s Responsibilities.

**Charter Of Rights**

**Participants rights**

Branch Out Support adopts a non-discrimination policy regarding eligibility and entry to services and provides Branch Out Support’s support services to individuals.

Participants have the right to:

* Have access to and supports that promote, uphold and respect participants’ legal and human rights.
* Exercise informed choice and control.
* Freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making.
* Access supports that respect participants’ culture, diversity, values and beliefs.
* A service that respects participants’ right to privacy and dignity.
* Be supported to make informed choices which will maximise independence.
* Access supports free from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination.
* Receive supports which are overseen by operational solid management.
* Access services that safeguard a well-managed risk and incident management system.
* Receive services from competent, qualified workers with expertise in providing person-centred support.
* Consent to the sharing of information between providers during the transition.
* Opt-out of giving information as required by NDIS.

**Participant Responsibilities**

The information below explains the participant's responsibilities when using Branch Out Support’s services.

* Respect the rights of staff, ensuring their workplace is safe, healthy and free from harassment.
* Abide by the terms of their agreement with us.
* Understand that their needs may change, and their services may need to change to meet their needs.
* Accept responsibility for their actions and choices even though some decisions may involve risk.
* Tell Branch Out Support if participants have problems with either the organisation’s staff or services that participants are receiving.
* Give Branch Out Support enough information to develop, deliver and review their Support Plan.
* Care for their health and well-being as much as participants can.
* Provide Branch Out Support with information to help the organisation meet their needs better.
* Provide Branch Out Support with a minimum of 24 hours' notice when the participant is not home for their service.
* Be aware that Branch Out Support’s staff are only authorised to perform the agreed hours and tasks outlined in their Service Agreement.
* Participate in safety assessments of their home.
* Ensure pets are controlled during service provision.
* Provide a smoke-free working environment.
* Pay the agreed amount for the services provided.
* Tell Branch Out Support in writing (where able) and give Branch Out Support notice before the day participants intend to stop receiving services from us.
* To inform staff if participants wish to opt out when asked.

**Right to give Feedback**

Branch Out Support values participant’s feedback. This may be on something Branch Out Support did well, or the organisation needs to do better. Here are several ways that participants can do this:

1. Completing a Complaint/Feedback form.
2. Talking directly to a staff.
3. Ask to speak to a more senior person.
4. Contacting the office on the phone.
5. Anonymously.

Branch Out Support will resolve complaints openly, honestly and quickly. Participants’ complaints and responses will be acknowledged within one (1) working day. (See Branch Out Support’s Complaints/ Feedback Policy and Procedures for our detailed process).

If participants are not satisfied with the resolution of their complaint, participants may contact an independent body such as:

NDIS Commission on Ph: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677.

Online on: <https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=PRD00-OCF>

**NDIS Code of Conduct**

Branch Out Support’s team will provide support or services to the participants and will provide a quality service to participants, their families and advocates:

* Provide complete and accurate information about yourself and the participant’s situation.
* Explain if there is a change in the participants’ health.
* Let Branch Out Support’s staff know if things change, or the participant cannot keep an appointment or commitment.
* Complete consent forms so Branch Out Support can work with the participants’ advocate (if applicable).
* Act respectfully and safely towards other people using the service and towards Branch Out Support’s frontline staff.
* Provide feedback about the service and how participants think Branch Out Support could do things better for them.
* Report to Branch Out Support if unhappy with Branch Out Support’s services or if there is any concern.

**Branch Out Support’s commitment to participants**

Branch Out Support takes a strengths-based, person-centred, holistic approach to care and support, where the participant or their advocate is primary to any decisions being made. Branch Out Support’s team will ensure that the participants’ services are managed respectfully and in consultation with you. When participants are in contact with the organisation.

Branch Out Support will:

* Always treat participants with respect.
* Treat participants fairly and without discrimination.
* Inform participants of their rights and responsibilities through Branch Out Support’s orientation process, accessible read documents and handbooks.
* Protect their personal information and only use it for the right reasons.
* Involve participants in decisions about the services that participants access.
* Support participants in connecting with other services if needed.
* Tell participants how to provide Branch Out Support feedback on the organisation’s service.
* Ensure their safety and undertake practices that prevent injury to participants and others.
* Help participants to access and use Branch Out Support’s services.
* Comply with their signed Service Agreement.
* Inform participants of their rights and responsibilities.
* Arrange for an interpreter or other language services if participants need this.
* Be polite and respect their views, opinions, personal circumstances and cultural diversity.
* Provide participants with advice and different options on other supports and services that may be available.
* Provide staff with the appropriate skills and competencies to meet their needs.
* Treat participants with dignity, fairness and respect, without discrimination or victimisation.
* Inform participants how they can make a complaint and provide information on how Branch Out Support will respond to that complaint.
* Provide support and care that recognises and acknowledges each person’s preferences, choices, interests, and capabilities.
* Support their rights to receive quality care and support in an appropriate environment promoting participation.
* Provide services that meet or exceed relevant industry standards such as the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators, NDIS Rules and the Charter of Rights.

# ADVOCACY SUPPORT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Branch Out Support recognises the importance of maintaining the participant’s right to use an advocate or representative of their choice. Both participants and potential participants have the right to select and involve an advocate or a representative of their choice to participate or act on their behalf at any time.

This policy applies to all participants, staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

## Policy

All participants have the right to use an advocate of their choice to represent their interests and speak regarding any aspect of the support or services they receive.

Staff will work cooperatively with the participant's nominated advocate and show the same respect to the advocate as shown to the participant. Where participants cannot advocate for themselves, it is Branch Out Support's policy to ensure that the participant’s interests are represented and supported using a substitute decision-maker.

**Advocacy Principles**

* Branch Out Support will ensure that all staff receive training in using advocates.
* Branch Out Support will maintain printed material on advocacy organisations.
* Branch Out Support will maintain local advocacy resource/contact lists.
* Branch Out Support will work cooperatively with any nominated advocate chosen by the participant and show the same respect to the advocate as is delivered to the participant.
* Branch Out Support will utilise a governance system to enable Branch Out Support to identify where a Participant needs advocacy.

**DEFINITION**

Advocacy is the active support for a cause or position, and in this context, it is an expression of support for a person who may find it difficult to speak for themselves. It may include achieving social justice, improving well-being, preventing abusive and/or discriminatory treatment, or stopping unjust and unfair treatment to meet their fundamental needs and interests.

Below is a list of types of advocacies:

* **Individual Advocacy**: a one-on-one approach to prevent or address discrimination or abuse.
* **Systemic Advocacy**: working to influence or secure long-term changes to ensure the collective rights and interests of people with disabilities.
* **Family Advocacy**: a parent or family member advocates with and on behalf of a family member with a disability.
* **Citizen Advocacy**: matches people with disabilities with volunteers.
* **Legal Advocacy**: upholds the rights and interests of individual people with disabilities by addressing the legal aspects of discrimination, abuse and neglect.
* **Self-Advocacy**: supports people with disabilities to advocate for themselves or as a group.

## Procedure

**Initial Assessment (Participant without an Advocate)**

* Discuss the participant’s right to appoint an advocate at any time and to have an advocate present to speak on their behalf.
* Provide the participant with advocacy information.
* Explain to the participant their rights regarding advocacy as per the Branch Out Support's Service Agreement and Charter of Rights and the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2018.
* Advise the Participant that if they wish to utilise advocacy services, then Branch Out Support can assist them in contacting any of these services.
* Provide the form; "Authority to Act as an Advocate" to the Participant. If the participant decides to utilise the services of an advocate. The completed and signed form is kept in the participant’s file.
* Discuss and document any specific communication issues or protocols between the service and the advocate (such as email, phone or other methods).
* Inform the participant that they can withdraw approval for an advocate to act on their behalf at any time.

**Initial Assessment (Participants with Advocates/Representatives)**

Before an Initial Assessment

At initial contact with the participant, ensure that the person is informed of their right to an advocate and record the advocate's details if the individual has an advocate.

Advise the Participant of the need to complete the Authority to Act as an Advocate form and provide this form to the Participant.

Contact the advocate to ensure they know they have been nominated as an advocate and agree to do so.

The completed Authority to Act as an Advocate form is kept in the participant’s file.

Ensure the potential participant is aware of their advocacy rights, including the right to have an advocate present for all assessments, meetings and communication between the Participant and Branch Out Support.

Schedule the Participant’s initial assessment at a time and date that will enable the advocate to be present.

Ensure an identified Advocate is present at the assessment.

At an initial assessment

If not already received, request the completion of the Authority to Act as an Advocate form. Explain that this must be completed for Branch Out Support to recognise the nominated person as the Participant's advocate formally.

Gather information about the advocate, such as contact details and methodology.

Explain that the Participant can change their advocate at any time. Changes should be documented with written confirmation from the Participant using the Authority to Act as an Advocate form.

**Working with Advocates**

Clearly identify the existence of an Advocate on the Participant's file.

Discuss and document any specific communication issues or protocols between the service and the advocate.

Communicate with a Participant's advocate and involve them in goal setting, planning service responses, and/or referrals for additional or alternative services.

Provide the Advocate with ongoing information regarding the health and well-being of the Participant as agreed.

Ensure all On-Call staff are aware of the Participant’s Advocate.

**Continuing work with Advocates**

Remind Participants of their right to have (or change) an advocate by providing written and verbal information during reassessments, visits or meetings.

Remind the participants of their right to have (or change) an advocate during each annual review of services or via written communication. Branch Out Support will communicate and work cooperatively with the advocate.

Refer Participants who are assessed as "unable to manage their service" and who have no other advocate to the Department of Justice and Community Safety and Attorney General, Office of the Public Advocate as appropriate.

Note: a web link to access advocacy services requires postcode input. Branch Out Support will guide and assist participants in this matter. <https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/>

**Advocacy Information**

* Australian Centre for Disability Law – disabilitylaw.org.au
* Autism Asperger’s Advocacy Australia (A4) - a4.org.au
* The Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand - [www.asan-au.org](http://www.asan-au.org/)
* Blind Citizens Australia - bca.org.au
* Brain Injury Australia - braininjuryaustralia.org.au
* Children with Disability Australia - cda.org.au
* Deaf Australia - deafau.org.au
* Deafness Forum of Australia - deafnessforum.org.au
* Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) - dana.org.au
* First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) - fpdn.org.au
* Human Rights Council of Australia – hrca.org.au
* Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) - idrs.org.au
* Mental Health Australia - mhaustralia.org
* National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID) - ncid.org.au
* National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) - neda.org.au
* Physical Disability Australia (PDA) - pda.org.au
* People with disabilities Australia pwd.org.au
* Short Statured People of Australia - sspa.org.au
* Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) - wwda.org.au

# INDIVIDUAL VALUES AND BELIEFS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Branch Out Support commits to cultural diversity and the support of Branch Out Support’s participants by respecting their culture, diversity, values and beliefs. Branch Out Support will recognise and value the multicultural nature of Australian society and give specific acknowledgement and support to the customs of Australian Indigenous peoples.

People with disabilities have the same right as other members of Australian society to realise their full potential. They should be supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life. Inclusion of and access for disabled people to mainstream and community-based activities and other government initiatives.

To inform the community of Branch Out Support’s service provision capacity, including the priority of access process and eligibility criteria requirements. Branch Out Support will encourage and manage requests for service from potential participants and referrals to and from other agencies.

This policy is inclusive of all community groups. It will include people such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, various ages and stages of development, sexual orientation and disability. This policy will apply to staff engaged in working with the participants. This policy applies to Branch Out Support's staff and management.

## Policy

Branch Out Support will deliver flexible services to meet diverse peoples' needs. Branch Out Support will actively provide a work environment supporting values and encouraging cultural diversity by training staff to develop cultural understandings.

Branch Out Support will identify any actual or potential barriers for the participant to access Branch Out Support’s services.

Branch Out Support’s strategies to ensure equity for all people may include:

* Treating all people equally according to their human rights.
* This includes all people regardless of background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability level, additional needs, family structure, or lifestyle.
* Promoting inclusive practices and ensuring the successful involvement of participants in the community to enable them to reach their goals and aspirations.

Branch Out Support will collaborate with the participant to identify their culture, diversity, values and beliefs. Branch Out Support acknowledges the participant's right to practice their cultures, values and beliefs. Branch Out Support will work with the participants to ascertain how and when they wish to participate in religious or cultural practices. The team must respond sensitively to the participant's requirements and work with the participant to access their required support.

Branch Out Support recognises, respects, promotes and celebrates the value of cultural diversity. Branch Out Support’s team will adopt inclusive and culturally diverse policies and strategies.

Branch Out Support is committed to social inclusion and community participation in delivering and expanding services to disadvantaged participants. Branch Out Support’s team will work in partnership with the community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, people with different sexual orientations and those with disabilities.

To improve and support the varying needs of people with disabilities, their families and advocates, Branch Out Support will access links between other service systems.

Branch Out Support will:

* Consult Branch Out Support’s participants to facilitate fair, equitable and transparent services.
* Work with services in the community to ensure Branch Out Support’s participants are provided with relevant contacts to other services and community networks to enable the development of their personal goals, outcomes and aspirations, and in line with their Support Plan.
* Actively encourage and support Branch Out Support’s participants to maintain personal networks and community connections and participate in their community.
* Use networks and community engagement feedback to inform management processes.

Branch Out Support will gather information about the participant's culture, beliefs, values and diversity. Participants' decisions about practising their beliefs and cultural practices are supported and recorded in their Support Plan.

Branch Out Support’s commitment is to make sure people with disabilities are connected to their communities by:

* Providing information on mainstream services and community activities which will benefit people with disabilities, as well as their families and advocates.
* Contributing to relevant links and networks within the community.
* Providing participation and inclusion of people with disabilities by working with community organisations.

Branch Out Support is committed to identifying and liaising with other stakeholders. Stakeholder identification and contact depend on the participant but may include local community support organisations, job networks, training organisations, and housing agencies.

Branch Out Support will uphold and promote all people's legal and human rights and abide by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Branch Out Support will treat all people with courtesy, dignity and recognise their human rights to self-determination and privacy.

## Procedure

Branch Out Support will ensure that all participants are treated fairly and non-discriminately. This intent incorporates both intake and service delivery processes. The information provided will be in an accessible read format, but Branch Out Support will arrange relevant support in the form of a home language or using an interpreter, as required. Suppose a participant has a barrier of not being able to read or understand information. In that case, a support person will be supplied to assist the participant in understanding what is being said or explained.

Branch Out Support will support the participant to access support linked to their culture, diversity, values and beliefs. The type of support and responses will be determined through consultation with the participant and following the choices made by the participant. To assist the participant in making choices about their level of participation in their relevant supports, Branch Out Support’s team may:

* Actively pursue contacts that the participant has chosen.
* Contact local communities such as cultural, religious, sexual orientation groups or spiritual groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
* Contact government agencies to support individual participants.
* Seek community members and groups to receive input into the service,
* Contact advocates assisting with developing community Support Plans for the participants.
* Actively support the rights of the participant to seek contact with those in the community relevant to their wishes, goals and aspirations. The participant will be encouraged to join with related community links as required.
* Following the participant’s aspirations and needs to participate in the community actively.

Branch Out Support will make relevant contacts for the participant to assist in initial involvement with their selected group or individual.

Branch Out Support will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally diverse groups to actively engage with their communities. The Support Plan will incorporate support from their community. This support will be assessed, monitored and reviewed to ensure that the goals and aspirations of participants are met using the relevant support. Branch Out Support will provide services that meet the aspirations and objectives of the participant for inclusion in the community.

Branch Out Support will work with the community to actively encourage the participant to participate in various activities, including employment, education, sporting activities, cultural events, and any relevant activities.

Branch Out Support is committed to building relationships with key stakeholders, including Government, organisations and communities, working together to get the best result for their participants. Branch Out Support will ensure that their services are tailored to flexibly meet their participant’s needs, acknowledging that each person’s needs differ.

Branch Out Support will prioritise providing early intervention and prevention towards each participant’s situation, thus heading off problems by understanding the root causes and intervening early. Branch Out Support will undertake Cultural Competence training for staff to increase knowledge and strategies for working inclusively.

Branch Out Support promote inclusion by:

* Working closely with a network of health and allied health professionals to be able to support the holistic needs of Branch Out Support’s participants.
* Building effective partnerships with the participants and their families, advocates and supports people to discuss and foster shared priorities and the participant's individual needs and goals.
* Focused efforts on building social inclusion and participation opportunities within the range of services provided.
* Provide information on community events and other relevant networks that meet participants' needs and identified goals.
* Working within the participant’s networks and support, including childcare, kindergarten, school or home environments, allows Branch Out Support to assist the participant in fostering relationships and participation in familiar surroundings.
* Having a community linkages policy that outlines how Branch Out Support will work with other communities for the betterment of their participants.
* Operating to ensure everyone can access Branch Out Support’s services.

# PRIVACY AND DIGNITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Branch Out Support will manage and ensure that the organisation provides participants access to services and supports that respect and protect their dignity and right to privacy.

This policy applies to all staff and contractors.

##  Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to protecting and upholding all stakeholders’ right to privacy and dignity, including participants, staff, management and representatives of agencies Branch Out Support deals with.

Branch Out Support is committed to protecting and upholding the participant's right to privacy and dignity as the organisation collects, stores and handles information about participants, their needs and services.

Branch Out Support is subject to NDIS (Quality and Safeguards) Commission rules and regulations. Branch Out Support will follow the guidelines of the Australian Privacy Principles in its information management practices.

Branch Out Support will ensure that each participant understands and agrees to what personal information will be collected and is informed of the reason for the collection. The participant will be notified and agree that this information is being recorded material in an audio and/or visual format.

Branch Out Support will advise each participant of privacy policies using the language, mode of communication and terms that the participant is most likely to understand. (Easy Read documents are made available to all participants).

Branch Out Support will ensure that:

* It meets its legal and ethical obligations as an employer and service provider about protecting the privacy of participants and organisational personnel.
* The participants are provided with information about their rights regarding privacy and confidentiality.
* The participants and organisational personnel are provided with privacy, and confidentiality is assured when they are being interviewed or discussing matters of a personal or sensitive nature.
* All staff, management, and volunteers understand what is required to meet these obligations.
* Participants are advised of Branch Out Support's confidentiality policies using the language, mode of communication and terms most likely to be understood.
* Branch Out Support will attempt to locate interpreters and use accessible materials.

This policy conforms to the Federal Privacy Act (1988) and the Australian Privacy Principles, which govern the collection, use, and storage of personal information.

This policy will apply to all records, whether hard copy or electronic, containing personal information about individuals and to interviews or discussions of a sensitive personal nature.

## Procedures

**Dealing with personal information**

In dealing with personal information, Branch Out Support staff will:

* Ensure privacy for the participants, staff, or management when they are being interviewed or discussing matters of a personal or sensitive nature.
* Only collect and store personal information necessary for the organisation's functioning and activities.
* Use fair and lawful ways to collect personal information.
* Collect personal information only with consent from the individual.
* Ensure that people know the type of personal information being held, the purpose of keeping the data, the method by which it is collected, used, and disclosed, and who will have access to it.
* Ensure that personal information collected or disclosed is accurate, complete, and up-to-date, and provide access to the individual to review or correct incorrect information about themselves.
* Take reasonable steps to protect all personal information from misuse and loss from unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure.
* Destroy or permanently de-identify personal information no longer needed and/or after legal requirements for retaining documents have expired.
* Ensure that participants understand and agree with what personal information will be collected and why.
* Ensure participants are informed when any recordings occur in either audio and/or visual format. The participant's involvement in any recording must be agreed to in writing.

**Participant Records**

Participant records will be kept confidential and only handled by staff directly delivering services to the participant. Information about participants may only be made available to other parties with the participant's consent, their advocate, guardian or legal representative. A written agreement permitting the recording must be maintained in the participant's file.

All hard copy files of participant records will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet in the office space.

All digital files of participant records will be password protected.

**Responsibilities for Managing Privacy**

All staff are responsible for managing personal information to which they have access. The Director is responsible for the content in Branch Out Support publications, communications and on the website and must ensure the following:

* Appropriate consent is obtained to include personal information about any individual, including Branch Out Support personnel (Consent Policy and Procedure).
* Information provided by other agencies or external individuals conforms to privacy principles.
* The website contains a Privacy Statement that clarifies the conditions of any collection of personal information from the public through their visit to the website.

The Director is responsible for safeguarding personal information about Branch Out Support's staff, management and contractors. The Director will be responsible for:

* Ensuring all staff are familiar with the Privacy Policy and administrative procedures for handling personal information.
* Ensuring that participants and other relevant individuals are provided with information about their rights regarding privacy and dignity.
* Handling any queries or complaints about a privacy issue.

**Privacy Information for Participants**

At the first interview, participants will be notified of the type of information being collected about them, how their privacy will be protected, and their rights regarding this data. Information sharing is part of Branch Out Support’s legislative requirements. Participants must consent to any information sharing between the organisation and government bodies. The participant can opt out of any NDIS information sharing during audits via their consent form.

**Privacy for Interviews and Personal Discussions**

To ensure privacy for participants or staff when discussing sensitive or personal matters, Branch Out Support will only collect personal information which is necessary for the provision of support and services and which:

* Is given voluntarily; and
* Will be stored securely on the Branch Out Support database.

When in possession or control of a record containing personal information, Branch Out Support will protect the record against loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure by reasonable steps. Suppose the record must be given to a person in connection with providing a service to Branch Out Support. In that case, everything reasonable will be done to prevent unauthorised use or disclosure of that record Branch Out Support will not disclose any personal information to a third party without the individual’s consent unless that disclosure is required or authorised by or under law.

# CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure ensure Branch Out Support upholds each participant’s individuality, dignity and privacy. The policy outlines Branch Out Support’s responsibilities for collecting and protecting participant information.

**Definition**

**Health information** – Any information or an opinion about an individual's physical, mental or psychological health or ability (at any time).

**Personal information** – Recorded information (including images) or opinion, whether true or not, about a living individual whose identity can be ascertained.

**Sensitive information** – Information or an opinion about an individual’s racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, membership of a political party, religious beliefs or affiliations, philosophical beliefs, membership of a professional or trade association, membership of a trade union, sexual orientation or practices, or criminal record.

## Policy

Privacy and confidentiality of participant’s information are paramount to Branch Out Support. Branch Out Support will only collect information necessary for effective service delivery. Branch Out Support will only use information collected for the purpose it was collected and secure it appropriately.

Branch Out Support will collect, use and disclose information by relevant state and Federal privacy legislation.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support will keep participants informed of their rights.
* Branch Out Support will ensure participants and their authorised representatives can access participants' personal information.
* Branch Out Support will keep participant information secure.
* User access credentials will protect computers and laptops.
* Branch Out Support will not release information related to participants to other individuals or services without the participant's or their representative's consent.
* Branch Out Support will respect the participant’s right to withdraw from consent at any time.
* Branch Out Support will collect, use and disclose information by relevant state and Federal privacy legislation.
* All staff are responsible for upholding Branch Out Support’s privacy and confidentiality responsibilities.
* Management will plan for participants with special needs to assist with protecting their privacy and dignity.
* Branch Out Support will consider individuals and groups with special needs when upholding their privacy, dignity and confidentiality.
* Branch Out Support will capture participant information in the privacy of their home or Branch Out Support’s office and ensure that it is in an area that prevents other people from hearing their details.
* Participants’ privacy will be respected, and assistance will be given in a dignified and appropriate manner during social outings or in their homes.
* staff will ensure time and space for participant privacy, respecting and encouraging participant independence.
* Individual choice will be respected regarding clothing and grooming, considering numerous factors such as the weather to ensure warmth if cold or to avoid overheating during hot seasons.
* Employees will show respect for the participant's home and participant belongings.
* Branch Out Support will collect, use and disclose information by relevant state and Federal privacy legislation.
* Participant Information will not be collected or released to other individuals or services without informed consent from the participant, their representative, or in exceptional circumstances, i.e., where legislation requires, in case of a life-threatening emergency.
* Clinical records are to be kept in a locked filing cabinet when not used in the office; if a home file is kept, it is to be kept discretely and privately in the participant’s home where the participant wishes to keep it.
* Branch Out Support will not provide participant information over the phone as it is difficult to determine the identity of the caller(s).
* Branch Out Support will ensure improvements identified by staff and participant feedback are actioned through the company’s Continuous Improvement Plan.
* Branch Out Support will monitor staff knowledge and application of confidentiality and privacy principles through yearly Performance Reviews.
* Branch Out Support will provide additional on-the-job and formal training to staff where required.

**Staff Privacy and Confidentiality**

Staff information Branch Out Support collects include but is not limited to tax declaration form; employment/engagement contract; personal details; emergency contact details; medical details; police and Working with Children Check records; Qualifications; First Aid, CPR and Anaphylaxis certificates; medical history; personal resume; payroll information; and Superannuation details.

Staff information may be accessed from the Management Team.

Staff have the right to request access to personal information Branch Out Support holds about them without providing a reason for requesting access; access this information, and make corrections if they consider the data inaccurate, complete or up to date.

If an individual requests access to or the correction of personal information within a service benchmark of 2 working days (and no more than 45 days after receiving the request), staff will provide access or reasons for the denial of access, correct the personal information, or provide reasons for the refusal to correct the personal data; or provide reasons for the delay in responding to the request for access to or correction of personal data.

Staff personal and health information will only be disclosed for medical treatment or emergency, with written consent from the staff member, when required by Commonwealth Law or to fulfil legislative obligations such as mandatory reporting.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# MANAGEMENT OF DATA BREACH POLICY AND PROCEDURE

To meet legislative compliance requirements as a mandatory reporter of eligible data breaches to both the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) and any individuals who may be potentially affected by a data breach; to inform relevant authorities of any breach, and to limit and reduce risks to the business and ensure continuous improvement in maintenance of data held by Branch Out Support.

All staff must maintain the confidentiality of all data relating to participants and other staff members. This policy describes all personal data regarding both participants and team members.

## Policy

Branch Out Support views data breaches as having severe consequences, the organisation must have robust systems and procedures to identify and respond effectively.

Branch Out Support will delegate relevant staff members with the knowledge and skills required to become a Response Team member.

Staff must immediately inform the Director or their delegate of the potential or suspected data breach. Within forty-eight (48) hours, the Director is to complete a Data Breach Process Form and ensure that, as a regulated entity, they notify the individuals and the Commissioner about eligible data breaches as soon as practicable (no later than thirty (30) days after becoming aware of the breach or suspected breach).

If a staff member becomes aware that there are reasonable grounds to believe that there has been an eligible data breach, Branch Out Support must promptly notify any individuals at risk of being affected by the data breach and the OAIC.

Branch Out Support will undertake the following when an eligible data breach has occurred:

1. Prepare a statement that, at a minimum, contains:
	1. Branch Out Support contact details:
		1. If relevant, the identity and contact details of any entity that jointly or simultaneously holds the same information regarding the eligible data breach, e.g., due to outsourcing, joint venture, or shared services arrangements. If information of this sort is included in the statement, the other entity will not need to report the eligible data breach separately.
	2. A description of the data breach.
	3. The kinds of information concerned.
	4. The steps it recommends individuals take to mitigate the harm that may arise from the breach (while the entity is expected to make reasonable efforts to identify and include recommendations, it is not expected to recall every recommendation possible following a breach).
2. Provide a copy of the prepared statement to the OAIC using the online Notifiable Data Breach Form.
3. Undertake such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to notify affected or at-risk individuals of the contents of the statement. Depending on the situation, individuals will be notified by email, telephone or post; if direct notification is not practicable, Branch Out Support will publish the statement on its website and take reasonable steps to publicise its contents.

**Definition**

**Data breach (Eligible Data Breach)** - Unauthorised access to or unauthorised disclosure of personal information or personal information is lost when unauthorised access to or unauthorised disclosure of the information is likely to occur.

**Likely (likely to result in serious harm) -** To be interpreted as more probable than not.

An assessment as to whether an individual is likely to suffer ‘serious harm’ because of an eligible data breach depends on, among many other relevant matters:

* the kind and sensitivity of the information subject to the breach
* whether the information is protected and the likelihood of overcoming that protection
* if a security technology or methodology is used about the information to make it unintelligible or meaningless to persons not authorised to obtain it - the data or knowledge required to circumvent the security technology or methodology
* the persons, or the kinds of persons, who have obtained or could get the information.
* the nature of the harm that may result from the data breach.

**Potential forms of serious harm** could include physical, psychological, emotional, economic and financial damage, as well as harm to reputation.

**Remedial action -** There are several exceptions to the notification obligation, including, notably, where an entity can take effective corrective action to prevent unauthorised access to, or disclosure of, information when lost or to avoid any serious harm resulting from the data breach. Where such remedial action is taken by an entity, an eligible data breach will not be taken to have occurred. Therefore, an entity will not be required to notify affected individuals or the OAIC.

**Suspicion of an eligible data breach -** If Branch Out Support merely suspectsthat an eligible data breach has occurred, but there are no reasonable grounds to conclude that the relevant circumstances amount to an eligible data breach, the entity must undertake a “reasonable and expeditious assessment” of whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that an eligible data breach has occurred.

**Assessment time limit -** Within 30 days after the day, it became aware of the grounds that caused it to suspect an eligible data breach.

**Personal Information -** Personal information includes a broad range of data or opinions that could identify an individual. Personal information will vary, depending on whether a person can be identified or is identifiable in the circumstances.

For example, personal information may include:

* an individual’s name, signature, address, phone number or date of birth
* sensitive information
* credit information
* staff member record information
* photographs
* internet protocol (IP) addresses
* voiceprint and facial recognition biometrics (because they collect characteristics that make an individual’s voice or face unique)
* location information from a mobile device (because it can reveal user activity patterns and habits)

## Procedure

**Stage 1. Assess and determine the potential impact**

Once notified of the possible data breach, the Director must consider whether a privacy data breach has (or is likely to have) occurred and then make a preliminary judgement on its severity. The appropriate managerial staff should seek advice on managing the data breach.

Criteria for determining whether a privacy data breach has occurred:

* + Is personal information involved?
	+ Is personal information of a sensitive nature?
	+ Has there been unauthorised access to personal information, unauthorised disclosure of personal information or loss of personal information in circumstances where access to the information is likely to occur?

Criteria for determining the severity of the breach:

* + Type and extent of personal information involved.
	+ The number of individuals that have been affected.
	+ If information is protected by any security measures (password protection or encryption).
	+ Type of person/s who now have access.
	+ Whether there is (or could be) a real risk of serious harm to the affected individuals.
	+ If there could be media or stakeholder attention due to the breach/suspected breach.

Regarding the above, serious harm could include physical, physiological, emotional, and economic/financial damage to reputation, as defined in Section 26WG of the National Data Breach Act.

The Director and relevant staff will take a preliminary view of whether the breach (or suspected breach) may constitute a Notifiable Data Breach. Accordingly, the Director will issue pre-emptive instructions as to whether the data breach should be managed at the local level or escalated to the Data Breach Response Team (Response Team); this will depend on the nature and severity of the breach.

**Stage 2. Select the appropriate data breach management option**

 **Data breaches are managed at a local level by managerial staff**

1. The Director will ensure implementation of immediate corrective action if this does not occur. Disciplinary action may include retrieving or recovering personal information, ceasing unauthorised access, shutting down or isolating the affected system.
2. A Data Breach Process Report will be completed within 48 hours of receiving instructions. The report will contain a:
* Description of the breach or suspected breach.
* Summary of action taken.
* Summary of outcomes from the action taken.
* Outline the processes implemented to prevent a repeated situation.
* Recommendation outlining why no further action is necessary.
1. The Director will sign off, confirming no further action is required.

**Data breach managed by the Data Breach Response Team**

1. When the Director instructs that the data breach be escalated to the Response Team, the Director will convene the Response Team and notify any relevant managerial staff.
2. The Response Team will consist of:
* Director.
* Human Resource nominee.
* Information Technology nominee.
* Marketing and external relations nominee.
* The Director nominates other people.

**The primary role of the Data Breach Response Team**

There is no single method of responding to a data breach. Each incident must be handled case-by-case by assessing the circumstances and associated risks to inform the appropriate action.

The Response Team may undertake the following steps, as appropriate:

1. Immediately contain the breach if this has not already occurred. Corrective action may include retrieving or recovering personal information, ceasing unauthorised access, shutting down or isolating the affected system.
2. Evaluate the risks associated with the breach, including collecting, documenting all available evidence and having regard for the information outlined above.
3. Call upon the expertise of, or consult with, relevant staff in specific circumstances.
4. Engage independent cybersecurity or a forensic expert, as appropriate.
5. Assess whether serious harm is likely (with reference above and to Section 26WG of the National Data Breach Act).
6. Recommend to the Director whether this breach constitutes an NDB for mandatory reporting to the OAIC and the practicality of notifying affected individuals.
7. Consider developing a communication or media strategy, including the timing, content and method of any announcements to participants, staff or the media.
8. The Response Team must undertake its assessment within 48 hours of being convened.

**The secondary role of the Data Breach Response Team**

Once the data breach has been dealt with appropriately, the Response Team should turn its attention to the following steps:

1. Identify lessons learnt and remedial action that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence; this may involve a review of policies, processes and refresher training.
2. Prepare a report for submission to senior management.
3. Consider conducting an audit to ensure that necessary outcomes are affected and effective.

 **Stage 3. Notify the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner**

* Taking into consideration the Response Team’s recommendation, the Director will determine whether there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a Notifiable Data Breach has occurred.
* If there are reasonable grounds, the Director must prepare a prescribed statement and provide a copy to the OAIC as soon as practicable (and no later than 30 days after becoming aware of the breach or suspected breach).

# DIVISION 2 – GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT CORPORATE GOVERNANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure ensure Branch Out Support understands it is accountable to all stakeholders, including participants, staff and the community. Branch Out Support will implement sound systems that guide best practices and professional service delivery.

**Operational plan** – A detailed plan provides a clear picture of how a business, or its specific areas or teams, will contribute to achieving the Strategic Plan. Operational Plans are usually developed annually and reviewed at regular intervals.

**Strategic plan** – A document used to communicate the long-term direction of a business, describing what it will do and how. Strategic Plans are long-term – usually developed for at least three years – and reviewed annually.

Principal accountability and approaches to corporate governance include:

* Fulfilling Branch Out Support’s duty to all the organisation’s stakeholders, including participants, participant representatives, advocates, staff, contractors and any person conducting business with the organisation.
* Providing quality services to Branch Out Support’s participants.
* Providing meaningful employment for Branch Out Support’s staff.
* Contributing to the welfare of the community.

## Policy

* Branch Out Support will have effective quality management systems and processes to guide and support its operations.
* Branch Out Support’s strategic business plans will be developed in a three-year Business Plan.
* Business operations shall be reviewed on an annual basis.
* The Management Team ensures that the organisation complies with all relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support’s management team develops strategic plans, which identify the key outcomes the business wants to achieve. A new Strategic Plan is produced every three years.
* Strategic Plans are implemented through annual Operational Plans. These form the basis of the Management Team’s expectations for each year and set out how the business will achieve the goals in its Strategic Plan.
* Develop communication strategies to keep participants, staff and other stakeholders informed.
* The Management Team will meet with staff and participants regularly. Minutes of sessions will be recorded, noting actions on items raised.
* Develop information systems that ensure staff are guided in their practice and can access relevant websites to assist with compliance.
* Ensure regulatory compliance is at the forefront at all meetings, professional standards are adhered to, and relevant current legislation and standards are understood and consistently met.
* The Management team will meet monthly or as necessary to ensure that the organisation provides the highest quality of care.
* The Management team will oversee human resource requirements, including developing job descriptions and recruitment (refer to human resources policy and procedure).
* The Management team is expected to have the qualifications and experience to deal with issues relating to financial and legal matters, human resources, service management and service promotion.
* The Management team will set out a calendar of yearly internal audits to be undertaken and report on the audit findings as recorded.
* The Management team will meet monthly to review the delivery of services, financial management, information management and overall compliance with regulatory requirements.
* The Management team will review and update the organisation’s business plan annually.
* Branch Out Support will comply with all relevant State and Commonwealth government agencies' data collection, service delivery and financial reporting requirements.
* Branch Out Support understands the organisation’s responsibilities about managing conflicts of interest when delivering services to NDIS participants. (refer to Conflict of interest policy and procedure).
* The management team will mitigate risks to the organisation and its stakeholders.

**Business focus**

**Commitment to Quality**

Branch Out Support is committed to providing high-quality services to its participants in a supportive environment. This commitment is in line with the National Disability Insurance Service requirements.

Branch Out Support will use information from the management of continuous improvement, complaints, feedback, incidents, work health and safety, and risk management to adjust Branch Out Support’s policies and procedures to ensure the organisation meets the requirements for the participant and their community.

Branch Out Support will seek feedback from participants and their community to ensure that Branch Out Support provides high-quality and responsive services. Feedback gained through surveys and consultation with the community and stakeholders will be collated and forwarded to management to review and recommend any adjustments to Branch Out Support’s policies and procedures as required. Managerial meetings will document discussions and outcomes. This will be fed back into Branch Out Support’s continuous improvement register.

**Target group**

There are two (2) target groups within the community in which Branch Out Support works along with:

1. Participants: Individuals with special needs who require support.
2. Service providers: Businesses who seek support for their participants.

 **Services provided**

The support services Branch Out Support provides for disabled participants are listed in the organisation’s initial audit scope.

**Management and reporting structure**

All reporting is based on the management structure as outlined in the organisational chart.

Branch Out Support will engage with specialist consultants and contractors to support the organisation’s business functions and assist with a participant’s support services.

All partners' knowledge, skills and experiences and critical personnel who influence Branch Out Support are reviewed to determine if additional training is required to address any identified gaps.

**Performance planning and review**

Branch Out Support’s planning and review process are included in the 'Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure'. Branch Out Support will monitor and review the performance of staff on an annual basis to:

* Determine whether the staff’s performance matches their current role description.
* Evaluate if the staff members’ performance meets the needs of the participants they support.
* Establish additional training to meet changes in current practices.
* Provide support to staff members to meet the required level of knowledge and skills.

**Conflict of interest**

All key personnel and staff must inform Branch Out Support's management regarding any situation in which they will derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity. The person concerned must complete a Conflict-of-Interest Declaration.

**Corporate governance principles**

Branch Out Support will be governed to ensure all stakeholders' best interests and remain viable and productive. Branch Out Support’s corporate governance principles include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Services are regularly monitored, reviewed and improved.
* Risk management reviews are conducted regularly.
* Continuous improvement strategies are undertaken and implemented.
* Implement necessary reviews and audits of all systems, policies and procedures.
* Planning processes to incorporate community engagement.
* Effectively manage human resource requirements to ensure all services meet the participant's and their community's requirements.
* Additional training and supervision will be provided to Branch Out Support’s staff members, as needed.
* Contractual obligations are always to be met.
* Effective management and implementation of appropriate financial and funding arrangements.

**Business Planning & Review**



**Financial management**

The Branch Out Support will undertake all requirements linked to NDIS contractual arrangements and other business practices.

An Asset Register will be maintained with a list of all current assets, allowing for additional purchases as required. The building and property will be reviewed to ensure that the premises meet the current requirements of Branch Out Support’s business. If additional sites are required, then an analysis of financials will be undertaken.

**Business financial management**

Roles and tasks:

* Financial roles and responsibilities are determined by Branch Out Support.
* An accountant will be used to complete the required financial compliance and obligations.
* Financial decisions are the responsibility of Branch Out Support.

**Business financial management practices**

The following practices apply to financial management, including recording business earnings and documenting Branch Out Support as a legitimate enterprise with a clear revenue stream and records of deductible business expenses.

Documentation and organisation of information regarding Branch Out Support’s transactions will be used to facilitate financial management for tax purposes.

**Bank accounts**

* All bank accounts are maintained, and separate accounts are always used for business and private purposes.
* For monies withdrawn from any bank account, whether by EFT or other online payment method, the Director requires approval.
* Each payment must be supported by an invoice, receipt or other appropriate documentation and the authorisations must be attached to this documentation before payment.
* Any variations to banking arrangements can be made or altered by the Director, who will delegate the responsibility for updating the financial system with the latest information.

**Credit cards**

* The business credit card can only be used for travel, authorised entertainment and purchases of small-value expenses or equipment up to $500.
* No cash advances are to be taken using the business credit card unless authorised by the Director.
* Where a business credit card is lost or stolen, then the owner of this card is to notify the Director, who is responsible for informing the issuing agency and ensuring the card is cancelled.
* The business credit card is not to be used for personal expenses.
* All business credit card holders must attach all receipts for payments made on the credit card. Upon completion and authorisation of the monthly expense statement, these documents will be forwarded to the director, who will pay them with a credit card statement.
* All business credit cards are to be returned to the business when the person is requested to do so by the Director or where their employment has been terminated with Branch Out Support.

**Budget**

Branch Out Support develops an annual budget with the support of a financial adviser.

* The budget will include:
* time limits.
* fixed costs – salaries, rent, insurance and other known costs.
* variable costs – utilities, cost of materials, staff wages.
* income – over the budget period.

**Books of accounts**

Branch Out Support is responsible for maintaining accounts and assisting the financial adviser in preparing the annual budget for monthly, quarterly and yearly financial reports.

Branch Out Support’s delegate is responsible for processing all receipts and payments.

**Issuing Petty Cash**

* The Director approves petty cash; each payment must be supported by an invoice, receipt or other appropriate documentation, and the authorisations must be attached to this documentation before payment before any cash is taken from the petty cash float. Only up to $50 can be disbursed at any one time.
* Once the petty cash is spent, a receipt or invoice should be attached to the voucher and returned to little cash with any balance of money unspent.
* Petty cash float is to be reconciled with a delegated staff member.

**Income**

All money received is deposited in Branch Out Support’s bank account. All funds received are receipted and recorded in the electronic financial system. Unallocated direct deposits of more than one week will be investigated thoroughly to determine the source of the deposit. Where the source cannot be identified, the deposit will be allocated to a separate bank account until the source is recovered.

Income is matched against invoices to determine when payments have been received and when additional actions are required.

**Payments**

All payments (except petty cash) are made by electronic transfer. Fees must be accompanied by an invoice and matched against services or equipment received before authorisation. Payments are only authorised by the Director.

**Recurrent payments**

Recurrent payments, wherever possible, are made electronically. The Director must approve All recurring payments and will delegate the arrangement for the fee authorised by the Branch Out Support’s bank.

The Director or their delegate is responsible for carrying out the following duties regarding payment cancellations:

* Ensuring the payment has not already been made.
* Getting authorisation to action the cancelled payment using appropriate forms from Branch Out Support’s bank.
* Ensuring the bank receives notification of the cancellation payment notice.
* Receiving confirmation of the action from Branch Out Support’s bank of the payment being cancelled.
* Ensuring the details of the cancelled payment are kept.

 **Supplier accounts**

When purchases are charged to the accounts of established suppliers, the account will be paid in full upon receipt of the statement or invoice within the required payment terms.

**Asset register**

The Asset Register will list the assets owned by Branch Out Support. It will contain pertinent details about each fixed asset to track the value and physical location. The register will show the quantity and value of items such as office equipment, motor vehicles, furniture, computers, communications systems and equipment.

**Reconciliations and ATO reports**

The following reconciliations and Australian Taxation Office (ATO) reports are completed at the end of each month:

* Bank’s accounts are reconciled against bank statements.
* The Instalment Activity Statement is completed and forwarded to the ATO.

The following reconciliations and ATO reports are completed at the end of each quarter:

* The Business Activity Statement (BAS) is completed and forwarded to the ATO.
* Superannuation Guarantee contributions are reconciled, and payments made.

The following reconciliations and ATO reports are completed at the end of each year:

* Books of accounts are balanced and closed off.
* Wages are reconciled, and Payment Summaries are completed and forwarded to staff and the ATO.
* Audit reports are prepared.

 **Audit**

* Annual acquittal statements and audited financial reports will be forwarded, as per contractual requirements, to the relevant government bodies.
* An annual audit is undertaken each year internally.
* External audits are conducted as required by the NDIS requirements to ensure Branch Out Support remains compliant by a qualified external auditor.

**Participant fees and payments**

Payments and pricing (NDIS)

* Branch Out Support must adhere to the NDIS Price Guide or other agency pricing arrangements and guidelines.
* Branch Out Support must declare relevant prices, notice periods, or cancellation terms to participants before service delivery. Participants are not bound to engage the services of Branch Out Support once the organisation’s prices have been disclosed.
* Branch Out Support can make a payment request once the support has been delivered or provided.
* No additional charges can be added to the support cost, including credit card surcharges and other fees, including any ‘gap’ fees, late payment or cancellation fees.
* A claim for payment is to be submitted within a reasonable time and no later than sixty (60) days from the end of the service booking to the participant, their plan manager or the NDIA.
* Branch Out Support’s cancellation policy and fee are outlined within the organisation’s Service Agreement.
* Where there are inconsistencies between the Service Agreement and the NDIS Price Guide, the NDIS Price Guide prevails.
* As required, Branch Out Support will develop a service quote, which the participant must approve before the service begins.

**Marketing**

Market targets

* Participants.
* Individuals.
* Legal guardians.
* Plan managers.
* Support Coordinators.
* Local Area Coordinators.
* Small organisations that seek reliable support for their participant/s.

**Marketing strategy**

* Contact local networks and communities to provide information about the services Branch Out Support provides.
* Work with the community and others coordinating participant services; advise details of services provided and associated fees.
* Incorporate Branch Out Support’s local community languages into all marketing collateral and on the organisation’s social media.
* Provide a single point of contact for enquiries; someone who can provide clear, relevant and accurate information.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Delegations of authority are the mechanisms by which Branch Out Support enables the organisation's staff to act on behalf of another absent staff member. This policy establishes a framework for delegating authority within Branch Out Support to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness and increase accountability levels of Branch Out Support’s staff and volunteers' performances.

Delegations are a crucial element in effective governance and management of Branch Out Support and provide formal authority to staff and volunteers to commit to the organisation and incur liabilities on behalf of the organisation.

Delegations of authority within Branch Out Support are intended to achieve five (5) objectives:

1. To ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation's administrative processes.
2. To ensure that the appropriate staff members have been provided with the level of authority necessary to discharge their responsibilities.
3. To ensure that the most suitable and best-informed individuals exercise delegated authority within the organisation.
4. To ensure internal controls are adequate.
5. To ensure that another person within the organisation can fill the position if required.

The policy applies to all Branch Out Support staff and volunteers who have delegated authority to act and sign documents on behalf of Branch Out Support.

## Policy

This policy outlines the circumstances under which the Director may delegate their responsibilities.

The Director is responsible for the organisation's management and can delegate functions. However, the Director may not delegate its power to adopt the organisation’s:

* Strategic plan
* Business plan
* Annual budget

The Director is:

* Charged with the duty of promoting the interests and furthering the development within Branch Out Support.
* Responsible for the administrative and financial decisions.
* Responsible for exercising general supervision over the staff and volunteers of Branch Out Support

The Director may delegate any function, power, or duty conferred or imposed upon them, subject to this policy, to any staff member within the organisation with the skills and knowledge required to act on the Directors' behalf.

Branch Out Support is committed to the highest standards of integrity, fairness and ethical conduct, including full compliance with all relevant legal requirements and, in turn, requires that all managers, staff members, volunteers and contractors acting on the Branch Out Support’s behalf, meet those same standards of integrity, fairness and ethical behaviour, including compliance with all legal requirements.

There is no circumstance that it is acceptable for Branch Out Support or any of its staff members or contractors to knowingly and deliberately not comply with the law or act unethically while performing or advancing Branch Out Support’s business.

## Procedure

The overarching delegation policy applies to all Branch Out Support’s organisation members. Units within the organisation must align with the organisation’s delegation policies. Delegations must be exercised to ensure that delegated staff hold the requisite qualifications and skills.

**Delegations to the Director**

* Delegations are attached to the position occupied, not to the occupant. The responsibilities of a position appear in the Job Description form and Delegation of Authority Register.
* Delegations reflect Branch Out Support’s organisational structure. Levels of authority are hierarchical through relevant lines of responsibility, up to and including the Director. Formal authorities held by any delegate are included in those held by that delegate’s supervisor or line manager, a delegate whose sub-delegates' authority remains responsible and accountable for the decision or action.
* The Director may, at any time, vary or terminate any existing delegations, subject to confirmation by the Management team at its next meeting.
* A delegation cannot be exercised where the staff member holding the delegation has a conflict of interest or where the delegation will result, either directly or indirectly, in any tangible benefit to the delegate. In such cases, the Director must transfer the function to another appropriate position.
* Permanent changes to delegations, either permissive or restrictive, require written authority from the Director. The Director must approve any significant variation to the standard delegations.
* This policy applies only to formal delegations. Delegations of an informal nature, where no commitment or liability is incurred on behalf of Branch Out Support, are carried out in the organisation's regular business without the requirement of written authority.
* A staffing delegation can only be actioned by the delegate who holds management responsibility for the individual staff member.

# QUALITY MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Quality Management System has been established to provide focus and direction within Branch Out Support and to ensure a positive impact on operational effectiveness, resulting in a high-quality service. The policy is developed to ensure:

* The alignment of people and resources is guided by the Branch Out Support’s Mission and Vision statement.
* The alignment of the planning, quality and risk management systems and their integration into all areas of Branch Out Support’s operations.
* There is a clear focus on the stakeholders, fostering collaboration, to ensure Branch Out Support is following the 'best practice' and documenting critical self-evaluation.
* A whole-of-service approach that reflects Branch Out Support’s governance and organisational structure with clear responsibilities and accountabilities; and
* There is continuous improvement recorded within Branch Out Support’s register.

The Quality Management Policy supports the development of a quality culture in which all staff assume responsibility for and engage in quality management at all levels and areas of the organisation.

The Director manages the Quality Management System and takes appropriate measures. The staff engaged in service delivery must follow Branch Out Support’s quality management policy and procedures.

## Policy

Branch Out Support recognises the importance of managing a quality system. This policy will give an overview of the systems. (Refer to the policy for the process details and each policy listed). The Quality Management System is designed to support service delivery and ensure that the service meets the NDIS Quality Standards and Practice Indicators requirements.

Branch Out Support's Quality Management System includes:

* Using data from complaints and feedback to improve services and procedures (Complaints and Feedback Policy).
* Managing the continuous improvement system to determine areas of improvement, including input from:
	+ Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure.
	+ Risk Management Policy and Procedure.
	+ Reportable Incident, Accident and Emergency Policy and Procedure.
	+ Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure.
* Reporting all relevant improvements from the Continuous Improvement Register to management to implement within Branch Out Support’s policies.
* Risks highlighted through the Risk Management Policy will be used to reduce hazards and improve practices.
* Human resources must include training staff in providing quality support to meet the individual needs of participants and recording the staff’s qualifications and checks within the Human Resource Register.
* Participants are required to have access to quality services and to be able to have input via the Complaints and Feedback process.
* An internal audit schedule has been devised to ensure that Branch Out Support continues to:
	+ Reviewing legislation that directly affects service provision.
	+ Auditing and reviewing policies and procedures to meet National Disability Insurance Standards, Rules and Guidelines.
* Service delivery meeting the best-practice standards, including evidence-based, person-centred Support Plans designed for the individual participant.
* Review of policies and procedures combined with feedback strategies allow for quality management of services.

**Monitoring the quality plan**

Branch Out Support will hold regular managerial meetings with relevant stakeholders (may include, but not limited to, managerial staff, staff representative, accountant/bookkeeper or community members).

Monitoring strategies include a review of the following data:

* + Participant’s risks.
	+ Environmental risks.
	+ Working with participant’s risks (work health safety).
	+ Feedback from participants, staff and community.
	+ Complaints from participants, staff and community.
	+ Incident reports and information regarding the incident (both non-reportable and reportable).
	+ Compliance changes (including legal).
* Internal and external audit reports and outcomes.
	+ Human resources (requirements, vacancies, potential adjustments).
	+ Financial (NDIS income and outgoings).
	+ Technology issues.
	+ Continuous Improvement Register (new and ongoing).
	+ Building maintenance and safety issues.
	+ Any other ad-hoc matter.

Managerial meetings will use an agenda which will include the following items:

* Financial report.
* Director’s report.
* Ratification of executive decisions.
* Budgeting and compliance.
* Organisational risk management.
* Continuous Improvement.
* Complaints, compliments and concerns from interested parties.
* Human Resources (issues, staff members, planning schedules).
* Work health and safety risk management.
* Internal and external audit reports and outcomes.
* Information management.
* Incidents (if applicable).
* Any other ad-hoc matter.

**Review**

1. Management meetings and input from various sources are used to determine any adjustment to the:

● Strategic or Business Plans.

● Policy and Procedure Manuals.

● Current practices.

2. Review the Continuous Improvement Register to:

● Sign off all actions.

● Reallocate responsibilities, if required.

**Update**

After monitoring and reviewing current information, the Director or their delegate will:

● Ensure that staff are trained in new practices.

● Record all training in staff files.

● Adjust Branch Out Support’s Policy and Procedure Manuals and implement version control.

● Inform participants, their advocate or guardian of changes.

# CARE ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to ensure a process that enables the organisation to provide a comprehensive and holistic assessment of each participant, considering their current individual needs and circumstances and to negotiate with the participant types of agreed strategies based on their evaluation.

## Policy

The policy ensures Branch Out Support’s operations align with all regulatory requirements.

Branch Out Support will work closely with the participants to develop a strength-based individualised Care Plan that will incorporate the participant’s needs and preferences.

Branch Out Support will work with participant’s families, carers, representatives and other stakeholders during the planning, assessment and review process.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support will discuss participants’ rights and responsibilities with participants during assessments and reassessment meetings. Branch Out Support will confirm participants’ understanding verbally, using an interpreter or representative where required.
* Branch Out Support will provide participants with information on how they can access a representative who can assist with access to services.
* Interpreting and translation services can be accessed if required.
* Branch Out Support will conduct a comprehensive assessment in collaboration with the participant and/or their representative to document the assessment outcomes.
* Branch Out Support will consult with medical practitioners and allied health professionals when required.
* Assessments will consider available information from the participant's NDIS Plan, ACAS assessments and other existing plans.
* Participants will be provided with a Service Agreement consisting of a schedule of support and an Individualised Budget.
* The individualised Care Plan will comprehensively reflect the individual participant's needs.
* Branch Out Support requires participant and/or authorised representatives to sign the Service Agreement to show they understand and agree to the support services scheduled.
* If a participant cannot sign Branch Out Support’s Service Agreement because of any physical incapacity, an authorised representative may sign the agreement on behalf of the participant by relevant legislation.
* Branch Out Support will contact medical practitioners and allied health professionals and notify next of kin if changes in participant needs impact participant safety.
* Branch Out Support will ensure interventions are in place to assist the participant to reach and maintain maximum independence.
* Branch Out Support will conduct specific assessments and Support/Care Plan reviews when the participant’s needs change.
* Branch Out Support will review the Support/Care Plan in consultation with the participant and/or their representative at a minimum of three-monthly intervals.
* Branch Out Support will adapt or change interventions in response to identifying changes that have occurred over the intervening period or at the request of the participant or their representative, medical practitioner or allied health professional.
* Where required, Branch Out Support will provide referrals and links to other services the participant may need.
* Documentation relating to the participant’s assessments will be kept in the participant’s file and stored in Branch Out Support’s Participant Management System.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# PARTICIPANT CASE NOTES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to provide staff with set guidelines on how to record case file notes to ensure participant information is recorded in a standardised, timely and accountable manner. This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards in Schedule 1, Legislative References for NDIS Services.

NDIS documents relevant to this policy and procedure:

* Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure
* Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure

## Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to the transparent and reliable recording of service delivery to participants. Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Register will record identified improvements and monitor the implementation progress. This information will be fed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes where relevant.

The recording of accurate and quality case notes is integral to supporting the following functions of the organisation:

* Recording and Planning Service Delivery.
* Supervision of staff.
* Legal Accountability.
* Risk Management Planning.
* Participant Support Planning; and
* Participant Support Reviews.

**Definitions**

**Case note** - A ‘case note’ is the term applied to a chronological record of interactions, observations and actions relating to a particular participant. Case notes are an essential part of a participant’s file, where staff succinctly record details to document the participant’s support services provided by Branch Out Support. File notes are a tool for reflecting on a participant’s progress towards their goals as identified in their plans. They also represent a record of events on each support session, interaction and event and promote efficient communication between staff.

## Procedures

What to Include in Case Notes:

When recording case files, staff are to ensure the information recorded is related to the following:

* A participant’s progress towards goals or values identified on their plan (actions taken, progress made, or barriers identified).
* The participant’s significant achievements or any changes to their circumstances.
* information relevant to the participant’s Risk Management Plan (potential/current risk issues, strategies developed and/or implemented to respond to the identified risk issues).
* Appointments attended, cancelled or rescheduled.
* All communication, including attempts with other services involved with the participant.
* Referrals made for the participant.
* Group activity participation.
* Any information given to the participant, such as specific or health information, etc.).
* All informed consent decisions (e.g., “Participant provided consent for staff to discuss low mood with another staff member or service provider”).
* Participant case reviews (outcomes, follow-up actions, progress); and
* Any follow-up meetings required.

What to avoid in Case Notes:

* Emotional reactions.
* Personal opinions.
* Value judgements or opinions.
* False information; and
* Unfounded speculations/opinion.

**Guidelines**

* staff shall be aware that participant files can be subpoenaed at any time, and staff can be subject to cross-examination in court concerning the content of their file notes.
* All personal information relating to the participant shall be maintained within the participant’s file and subject to the security, confidentiality, access and storage requirements detailed within Branch Out Support Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure.
* Staff must make notes after the support session, interaction, meeting, or event as soon as possible and accurately and fairly reflect the participant’s communication/behaviour. Staff will act in accordance with Branch Out Support Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure when managing or recording personal and sensitive participant information.
* The Director will ensure appropriate time is allocated for staff to complete case notes as soon as possible after the support session. If staff find it challenging to achieve case notes (due to timing restrictions, access to files, etc.), they will discuss this with the Director.
* staff must be mindful when recording case notes that participants have the right to request to read their file notes at any time.

**Monitoring and Review**

This policy and procedure will be reviewed at least biennially by the Management team. Reviews will incorporate staff and other stakeholders' feedback.

Feedback collection mechanisms, such as staff and participant satisfaction surveys, will assess:

* Satisfaction with Branch Out Support records and information management and privacy and confidentiality processes.
* Whether stakeholders have received adequate information about privacy and confidentiality, including how their records will be stored and disposed of and how they can access and change them.
* The extent to which participants and their supporters feel their privacy and confidentiality have been protected.

# CONSENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Branch Out Support must gain consent from the participant before sharing any information with family, advocates, other providers and government bodies. Children under 18 need their family, advocate or guardian's consent to share information with providers and government bodies. All staff are responsible for informing participants about their rights regarding the provision of consent.

All efforts should be made to obtain consent. Where there are language or communication barriers, staff will ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to overcome these barriers, using available communication skills, technology, interpreters, relatives/carers and friends. Relatives may be consulted about the best ways to communicate or may be requested to assist with establishing the participant’s values and preferences if they cannot express them.

Initial consent will be undertaken during their induction with Branch Out Support. The prime responsibility for obtaining consent lies with the frontline worker to carry out the service or induction process. Another individual can seek consent if they have enough knowledge to give the correct information and answer the participant’s questions correctly. The act as an Advocate form must be completed and documented within the participants' file before the advocate consents on the participants' behalf.

Consent is equally valid whether expressed verbally, non-verbally (implied) or written.

* Implied consent is adequate for most of the support provided by the organisation.
* Oral consent is enough for most interventions provided by doctors and other health professionals (such as commencing a manual handling process and using complex medical procedures). Oral consent should be recorded in the Support Plan with relevant details of the discussion, the date and time of the entry, and the name of the staff member written. Oral refusal of consent for any intervention must also be recorded in the Support Plan in the same manner.
* Written consent should be gained for the use of an advocate or to share information. by both the participant and the healthcare professional. Note: Participants automatically opt in and must be asked to opt out during NDIS audit requirements if they wish to.
* Photography: Written consent will be obtained from any participant having their photograph taken.

## Policy

* Branch Out Support recognises the importance of maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Sometimes, sharing information with other parties, such as government bodies and service providers, is essential.
* Branch Out Support will not give any information to a person or authority without the participant’s consent unless the disclosure is legally required.
* Branch Out Support will inform all participants (upon entry into the organisation’s service) about their rights to privacy and confidentiality.
* Branch Out Support will notify all participants that they have an opt-out option if their information is requested for audit purposes.

**Guiding Principles**

* People have the right to decide about things that affect their lives.
* People are presumed to have the capacity to make their own decisions and consent when required unless there is evidence otherwise.
* People are supported in making informed decisions when their consent is required.
* Consent is obtained from the person, or a legally appointed guardian, for life decisions such as accommodation, medical treatment, forensic procedures, and behaviour support.
* Consent for financial matters is obtained from the person, a legally appointed financial manager or the person appointed under a Power of Attorney.
* People are supported to identify opportunities to make decisions about their lives and build their decision-making skills.
* When support to make decisions is wanted or needed by the person, it is provided in ways preferred by the person and by a supporter of their choice.
* Support with decision-making respects the person’s cultural, religious and other beliefs.
* If the person wants to be supported by natural supporters, such as family and friends, this is encouraged and facilitated.
* Support is provided in ways that uphold the person’s right to self-determination, privacy, and freedom from abuse and neglect.
* Decision-making and self-determination are not limited by the interests, beliefs or values of those providing the decision-making support.
* The amount or type of support people require to make decisions will depend on the specific decision or the situation.
* People are supported to make decisions that affect their lives even if others don’t agree with them or regard the decisions as risky.
* People are supported to access opportunities for meaningful participation and active inclusion in their community when interest is expressed or requested.
* Information is provided in formats that everyone can understand and enables the person, their supporters and other relevant people, such as legally appointed guardians, to communicate effectively with each other.

## A picture containing card, drawing  Description automatically generatedProcedure

If a participant wishes to give consent to another person or organisation, then the following procedures are required to be undertaken:

* Inform the participant that written or verbal consent is required to share their personal information.
* Inform the participant that their consent can be withdrawn at any time.
* Communicate information about the consent in a method the participant can understand.
* The participant completes a Consent Form.
* A signed Consent Form is to be placed at the front of the participant's file.
* Relevant staff is informed about the consent provided to Branch Out Support.

# SUCCESSION PLANNING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to set out Branch Out Support’s system to ensure the organisation can continue operating effectively and meet the business’ Mission and Value statements when key personnel vacate their positions.

## Policy

Branch Out Support conducts succession planning that identifies current and future workforce needs and specific replacement strategies for key personnel.

**Definitions**

**Key personnel** - a member of the group of people responsible for the executive decisions of a business or any other person who has the authority or responsibility for (or significant influence over) planning, directing or controlling the business activities. A person responsible for the executive decisions of a business includes a member of the business’s governing body, including a corporate body that is incorporated or taken to be combined under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth).

## Procedures

* Implement sound corporate governance, including budgeting processes and regular audits.
* Develop a sustainable workforce for Branch Out Support, its Management team must develop and continuously review a Succession Plan for all key personnel.
* Branch Out Support Succession Plan must assess current and future critical positions; objectively identify high potential internal candidates; and develop strategies to ensure continuity for crucial personnel positions.
* The Succession Plan should align with Branch Out Support Strategic and Operational Plans and consider Branch Out Support’s future direction, continuity risks or areas where significant disruption may be experienced if crucial staff leave; age profiles; retirement plans of key personnel; and performance assessments of essential personnel.
* The Management team will formally review and update the Succession Plan each financial year and at times of significant and unanticipated change.
* Operational plans are reviewed at monthly management team meetings, and performance reviews are conducted for management team members.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# COMPLIANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure ensure that Branch Out Support complies with the range of legislative, regulatory and contractual requirements that apply to the organisation’s operations and records any changes to these requirements. This policy and procedure apply to all Branch Out Support staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

**Definitions**

* **Commissioner of the NDIS -** Quality and Safeguard Commission (NDIS Commissioner) –leads the NDIS Commission.
* **Approved Quality Auditor** – a person or body approved by the NDIS Commissioner to be an approved quality auditor for the NDIS Act 2013 (Cth).
* **Banning Order** – a written notice provided by the NDIS Commissioner to a NDIS provider or person employed or engaged by a NDIS provider, prohibiting them from certain activities. A banning order may apply generally or be of limited application. It may also be permanent or for a specified period.
* **Certification** – an assessment by an approved quality auditor of an applicant or of a registered NDIS provider against an applicable standard (such as the NDIS Practice Standards) by conducting:
* A desk audit of the applicant or provider, including reviewing the applicant’s or provider’s relevant documentation in relation to the standard.
* An inspection of the sites, facilities, equipment and services used, or proposed to be used, in the delivery of supports or services by the applicant or provider in relation to the standard; and
* Interviews with relevant persons, including key personnel of the applicant or provider and persons receiving, or to receive, support or services from the applicant or provider in relation to the standard.
* **Compliance Notice** – a written notice provided to a NDIS provider by the NDIS Commissioner if the NDIS provider is not complying with the NDIS Act 2013 (Cth). Failure to comply with a Compliance Notice will result in a civil penalty (fine) and may lead to the provider’s registration being suspended or revoked.
* **Enforceable Undertaking** – in the context of the NDIS and this Policy and Procedure, an agreement made between the NDIS Commission and a registered NDIS Provider that is legally binding and enforceable in a court. In these circumstances, the commitment would relate to activities the provider has agreed to undertake to address or rectify compliance issues.
* **NDIS Code of Conduct** – a code of conduct that applies to NDIS providers and those employed or otherwise engaged by NDIS providers, regardless of whether they are registered. The NDIS Code of Conduct supports the rights of people with disabilities to have access to safe and ethical support in the NDIS. It reflects the core values and principles in the National Standards for Disability Services, the National Mental Health Standards and the NDIS Act 2013 (Cth).
* **NDIS Practice Standards** - standards concerning the quality of support or services to be provided by registered NDIS providers. Non-compliance with the NDIS Practice Standards by registered NDIS providers constitutes a breach of registration.
* **NDIS Provider Register** – a register kept by the NDIS Commission containing the details of all registered NDIS providers. It includes:
* Business details, including contact person, ABN and contact details.
* The approved registration periods.
* The classes of support or services the business is registered to provide.
* The classes of people the business is registered to support.
* Any conditions placed on the registration.
* Details of any previous or current suspension.
* Details of any previous or current banning order.
* Information about any previous or current compliance notices in force and
* Information about any enforceable undertaking the business has committed to.

The NDIS Provider Register may also include information about unregistered NDIS providers or NDIS providers who have had their registration revoked and any other information relevant to providing support or services to people with disability.

* **NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission (NDIS Commission)** is an independent body that regulates the NDIS market and supports the high-quality and safe delivery of NDIS supports and services. It is responsible for:
* registration and regulation of NDIS providers.
* compliance monitoring, investigation and enforcement action.
* Respond to concerns, complaints and reportable incidents, including abuse and neglect of a person with a disability.
* national oversight of behaviour support, including monitoring the use and reduction of restrictive practices within the NDIS; and
* leading collaboration with states and territories to design and implement nationally consistent NDIS worker screening processes.
* **Revocation** – a written notice removing the registration of a person as a registered NDIS provider due to the reasons outlined in the definitions above. The Commissioner may also revoke the registration of a registered NDIS provider upon written request from the provider
* **Suspension** – The NDIS Commissioner may suspend the registration of a registered NDIS provider for a specified period. The Commissioner may also stop registering a registered NDIS provider upon written request from the provider. While suspended, registration ceases to have effect. A Suspension may be enforced if the provider is not complying with the NDIS Act 2013 (Cth), if their registration application contains false or misleading information, where they or their crucial personnel are considered unsuitable for providing services to people with disability or if they become an insolvent under administration.
* **Verification** – an assessment by an approved quality auditor of an applicant or of a registered NDIS provider against an applicable standard by conducting a desk audit of the applicant or provider, including reviewing the applicant’s or provider’s relevant documentation in relation to the standard.

## Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to complying with all relevant regulatory, legislative and contractual requirements.

Branch Out Support acknowledges that the organisations Director(s) and the Management team are responsible for ensuring that the service remains compliantBranch Out Support’s practice will comply with all requirements set down by the state and Federal governments. Branch Out Support’s practice will comply with the NDIS Code of Conduct.

## Procedures

To maintain its NDIS provider registration, Branch Out Support must:

* Comply with all applicable requirements imposed by a law of the Commonwealth or a law of the State or Territory in which it operates as a registered NDIS provider.
* Comply with all applicable requirements of the NDIS Code of Conduct.
* Comply with all applicable standards and other requirements of the NDIS Practice Standards.
* Comply with all applicable requirements relating to record-keeping required by the NDIS rules.
* Implement and maintain a complaints management and resolution system compliant with the NDIS rules.
* Implement and maintain an incident management system compliant with all applicable requirements for reportable incidents under the NDIS Rules.
* If requested, provide information to the Commissioner of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission within the period specified in the request.
* Branch Out Support must comply with any conditions specified in its NDIS Certificate of Registration or imposed by the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission later, such as:
* The types of quality audits it must undergo.
* The timing of such quality audits; and
* Requirements relating to support or services it is registered to provide, including circumstances in which support or services can or cannot be provided.
* Branch Out Support must notify the NDIS Commission of a change of circumstances that materially affects its suitability, or any of its key personnel, to provide the support or services it is registered to provide. The change must be notified to the Commissioner within 28 days of the change on the form approved by the Commissioner. Changes in circumstances include:
* Event that significantly affects Branch Out Support’s ability to comply with its conditions of registration.
* Any change that adversely affects access to support or services by people with disabilities currently receiving those supports or services from Branch Out Support.
* An adverse change in Branch Out Support’s financial capacity to provide the supports or services it is registered to provide and
* Any notable change in Branch Out Support’s organisation or governance arrangements.

Management team members are responsible for:

* Supporting ongoing compliance in all areas of Branch Out Support operations.
* Ensuring staff understand their compliance responsibilities; and
* Fostering a compliance culture within their area of responsibility.

Branch Out Support may request that the NDIS Commissioner correct the NDIS Provider Register using the approved form if it becomes aware that the Register contains incorrect information.

Branch Out Support’s Compliance Coordinator and Operations Manager will report on compliance issues to the Management team monthly, and the Operations Manager will track these in Branch Out Support Compliance Register.

All staff are responsible for managing compliance within their areas of influence.

The management team must monitor legislation and regulatory compliance requirements changes through ongoing contacts with relevant government agencies, scanning relevant websites for updates, membership of organisations, and internal audits. All staff are to be made aware of any appropriate changes immediately.

**Reporting Compliance Failure**

* Branch Out Support encourages proactive reporting of compliance failures, breaches, issues, incidents and complaints so that these matters can be rectified promptly and promptly.
* All staff must notify their immediate supervisor or the Operations Manager once they know that a compliance failure has occurred, is likely to occur, or a compliance-related complaint has been made. The Operations Manager must address identified compliance failures or compliance-related complaints upon becoming aware of them to re-establish compliance to protect Branch Out Support as quickly as possible.
* All compliance failures or compliance-related complaints must be reported to the Compliance Operations Manager, who will track them in the Compliance Register and report them to the Management Team.
* As a NDIS Registered Provider, Branch Out Support must comply with the NDIS Terms of Business for Registered Providers and the NDIS Provider Registration Guide to Suitability. Branch Out Support will assess compliance with these documents as part of its annual self-assessment against the NDIS Practice Standards.
* Branch Out Support must comply with the NDIS Practice Standards, set out in Schedules to the NDIS (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018.

**NDIS Code of Conduct**

In providing support or services to people with disability, Branch Out Support and its staff will:

* Act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making in accordance with applicable laws and conventions.
* Respect the privacy of people with disabilities.
* Provide support and services safely and competently, with care and skill.
* Act with integrity, honesty and transparency.
* Promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns that may impact the quality and safety of support and services provided to people with disabilities.
* Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against, exploitation, neglect and abuse of people with disabilities.
* Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Branch Out Support will continuously improve all service management aspects so that its operations align with legislation-relevant standards and compliance requirements through an ongoing cycle of review and evaluation of processes and procedures.

## Policy

Branch Out Support pursues innovation and promotes culture of continuous improvement in its corporate governance service delivery to participants.

Branch Out Support will include all stakeholders, including participants and staff, in its continuous improvement activities to ensure participants’ needs are met effectively.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support puts the participant at the centre of decision-making in all aspects of their life. It also supports participants in actively participating in their community and pursuing their interests or goals.
* Branch Out Support encourages innovation and participation in the organisation’s services.
* Branch Out Support provides ongoing staff education and professional development opportunities.
* Branch Out Support has a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan and reports on this regularly at staff and participant meetings.
* Branch Out Support will encourage participants, staff and stakeholders to provide feedback, then document and act on feedback.
* Branch Out Support will review its complaints register regularly as part of its continuous improvement activities to ensure participants’ needs are met effectively.
* Branch Out Support will drive continuous improvement through regular surveys, meetings and audits.
* Branch Out Support staff are encouraged to participate in developing strategies for ongoing improvements.
* Branch Out Support will establish and maintain an effective information system for continuous improvement.
* Branch Out Support will identify opportunities for improvement and evaluate accidents, incidents or emergencies to minimise risks and improve the organisation’s services.
* Branch Out Support will include staff, participants and other relevant stakeholders in continuous improvement activities to ensure high-quality services meet participant needs.
* Branch Out Support will provide feedback on service improvements to stakeholders, including participants and staff.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to eliminate or minimise risk for participants and staff by establishing a practical risk management framework. This policy and procedure apply to all staff, contractors and volunteers.

**Definitions**

**Risk** – Any internal or external situation or event that has the potential to have a negative impact by causing harm to people associated with the organisation, preventing the organisation from successfully achieving its outcomes or delivering its services, reducing the organisation’s viability or damaging its reputation. From a Risk Management perspective, risk is the combination of the likelihood (chance) of an event occurring and the consequences (impact) if it does.

**Managed Risk** – The level of risk remaining after risk treatment plans have been put in place and are being followed.

**Unmanaged Risk** – The level of risk before any action has been taken to manage it.

**Risk Analysis** – Understanding the nature, sources and causes of risks to determine the degree of risk. The degree and consequences of risk together inform risk evaluation and decisions about risk treatment.

**Risk Assessment** – The overall process for identifying, analysing and evaluating risks. Risk assessments assist in determining what levels of harm can occur, how harm can occur, and the likelihood that damage will occur.

**Risk Evaluation** – The process of determining whether a risk is tolerable or whether it requires ‘risk treatment.’

**Risk Identification** – The process of finding, recognising and describing risks.

**Risk Treatment** – a measure, work process or system used to eliminate risk, or if this is not possible, reduce the risk as reasonably practicable. Options include:

* Avoiding the Risk – where the level of risk is unacceptable, and the means of risk control are either not viable, not worthwhile or not actionable, the risk could be eliminated by not proceeding with the activity that would generate the risk.
* Changing the Risk Consequence – undertake actions aimed at reducing the impact of the risk.
* Changing the risk likelihood – undertaking actions to reduce the probability of the risk occurring.
* Retaining or Accepting the Risk – Accept the risk as it is. This is appropriate where the risk rating is sufficient to justify other potential risk treatment options when it is not possible or uneconomical to treat the risk or when the risk level is tolerable.
* Sharing the Risk – Responsibility for treating the risk can be transferred or allocated to other parties best able to manage it. For example, using insurers.

## Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to identifying and managing all organisational risks, including compliance and Workplace Health Safety.

Branch Out Support will provide staff with relevant safety equipment to assist them.

Branch Out Support is committed to training its staff in Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and providing guidelines for their work in participant homes and the wider community.

Branch Out Support’s approach to risk management, including its Risk Management Model and Principles, is aligned with Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 31000:2009 (Risk Management Principles and Guidelines).

## Procedures

Branch Out Support’s Risk Management Model consists of the following steps:

* Identify: Detect the risky events that may prevent or delay achieving Branch Out Support’s strategic goals and objectives.
* Analyse: Outline the causes, impacts and existing treatments to assess the consequence/likelihood of the risk and determine the risk rating.
* Treat: Implement existing and future treatments to prevent or mitigate the risk.
* Monitor: Continually observe and then evaluate the risks and treatments to maintain Branch Out Support’s risk management effectiveness.
* Report: Provide regular reports and updates to assure Branch Out Support and its stakeholders that risks are appropriately managed and treated.
* The Management team monitors and reviews the organisation’s risk management practices.
* Management team members will develop, implement and monitor Risk Management Plans

Risk Treatment Plans are required for:

* Child safety and promoting a child-safe environment.
* Incident Management.
* Complaints Management.
* Work Health and Safety
* Supported independent living services.
* Human Resource Management.
* Financial Management.
* Information Management; and
* Governance.
* Branch Out Support will educate staff in Workplace Health Safety (WHS) and provide guidelines for staff working in participant’s homes and the wider community.
* Branch Out Support will assist staff with relevant safety equipment (PPE).
* Branch Out Support will inform staff about personal safety, driver safety, universal precautions, infection control, cultural awareness and behaviour management.
* Branch Out Support will ensure all equipment is fit‑for‑use and electrical equipment is tested and tagged.
* Branch Out Support will provide staff with compulsory yearly manual handling education.
* Branch Out Support will provide induction to staff on risk management and the importance of being aware of their surroundings.
* staff are responsible for managing risk within their areas of work.
* Branch Out Support will review its Risk Management Plans regularly and report on risks relevant to their areas of influence to the Management team.
* Identified risks will be tracked by the designated personnel using the Risk Register.
* Branch Out Support will foster a risk “awareness culture” by including risk awareness and identification during staff meetings.

**Risks to children**

Children with a disability or developmental delay are at higher risk than other children of harm, abuse and neglect.

Staff must recognise that children are less likely to tell adults when they do not feel safe, and while their behaviour may change, others may not read these changes as a sign something is wrong. Branch Out Support staff must proactively look to prevent and identify risks to a child’s safety and well-being at all stages of service delivery.

**Participant Risk Assessments**

A Participant Risk Assessment must be undertaken for all participants at their initial assessment and reviewed during formal Support Plan reviews. Participant Risk Assessments must also be reviewed every three months or sooner if changes to the person’s environment, existing risks, or new risks emerge. Where support is to be provided in a participant’s home, the Participant Risk Assessment must include a Home Risk Assessment (see Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure).

A Home Risk Assessment aims to identify potential hazards in the participant’s home and put appropriate controls in place to reduce the risk of injury or illness for staff, the participant, carers and other workers. This must be done with the participants, their families and/or landlords.

As part of both risk assessment processes, staff must identify potential control measures, which should become part of the participants' support plan. Suppose either assessment shows that staff would be exposed to significant risks. In that case, the Operations Manager must determine if support should be modified or suspended until the risk has been adequately controlled.

Participant Risk Assessments and reviews must be undertaken in collaboration with participants, their supporters and any other stakeholders involved in managing a specific risk. If the participant is a child, assessments and reviews should be undertaken with the participant’s family. Enabling the participants to achieve their lifestyle goals and their ability to have greater choice, control, and more opportunities to try new activities and develop their existing skills must always be considered. Risk assessments must also consider any incident reports related to the participant and whether specialist positive behaviour support arrangements should be implemented or changed.

Staff should raise any issues or concerns regarding Participant Risk Assessments with the Compliance Coordinator or the Case Manager, Significant risks should be escalated to the Operations Manager or the Director. Participant risk assessments and reviews must be kept in the participants' records.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure demonstrate the organisation's commitment to providing a safe workplace that minimises risks to employees and participants by encouraging all employees and Management to take fair and reasonable means to ensure safe work practices.

**Definitions**

**Duty of Care** – A common law concept that refers to the responsibility of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all foreseeable risks of injury. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility of Branch Out Support’s staff to provide participants, students, volunteers, contractors and anyone visiting the service with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury.

**Safety Data Sheet (SDS)** – Provides staff and emergency personnel with safety procedures for working with toxic or dangerous materials. The safety data sheet includes all relevant information about the material, such as physical properties (e.g., melting/boiling point, toxicity and reactivity), health effects, first aid requirements and safe handling procedures (e.g., personal protective equipment, secure storage/disposal and management of spills).

**Workplace** – any place where work is carried out on behalf of Branch Out Support.

## Policy

The health and safety of staff and participants is paramount to Branch Out Support. Workplace Health and Safety is responsible for all Branch Out Support stakeholders, including management staff, employees, volunteers, contractors, participants, families, carers and visitors.

If services are delivered in participants’ homes, participants must provide a safe and healthy working environment for Branch Out Support’s staff. Branch Out Support will take steps to ensure the health, safety and well-being of employees, participants, their representatives, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

Branch Out Support’s employees and volunteers are expected to stop unsafe work.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support will develop best practice working routines, instructions, procedures, processes and systems that minimise, reduce or remove risks for staff and participants.
* Provide protective clothing and equipment (PPE) to protect employees.
* Consult about and endeavour to improve continuous safety measures.
* staff complete Home Risk Assessments before commencing work in a participant’s home.
* Provide staff with annual emergency training.
* Maintains a system of hazard identification and outcomes to reduce hazards.
* Provide manual handling as mandatory yearly training for staff.
* Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) are reported to the appointed Manager.
* Management will address or respond to WHS issues or nominate a suitable staff representative.
* Track issues progress and outcomes in the Workplace Health and Safety Register.
* Workplace Health and Safety matters must be reported to the Management team monthly.
* Upon commencement, all staff will undergo Induction, including general and task specific WHS training where appropriate.
* The Management team ensures Branch Out Support meets its obligations under WHS legislation.

**Management Team Responsibilities**

Management Team will be vigilant in ensuring that each employee is safe from injury and risks to health while at work by actioning the following processes:

* Provide and maintain a safe working environment.
* Provide adequate facilities.
* Provide instruction, orientation and training.
* Monitor working conditions, including home safety assessments.
* Monitor the health and safety of employees (review any injuries).
* Keep records of any work-related injuries.
* Identify hazards and potential risks and minimise or eliminate them where possible.
* Developed, implemented, and regularly reviewed the WHS Policy and Procedure.
* Consult regularly with employees and have WHS as mandatory for all meetings.
* Be aware of and always follow the WHS Act.
* Ensure WHS policies and procedures are followed.
* Ensure any risks or potential risks are identified, assessed and controlled.
* Provide employees with thorough induction and information, instruction, ongoing training and supervision to ensure all work is carried out safely.
* Provide contractors with relevant information on how to carry out their work safely and to comply with Branch Out Support WHS responsibilities.

**staff Responsibilities**

* Take reasonable care to protect their health and safety.
* Use equipment provided by Branch Out Support to protect their health and the participant’s health, safety and well-being.
* Follow the Branch Out Support’s health and safety instructions and procedures.
* Do not be affected by drugs or alcohol at work.
* Report hazards and incidents/injuries to Management immediately.
* Be aware of and follow Branch Out Support’s Workplace Health & Safety Act.

**Responsibilities of contractors, participants, families and representatives**

* Be familiar with this policy.
* Report hazards or incidents immediately to Management to enable effective control and management of any problems.
* Public liability insurance to cover any injuries they cause to their participants and/or the public (contractors.)
* Cooperate with reasonable WHS rules and practices implemented by Branch Out Support.
* To not act recklessly or place the health and safety of others at risk.
* Ensure their actions or failure to act do not put themselves or Branch Out Support’s staff at risk.
* If services are delivered in participants’ homes, participants must provide a safe and healthy working environment for Branch Out Support’s staff.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and, where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# INFORMATION MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure ensures Branch Out Support effectively manages information and records.

**Definitions**

**Information** – knowledge communicated or received. It results from processing, gathering, manipulating and organising data in a way that adds to the receiver's understanding.

**Information management** – a system for creating, producing, collecting, organising, storing, retrieving and disseminating information in any format and available from internal or external sources.

**Record** – recorded information in any form (including data in a computer system) that must be kept as evidence of the activities or operations of the organisation.

**Records management** – the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposal of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of documents.

## Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to having an effective records management system to support its participant services operations. Good record-keeping practices reinforce Branch Out Support’s day-to-day business operations.

Branch Out Support is committed to establishing and maintaining information and record management practices that meet the organisation’s needs, legislative, accountability requirements and stakeholder expectations. Branch Out Support is committed to protecting against loss or misuse of personal information and data.

## Procedures

* staff have access to the participant’s information held in the participant's file, on a ‘need to know’ basis and only for the purposes it was provided, such as providing disability services to the individual.
* Access to information should be provided to authorised staff for legitimate organisation purposes, e.g., where the data is necessary for staff to perform their role.
* Information is to be treated in the strictest of confidence and is not to be divulged unless for legitimate and legally permissible purposes, in accordance with relevant legislation and standards.
* The use of records by staff is monitored, and file audits are undertaken to ensure the files are complete and up-to-date and procedures are followed.
* Information or any form of media relating to Branch Out Support’s work cannot be taken from the premises without the prior permission of the Management team.
* Electronic records are stored securely with backup and disaster recovery systems. The most significant level of care is taken for participant-related records.
* Branch Out Support’s electronic data, including email data, is securely stored on a cloud server, which is protected and backed up.
* Branch Out Support uses electronic participant management and financial management systems to capture and store specific information and records.
* Participant and financial management systems are password-protected and restricted to approved personnel.
* Corporate records must not be maintained in email folders, shared folders, personal drives or external storage media, as these lack the necessary functionality to protect business information.
* Where required, records should be moved securely in a non-transparent container.
* Hard copy files are kept in locked filing cabinets in secure, lockable areas with access limited only to authorised staff.
* Hard copy files are kept in a secure location that is regularly maintained and cleaned.
* staff are expected to lock unattended computers and maintain a 'clean desk' policy.
* Regular physical access and digital access internal audits will be undertaken.
* Branch Out Support will retain records relating to the provision of NDIS services in accordance with the Record Principles 2014.
* When information is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was obtained, Branch Out Support must take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify it.
* As a registered NDIS provider, Branch Out Support must keep records relating to service delivery for seven years from the date they were created.
* Once information can be destroyed, it is placed in a secure bag to be collected by a fast destruction service for shredding.
* staff must maintain the physical privacy of personal information and organisational records in accordance with state and Commonwealth legislation.
* Branch Out Support will provide participants and government agencies access to records in accordance with any applicable legislation, including Freedom of Information legislation.
* Branch Out Support will comply with The Notifiable Data Breaches (NDB) Scheme, which requires entities to notify affected individuals and the Commissioner of certain data breaches.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# PROVIDING INFORMATION AND REFERRAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to ensure Branch Out Support provides participants and other stakeholders with accurate information to access services most appropriate to their needs.

## Policy

Branch Out Support will collaborate with other service providers to enhance its service delivery and provide its participants with appropriate referrals and services that meet their needs.

Branch Out Support will inform the community, participants and other service providers about its services and access requirements.

Branch Out Support will encourage and facilitate participant and stakeholder participation within the organisation’s services.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support will build relationships with local agencies, health services, and advocacy services and participate in relevant local networks, including conferences, to increase services and referral options for the organisation’s participants and other stakeholders.
* Work with local Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and CALD service providers to assist culturally sensitive service delivery to participants.
* Build relationships with local agencies and advocacy services and participate in relevant local networks, including conferences, to increase service and referral options for the organisation’s participants in the criminal justice system.
* Distribute marketing information about Branch Out Support’s services in appropriate formats to the local community and other relevant agencies.
* Management will ensure Branch Out Support is listed in relevant directories.
* Maintain an informational Handbook in appropriate formats on the organisation’s services and distribute the Handbook to community when appropriate.
* The management team will review Branch Out Support’s participation in support, services and referral networks annually.
* Referrals and requests for services will be handled in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Service Access Policy and Procedure.
* Maintain a Referrals Database.
* Work with participants who have been refused services by Branch Out Support or participants leaving the organisation to identify alternative service providers and will provide support with referral to other service providers.
* staff providing referrals will consider participants’ needs and personal circumstances.
* staff will acknowledge and address any participant's concerns and explain why a referral has been made.
* staff will be provided with training and professional development in handling referrals.
* If there is more than one service that may assist a participant, staff will provide the participant with information about the range of services available and give them the choice over which services they wish to use.
* If a participant is not satisfied with referrals provided by Branch Out Support, they will be directed to the complaints and feedback processes.
* A Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified with the referral process.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure ensure that the organisation maintains sound financial management and accounting principles. This policy and procedure explain Branch Out Support’s NDIS-specific financial management arrangements.

**Definitions**

**Assets** are non-consumable items of tangible property (including fixtures) with a service life more significant than one year. Assets can include, but are not limited to, non-medical equipment, equipment or aids to support participants, electronic equipment (such as computers), furniture, and motor vehicles.

**Corruption** is dishonest activity in which an executive manager, manager, staff member or contractor of an entity acts contrary to the interests of the entity and abuses their position of trust to achieve some personal gain or advantage for him or herself or another person or entity.

**Fraud** – dishonest activity causing actual or potential financial loss to any person or entity, including theft of money or other property by staff or people external to the entity, and where deception is used at the time, immediately before or immediately following the activity. This also includes the deliberate falsification, concealment, destruction or use of falsified documentation used or intended for a non-business purpose or the improper use of information or position for financial benefit.

## Policy

Branch Out Support will have an open and transparent accounting system. Branch Out Support will prepare financial statements according to the Australian Accounting Standards.

Branch Out Support is committed to having its accounts and records audited in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Implement financial processes that support participants to avoid or limit their debts to Branch Out Support.

Manage participants who are debtors to assure Branch Out Support’s financial sustainability; and comply with the NDIS Terms of Business for Registered Providers and the NDIS Price Guide, including prohibition on advance payments for Agency Managed plans; prohibition of overdue payment fees and processes for withdrawal or termination of services.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support will use an electronic financial management system to support Branch Out Support’s financial management.
* Branch Out Support will comply with the Australian Accounting Standards issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board.
* All monies received by the organisation are to be recorded.
* Branch Out Support will monitor the organisation's financial position to minimise the risk and ensure that expenses comply with the organisation’s budget.
* The Director is responsible for the delegation of expenditure.
* Access to Bank Accounts and EFT transfers is restricted to the Director and must be password protected.
* Receipts for all expenditures are provided to and retained by the Director.
* The Directors/Senior Management will authorise and reimburse staff for work-related expenses.
* Assets owned by Branch Out Support will be recorded in the organisation’s Asset Register.
* Sold or disposed assets of Branch Out Support will be recorded in the organisation’s financial records and the Asset Register.
* Branch Out Support’s Management team will prepare an annual budget for the organisation.
* Branch Out Support’s Management team will prepare a quarterly expenditure report against the budget.
* Branch Out Support’s Management team will prepare Financial Statements for submission to funding bodies as required.

The Financial Report will include:

* Profit & Loss year to date.
* Balance Sheet for the year to date.
* General Ledger for the year to date; and
* Budget vs. Actual for the year to date.
* The management team will conduct a financial reconciliation annually in consultation with the independent accountant and prepare a Financial Report.
* The management team will appoint a qualified auditor to audit Branch Out Support’s accounts as professional standards require.

**Fraud and Corruption Control**

Branch Out Support’s Operations Manager will raise general awareness amongst staff about what fraudulent practices are, identify potential fraud, how to report fraud and make it clear that fraudulent practices will not be tolerated.

During induction Branch Out Support employment screening processes (see Human Resources Policy and Procedure), include police and Reference Checks.

Where the Management team, staff member, participant or other stakeholder identifies an instance of suspected fraud or corruption, an initial report must be made to the Director. Unless that person may be implicated, reports must be made to the relevant authorities, including the NDIS Commission or Police.

All reports of fraud or corruption should be treated in confidence and referred to the Director. When a report or allegation of fraud or corruption is received, every effort must be made to deal with such reports quickly and decisively.

The Director will record all reports of actual and suspected fraud or corruption, noting the nature of the report, the time received, and remedial actions planned and taken. Upon request, a copy of these records shall be provided to the relevant authorities.

In examining cases of suspected fraud, Management and staff must ensure that their inquiries are not discriminatory to any subsequent investigation. If in doubt, do not pursue further investigations, and the Director shall contact the correct Police.

All discipline or misconduct investigations relating to Branch Out Support’s staff will be conducted in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Human Resources Policy and Procedure.

**NDIS Specifics & Service Agreements**

Branch Out Support financial arrangements regarding NDIS service delivery comply with the NDIS Act 2013 (Cth), the NDIS Rules, all relevant NDIS guidelines, all policies issued by the NDIA, including the NDIS Terms of Business for Registered Providers, NDIS Provider Registration Guide to Suitability and any other applicable Commonwealth or State law or other requirements.

The Management team will develop pricing structures for Branch Out Support that align with the price controls and quoting requirements for NDIS support per the NDIS VIC/WA/NSW/QLD/TAS/NT/SA Price Guide.

The Director and Accounts Manager will maintain complete and accurate accounts and financial records of the support delivered to NDIS participants, along with documents of all Service Agreements.

Branch Out Support accounts and financial records will be maintained regularly and in such detail that the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) can accurately determine the quantity, type and duration of support delivered.

Financial records and accounts relating to NDIS service provisions will be retained for five years from the issue date. Retaining all documents will also comply with all relevant statutes, regulations, by-laws and any Commonwealth, State or Local Authority requirements.

A NDIS Service Agreement will formalise the support Branch Out Support will provide NDIS participants. Participants have a choice over what level of control they have over their finances, and this is reflected in their Service Agreement with Branch Out Support. Branch Out Support will collaborate with participants and supporters to develop their Service Agreement.

Branch Out Support will declare prices to all participants before providing services and include all fees Service Agreements along with detailed information about the supports to be provided. Fees charged will not exceed the price controls set by the NDIA.

Branch Out Support Service Agreements will set out the costs to be paid for support when delivery of support is to be performed and the method of payment required. View Branch Out Support’s Assessment, Planning and Review Policy and Procedure for more information on the Service Agreement's contents.

The participant must sign the Service Agreement before service delivery can commence. Through its invoicing and statement arrangements, Branch Out Support will ensure that participants are regularly provided with details of services delivered and the amount charged for those services.

Service Agreements will be consistent with the NDIS’ pricing arrangements, guidelines and the requirements of the A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 (Cth) regarding the application of the GST.

When participants have difficulty paying their fees, they are encouraged to discuss this with Branch Out Support to implement mutually acceptable payment arrangements.

Accounts are calculated each week and are to be paid weekly. Fees are to be paid online or by direct deposit. Cash will not be kept on Branch Out Support’s premises, and Branch Out Support will not accept cash payments.

Prices charged to NDIS participants will not exceed the price level prescribed for that support in the NDIS VIC/WA/NSW/QLD/TAS/NT/SA/ACT Price Guide. No other charges will be added to the support cost, including credit card surcharges and additional fees such as ‘gap’ fees, overdue payments, or cancellation fees.

Receipts will be provided at the time of payment, and reprints will be supplied upon request. Statements of services provided will be issued by mail or email at the beginning of each quarter for the previous quarter's support.

Branch Out Support will submit claims for payment to the NDIA within a reasonable time limit and no later than 60 days from the end of the support booking.

Branch Out Support’s Account Manager establishes effective billing processes and efficient payment collection methods. The Accounts Manager will determine appropriate processing time limits for the following: Agency-managed plans - Payment Request through NDIS Provider Portal; Plan-managed plans - Invoice to Plan Management Provider; and Self-managed plans - Invoice to participant.

Outstanding debts will be reviewed on a weekly basis by the Accounts Manager, who will decide upon the appropriate action to be taken.

The Accounts Manager will contact debtors regarding overdue payments 15, 22 and 29 days after an invoice is issued.

**15 days after the Issue of the Invoice**

Suppose the Accounts Manager successfully speaks to the participant/carer and gains assurance of prompt payment. In that case, the Accounts Manager will record the promised date for payment in Branch Out Support’s financial management system and email the participant a reminder.

Suppose the Accounts Manager is not successful in gaining assurance of prompt payment. In that case, they will email the participant/carer stating services might be withdrawn or terminated if payment is not made within seven days.

**22 days after the Issue of the Invoice**

Suppose the Accounts Manager successfully speaks to the participant/carer and gains assurance of prompt payment. In that case, they will record the promised date for payment in the company’s financial management system and email the participant a reminder. If appropriate, a payment plan may be agreed upon.

Suppose the participant/carer is not contactable. In that case, the Accounts Manager will check the participant’s file and speak to any of the participant’s support staff to check if they are overseas, in hospital, or otherwise unavailable.

If there is no acceptable reason for non-payment, the Accounts Manager will consider withdrawing/terminating services immediately. If so, they will inform the participant in writing.

Suppose the participant is self-managing their NDIS plan, and there are doubts about their capacity to self-manage. In that case, the Accounts Manager will escalate to the Director, who will contact the NDIA.

The Accounts Manager will email a final demand letter requiring payment within seven days, stating that recovery will commence through a debt collection agency without further notice unless payment is received within that time limit.

**29 Days after the Issue of the Invoice**

Suppose a debt is not paid within this time limit, and an agreed payment plan has not been reached. In that case, the Accounts Manager/Case Manager will ensure that services are withdrawn or terminated immediately if this has not already occurred.

The Accounts Manager/Case Manager will inform the participant/carer in writing and decide on further action (for example, arrangements for debt collection or a repayment plan).

**Finalising Debts**

The Accounts Manager may accept a reasonable request for payment by instalments, provided the agreement terms and time limits are agreed upon. Such contracts are to be in writing and confirmed by both parties, with a copy provided to the participant and a copy retained on the participant’s file.

In the event of a payment default, the total amount of the debt will become due for payment and will be referred to Branch Out Support’s debt collector.

Before referring a debt to a debt collection agency, the Accounts Manager will determine whether this is a financially worthwhile option for Branch Out Support.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to demonstrate that Branch Out Support will manage human resources effectively to ensure that staff are appropriately skilled and trained to safely deliver support and services to participants.

## Policy

Branch Out Support will ensure it is sufficiently resourced to meet legislative, policy and service standards.

Branch Out Support will ensure all staff have clear policies, procedures and work instructions that will enable them to deliver a quality service to participants.

All Branch Out Support employees will maintain up-to-date Working with Children Check and police Check and any other state-relevant requirements.

Each participant’s support needs will be met by staff who are competent in their role, hold relevant qualifications, and have relevant expertise and experience to provide person-centred support.

All staff are recruited according to Branch Out Support’s equal employment opportunity (EEO) processes. All permanent vacancies are advertised externally and internally. Only those who successfully pass the NDIS Worker Screening Check and NDIS Worker Orientation Program will be employed by Branch Out Support. The Director is responsible for the recruitment and administration of all employees.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support will provide staff with clear policies and procedures and work instructions that will enable them to deliver a quality service to participants.
* staff delivering disability support services must meet the minimum qualification and experience requirements outlined by the NDIA.
* staff delivering NDIS services must meet the minimum qualification and experience requirements in accordance with relevant legislation.

All staff must have, where relevant:

* Medication administration credentialing/re-credentialing.
* Manual handling training and experience.
* Their car is covered by full comprehensive car insurance.
* A Drivers’ License – green P provisional or open licence. If they assist participants with travel and transport, their car registration and comprehensive car insurance must be provided.
* A current National Police Records Check, NDIS Worker Screening Check, and/or other state requirements.
* Working with Children Check and/or any other state requirements.
* A current First Aid and CPR Certificate, including Anaphylaxis and Asthma.
* Working rights
* NDIS Worker Orientation Training
* Infection Control Training

Branch Out Support will screen relevant requirements for existing staff, volunteers, students and contractors who work directly with participants every three years.

Branch Out Support will provide ongoing training and development opportunities for staff.

Branch Out Support will conduct performance reviews for all staff on a yearly basis.

**Recruitment**

Branch Out Support will develop advertising material that stipulates employer requirements.

Branch Out Support will advertise online and within the organisation’s local community.

Management will review the resumes and experience of potential candidates.

Management will contact short-listed candidates and arrange interviews.

Staff will complete relevant documents: Employment application, Interview questions, Reference check form, police Check, Blue Cards and Yellow Cards forms and certified copies of qualifications.

Complete mandatory checks, including Working with Children Checks, Tax file declarations, and new employee information forms.

Add car registration and insurance details to register.

Carry out reference checks to finalise the choice of candidates.

Phone successful candidate/s and send out a Letter of Offer.

Obtain candidates’ acceptance of the Offer (Returned Signed Letter).

Provide comprehensive induction of Branch Out Support’s mission, values, organisational structure, policies and procedures, staff code of conduct and WHS.

All inexperienced staff must be provided with an Employee Handbook, incorporating their job description, Code of Conduct, an organisation chart highlighting their direct supervisor and other relevant information to orientate them to the organisation.

Issue uniforms and other resources to new employees and arrange their roster and buddy shifts.

Organise mentoring programs and professional development trainings.

If required Branch Out Support will provide cultural awareness training on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD communities.

Branch Out Support will implement a mentoring program, probationary interviews and a yearly performance review.

Branch Out Support will develop a comprehensive education program and timetable.

Branch Out Support will create monthly meeting schedules to ensure staff concerns are heard and addressed accordingly.

Branch Out Support will ensure all contractor’s performance is monitored regularly.

Staff members who have been injured or become ill and wish to make a Workers Compensation claim must Complete a Worker’s Injury Claim Form from the state WorkSafe authorities and submit it to the Management team.

Branch Out Support complies with the other injury and return to work schemes of the organisation’s state and/or territory.

**Mandatory Checks**

As a NDIS Registered Provider, Branch Out Support must screen new and existing staff who:

* Are key personnel.
* Are in a role for which the normal duties include the direct delivery of specified support or specified services to a person with a disability (see the NDIS Commission’s List of Specified Services and Supports); or
* Are in a role where the normal duties are likely to require more than incidental contact with people with disabilities.
* If staff have only incidental contact with people with disabilities as a regular part of their jobs (for example, administrative support staff), it is not mandatory for them to have a check, however, Branch Out Support may still require them to get one.

Before checks are undertaken, the person being checked must:

* Consent to providing Branch Out Support with police and international police record checks, where applicable.
* Sign a statutory declaration stating they have fully disclosed all relevant information regarding their criminal record and employment history to Branch Out Support.
* Branch Out Support must also allow prospective employees and volunteers to disclose any criminal record or disciplinary actions as part of the recruitment process.

The Operations Manager is responsible for:

* Assessing whether a staff member needs an updated check.
* Determining who will cover the costs of mandatory record checks.
* Maintaining a record for all Branch Out Support’s staff, including their qualifications, registrations, training and criminal history check status. The operations manager must ensure they have been sighted and maintain the details on each staff member's record.
* Maintaining the Human Resources Register that contains the National Police Check and Working with Children Check Clearance Numbers, including expiration dates and currency status for all staff.
* Employment contracts will stipulate that all staff are obligated to advise the Operations Manager if they are charged with a criminal offence which is punishable by imprisonment or, if found guilty, could reasonably affect their ability to meet the inherent requirements of their job and disclose formal disciplinary action taken against them by any current or former employer, including findings of improper or unprofessional conduct by a Court or Tribunal and investigations the staff member has been the subject of.

**Results of the Police Record Check**

Information released as part of a police check is restricted according to the relevant legislation or released policies operating in the specific police district. Where the police check reveals no disclosable court outcomes, outstanding charges or other matters, their appointment may be confirmed.

In all other cases, the Operations Manager will manage the assessment process to determine the applicant's suitability for employment or placement. The Operations Manager will ensure that the applicant, student or volunteer confirms that the details of the disclosable record are correct, the Operations Manager will assess whether any disclosable record of the applicant, volunteer or student is made in accordance with the assessment criteria detailed below. Any decision made for or against a person can be justified and is fully documented.

The Operations Manager should consider the following criteria:

* The relevance of the criminal offence concerning the job or placement.
* The nature of the offence and the relationship of the offence to the job or placement for which the applicant is being considered.
* The length of time since the offence took place.
* Whether the person was convicted or found guilty and placed on a bond.
* Whether there is evidence of an extended police record.
* The number of offences committed may establish a pattern of behaviour that renders the applicant unsuitable.
* Whether the offence was committed as an adult or a juvenile.
* The severity of punishment imposed.
* Whether the offence is still a crime or has been decriminalised.
* Whether other factors may be relevant for consideration.
* The person's general character since the offence was committed.

Where the Operations Manager makes the decision not to take on an applicant, volunteer or student with a disclosable record, they must:

* Inform the unsuccessful applicant of the decision and its rationale.
* Provide an opportunity for the unsuccessful applicant to discuss the results and
* Inform the unsuccessful applicant of the opportunity to review the decision.

**Working with Children Check (WWCC)**

WWCC are valid for five years and assess the level of risk an individual poses to children's safety. They are more extensive and targeted than police Checks and consist of a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

All Branch Out Support staff, contractors or volunteers who have contact with children during their duties must have and maintain a clear WWCC check.

**Supervisor Support**

Branch Out Support is committed to assisting all employees in performing their duties per the organisation’s policies and procedures, including at least regular supervisor meetings every six months. The supervisor and employee are expected to contribute to this process actively.

Where it is identified that staff are not performing to their required standard, it may result in immediate action, including a development plan being implemented, which may include further training.

**Termination of employment**

staff are required to give the relevant notice as stated in the relevant industrial Award or instrument if they choose to end their employment with the organisation.

Branch Out Support has the discretion to pay the staff member their notice period in lieu instead of having them attend work during the notice period.

Branch Out Support will ensure all salary and entitlements are paid to the staff member within 14 days of the end of their employment.

**Disciplinary Action**

staff who do not comply with Branch Out Support staff Code of Conduct, Policies and Procedures or do not respond to performance intervention may face disciplinary action.

Branch Out Support will document performance-related discussions or counselling sessions, which will be kept on staff records.

Where a staff member engages in serious misconduct so that it becomes unreasonable for Branch Out Support to continue their employment, the staff member may be dismissed instantly.

Branch Out Support will comply with all State and Federal legislation and the staff member’s Employment Contract in relation to disciplinary action and employment termination.

**Exit Interviews**

The Operations Manager will ensure all staff leaving Branch Out Support have the opportunity to complete an Exit Interview.

Exit interviews are voluntary and allow departing staff to offer feedback and suggestions that Branch Out Support may use to improve its workplace practices and environment.

Staff will receive an Exit Interview Questionnaire to complete their Exit Interview.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to demonstrate Branch Out Support’s commitment to managing conflicts of interest openly and transparently. This policy and procedure apply to Branch Out Support’s Management team and meet relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

## POLICY

Branch Out Support acknowledges that failure to respond to actual or potential conflicts of interest can damage the reputation and community confidence in Branch Out Support. It may also have legal ramifications.

The NDIS Terms of Business for Registered Providers requires providers to have policies about potential conflicts of interest in service delivery.

Branch Out Support aims to act in accordance with its values and comply with its obligations as a registered provider of support under the NDIS.

**Definitions**

**Registered Plan Management Provider** - a NDIS provider who manages the funding for support in NDIS participants’ plans. Providers must be registered with the NDIS Commission to provide Plan Management. Plan Management Providers are responsible for purchasing supports identified in participants’ plans (including paying any applicable indirect costs, such as taxes; receiving and managing funding provided by the Agency; and acquiring financing provided by the Agency.

**Registered Support Coordination Provider** – a NDIS provider registered to help NDIS participants identify, connect with and work with service providers who provide the support best suited to them. Providers must be reported to provide Support Coordination.

## PROCEDURES

As a registered provider of support under the NDIS, Branch Out Support manages conflicts of interest. Managing conflicts of interest in plan management and support coordination and offering or receiving gifts, benefits and commissions.

All staff will act in the best interests of NDIS participants and other participants, ensuring they are informed, empowered, and able to maximise choice and control.

Branch Out Support will ensure that when providing support to NDIS participants, any conflict of interest is declared and any risks to participants are mitigated.

Staff will manage, document and report on individual conflicts as they arise. Staff will ensure that advice to a participant about support options (including those not delivered directly by Branch Out Support) is transparent and promotes choice and control.

**Managing conflict of interest in plan management and support coordination**

staff performing plan management and support coordination functions will ensure that:

* The organisation’s Risk Register includes the ongoing potential conflict of interest related to delivering these services and other NDIS supports.
* They declare the potential conflict of interest of Branch Out Support being both plan manager or support coordinator and a provider of other supports to participants and affirm that the organisation will act as directed by the participant and in the best interests of the participant; and
* Participants are presented with a range of choices about providers of support. Staff will not seek to influence the participant to select Branch Out Support over other organisations.

**Gifts, benefits and commissions and the NDIS**

Branch Out Support and its staff must not accept any offer of money, gifts, services or benefits that would cause them to act contrary to the interests of a NDIS participant.

Staff must have no financial or other personal interest that could directly or indirectly influence or compromise the choice of provider or provision of support to a participant. This includes obtaining or offering any commission by Branch Out Support employees.

**MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. Staff, participants, and other stakeholders' feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# Preferred Method of Communication Policy and Procedure

All participants can access support that promotes, upholds, and respects their legal and human rights, enabling them to exercise choice and control. Due to the variation in types of disability, there is a variation in the modes of communication that each participant will require. This policy is designed to ensure that Branch Out Support’s employees understand each participant’s preferred method of communication. This preferred method of communication will then be embedded in the support and services provided to the participant.

Support staff and those who work with Branch Out Support’s participants must understand the participant’s preferred method of communication and put that preference into practice wherever possible. The Director will inform the staff members of each participant’s communication requirements and will always attempt to place staff that can communicate effectively with a participant.

**Definitions**

**Interpreter**: A person who interprets, especially one who translates speech orally or in sign language. An interpreter translates the spoken words based on their grammatical knowledge of the language they interpret. Their interpretation is based on their expertise in the subject.

**Translator**: A person who professionally translates from one language into another.

A translator must be equipped with excellent linguistic skills. They must have a sound knowledge of grammar and be able to express the thoughts presented to a participant in the language.

**Mode of communication**: The medium or channel through which communicative intent is expressed. Typical communication modes include natural speech, facial expression and gesture. Exceptional communication modes include the use of graphic symbols or synthetic speech.

**Accessible Read documents**: Easy Read documents simplify information, making it easy for the participant to understand. Typically, it uses plain text or pictures to assist in explaining text and has lots of space between sentences.

## Policy

The best means of communicating with a participant is determined at the initial consultation, the information collected will be recorded and used from that point forward. Staff are required to treat all participants respectfully and use their preferred mode of communication wherever possible. Variations in the mode of communication may include:

* Written documents with no adjustments
* Verbal explanations
* Demonstration
* Easy Read documents – explanations and forms
* Interpreters (oral)
* Translators (written)
* Participants may use their interpreters and access their advocate to assist them.

## Procedure

At the initial contact meeting, staff will consult with the participant and their family or advocate to determine the most preferred mode of communication.

**Initial Meeting**

The Director will undertake the following steps:

* Determine the best means of communication via discussion or assessment.
* Record this mode of communication in the Support Plan.
* Inform all staff workers who work with the participant.
* Match staff with these skills or train and support staff in communicating.
* Arrange for an interpreter or translator (if required).

**Provision of Information**

staff are to use the information gained in the initial meeting to provide information to the participant in their mode of communication, where information must be discussed with the participant. Methods that will be used may include:

* Providing information in written form without any adjustments.
* Providing information in written form using Easy Read Documents.
* Explaining the information orally to participants with difficulty reading or comprehending written documents.
* Demonstrating information (if able to do so).
* Accessing an interpreter via Translating and Interpreting Services, Department of Home Affairs.

# NDIS Worker Screening check Policy and procedure

The purpose of this policy:

The NDIS Worker Screening Check is an assessment of whether a person who works or seeks to work with people with disabilities poses a risk to them. The evaluation determines whether a person is cleared or excluded from working in specific roles with people with disabilities.

The Worker Screening Unit conducts the NDIS Worker Screening Check in the state or territory where a person applies for it. The Worker Screening Unit also decides whether a person is cleared or excluded. Registered NDIS providers must ensure that they only engage workers who have been removed in specific roles, called risk-assessed roles.

Before the NDIS Worker Screening Check started, registered NDIS providers were required to ensure that their workers in risk-assessed roles had an acceptable check that met the transitional and special arrangements that apply to the state or territory where they provide support and services. Now that the NDIS Worker Screening Check has commenced, registered NDIS providers may be able to continue recognising a person’s acceptable check if the person does not have a NDIS worker screening clearance. The period that an acceptable check can continue to be recognised depends on the state or territory where the person provides support or services. Please visit the transitional and special arrangements page for more information.

**Definitions**

**Acceptable** check is the name given when a person fulfils the requirements that apply in the state or territory where they provide support and services under the transitional and special arrangements contained in Part 4 of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Worker Screening—Practice Standards) Rules 2018. It allows individuals to work in specific roles without a NDIS worker screening clearance during a particular period that applies to that state or territory. This acceptable check will sometimes be recognised after the NDIS Worker Screening Check has commenced.

**NDIS Worker Screening Check (Worker Screening Check)** A nationally consistent assessment conducted by a state or territory Worker Screening Unit to determine whether a person who works or seeks to work with people with a disability poses a risk to them.

**NDIS Worker Screening clearance** is a decision made by a Worker Screening Unit that clears a person who applied for a NDIS Worker Screening Check to work with people with disability in a risk-assessed role.

**NDIS Worker Screening exclusion** is a decision made by a Worker Screening Unit that does not clear a person who applied for a NDIS Worker Screening Check to work with people with disability in a risk-assessed role.

**Registered NDIS provider:** A registered NDIS provider is a person or organisation registered with the NDIS Commission per section 73E of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. NDIS providers must be reported to deliver support (e.g., implementing regulated restrictive practices in a behaviour Support Plan).

**Self-managed participants** Self-management is when a NDIS participant manages their own NDIS funding. It gives NDIS participants the flexibility and choice to decide which provider delivers NDIS support and services to meet their plan goals.

**Unregistered NDIS provider** A provider of NDIS support and services not registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Not all providers are required to be registered. Unregistered NDIS providers usually deliver lower risk support to NDIS participants – for example, house maintenance. Only participants who self-manage or plan-manage their NDIS funding can choose to receive support and services from unregistered NDIS providers.

**Worker** For the NDIS Worker Screening Check, a worker is someone employed or otherwise engaged by a registered or unregistered NDIS provider, or someone who provides support and services to self-managed participants. To note:

* It includes paid, unpaid and self-employed people, such as employees, contractors, consultants, and volunteers.
* It also includes individuals that are themselves a registered or unregistered NDIS provider, each of the key personnel of a registered NDIS provider and a partner of a partnership that is a registered NDIS provider.
* Only workers of registered NDIS providers engaged in certain roles (called risk-assessed roles) are required to obtain a NDIS worker screening clearance.

**Worker screening unit (WSU)** The person or body responsible for conducting NDIS Worker Screening Checks in a state or territory under its NDIS worker screening law. WSU’s are contained within state or territory government departments, or other state or territory authorities.

## Policy

As a registered NDIS provider, Branch Out Support will comply with the requirements relating to worker screening, as per the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Practice Standards – Worker Screening) Rules 2018. It is the responsibility of the Director to verify that all workers performing in a risk-assessed role have applied for and hold the appropriate worker screening clearances, (as determined by the Worker Screening Unit) by reviewing the details recorded in the National Worker Screening Database (NWSD). The Director or an authorised delegate will manage, record and verify worker screening.

The Director will identify which roles are risk assessed roles and ensure all workers in the roles have a NDIS Worker Screening Check or an acceptable check under the transitional and special arrangements. The following table lists the NDIS registration groups that may have risk assessed roles.

Only employees who work in risk assessed roles require worker screening clearances. Branch Out Support is not required to verify that employees, who do not work in risk assessed roles, have a NDIS worker screening clearance or an acceptable check under the transitional and special arrangements.

However, Branch Out Support or a self-managed participant, may (as a safety measure) require a staff worker to undergo a NDIS worker screening clearance or have an acceptable check under the transitional and special arrangements, before engaging them for a role that is not a risk assessed role.

All workers in a risk assessed role must apply for a NDIS Worker Screening Check with the state’s Worker Screening Unit. The Worker Screening Unit manages the application process and collects the required application fee.

The Director or a delegated staff member will access the NDIS Portal and validate the worker screening checks. The National Worker Screening Database (NWSD) will email Branch Out Support about a worker’s clearance or exclusion.

The Director, in turn, will inform the staff members of the results. If the NWSD advises of an exclusion or provides negative advice regarding a worker, it is the Director’s responsibility to immediately withdraw that worker from the risk assessed role.

**Supports and services that may have risk assessed roles as described by the NDIS:**

* 0102 Assistance to access and maintain employment or higher education.
* 0104 High intensity daily personal activities.
* 0106 Assist life stage, Transition.
* 0107 Assist Personal Activities.
* 0108 Assist Travel / Transport.
* 0110 Behaviour support.
* 0114 Community Nursing care.
* 0115 Daily Tasks / Shared living.
* 0116 Innovative community Participation.
* 0117 Development life skills.
* 0118 Early childhood support.
* 0119 Specialised Hearing Services.
* 0121 Interpret / Translate.
* 0125 Participate in the community.
* 0126 Ex Phys Personal Training.
* 0127 Plan management.
* 0128 Therapeutic support.
* 0129 Specialised driver training.
* 0132 Specialised support coordination.
* 0133 Specialised supported employment.
* 0134 Hearing services.
* 0135 Customised prosthetics.
* 0136 Group and centre-based activities.

## Procedures

**How to apply for NDIS Worker Screening check**

Workers engaged to provide NDIS support and services to registered NDIS providers, unregistered NDIS providers and self-managed participants can apply for a NDIS Worker Screening Check through a state or territory agency. Each agency has a ‘Worker Screening Unit.’ The Worker Screening Unit is responsible for accepting and processing NDIS Worker Screening Check applications from workers and will undertake risk assessments to determine whether a worker receives a clearance.

When a worker applies for a NDIS Worker Screening Check, a fee is payable (set by the state or territory in which the application is made).

Workers must prove their identity for their application to proceed. The process for this will depend on the state or territory in which a person applies.

Workers will nominate the NDIS provider or self-managed participant that engages them (or intends to engage them) to provide NDIS support and services. The NDIS provider or self-managed participant then needs to verify that they engage (or intend to) the worker, to deliver NDIS support and services. The application will not be assessed until the relevant NDIS provider or self-managed participant has verified the application.

It is a condition of registration for registered NDIS providers that they ensure that workers in risk assessed roles have a NDIS Worker Screening Check or an acceptable check under the transitional and special arrangements. This provides a level of safeguarding for NDIS participants by helping to ensure that those in risk assessed roles do not pose an unacceptable risk to the safety and wellbeing of NDIS participants.

**Who should have / apply for NDIS Worker Screening check**

Registered NDIS providers must ensure that key personnel and other workers in certain types of roles have appropriate worker screening clearances that meet the requirements of the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators.

Appropriate clearances ensure that the key personnel and employees in risk assessed roles do not pose an unacceptable risk to the safety and wellbeing of our NDIS participants. Compliance with the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators is a condition of registration for all registered NDIS providers.

The risk assessed roles are linked to the NDIS requirements. All roles identified as risk assessed by Branch Out Support must meet all NDIS worker screening requirements.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# DISPUTES AND GRIEVANCES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aims to set out the steps Branch Out Support’s staff are required to take regarding disputes and grievances. This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

## Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to maintaining positive working relationships between its staff and management. Disputes and grievances should be addressed within the organisation in a timely and confidential manner.

**Definition**

**Dispute** – a disagreement or argument arising from discrimination, harassment or any other behaviour between staff members or between the organisation and a staff member.

**Grievance** - a formal complaint lodged by one staff member against another or the organisation.

**Sexual harassment** - any form of unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited sexual behaviour that is offensive, humiliating or embarrassing.

**Workplace harassment** - repeated behaviour, other than behaviour amounting to sexual harassment, of one staff member or group of staff members that is unwelcome, unsolicited and considered to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening by another staff member.

## Procedures

Disputes and grievances must be treated by Branch Out Support with the utmost confidentiality, and the complainant must not be victimised.

All grievances must be taken seriously and investigated impartially.

staff should attempt to resolve disputes with the other person before lodging a grievance. If attempts to resolve the dispute fail, staff must discuss the matter with the Operations Manager.

The Operations Manager will mediate and seek an acceptable compromise for both parties. If the dispute involves the Operations Manager, the staff must discuss the matter with the Director.

Issues of sexual harassment or discrimination should be brought to the notice of the Operations Manager.

The staff member should write a grievance letter to the Director if a dispute cannot be resolved.

Once a formal grievance is lodged, the Director will investigate the matter within five working days. If the Director has a conflict of interest, an independent party will conduct the investigation.

Where necessary, the Director will appoint an independent mediator to help resolve disputes; and encourage a support person, union or professional association representation and involvement in the dispute resolution procedures.

If the investigation reveals that the grievance is valid and depending on the nature of the complaint and its seriousness, the staff member against whom the grievance was lodged may be required to apologise to the staff member who lodged the grievance; given a written warning, counselling, transfer, demotion or dismissal.

Suppose the grievance is found to be a frivolous claim, depending on the seriousness of the allegations. In that case, the staff member making the complaint may be asked to undertake counselling, make a written apology to the staff member complained about, given a written warning, transfer, demotion or dismissal.

staff have the right to appeal decisions relating to disputes. Appeals should be directed in writing to the Director and the Management team will make a final decision. staff who successfully appeal will have the outcome and actions reassessed for appropriateness. staff who are unsuccessful in their appeal will have the original decision reconfirmed.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# EQUITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATON POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure aim to demonstrate Branch Out Support’s commitment to a workplace free from harassment and discrimination. This policy and procedure include Branch Out Support’s commitment to equal opportunity.

## Policy

Branch Out Support will ensure all staff are valued and encouraged to contribute to the organisation’s policies and procedures. Branch Out Support’s staff must comply with anti-discrimination and harassment legislation.

As an equal opportunity employer, Branch Out Support is bound by all relevant State and Federal legislation in relation to equal employment opportunity (EEO). This legislation ensures that no staff member will be discriminated against unfairly or unlawfully.

Branch Out Support is an equal opportunity employer and will comply with all relevant State and Federal legislation concerning equal employment opportunity.

**Definitions**

**Equity** – Treating all persons fairly and without discrimination.

**Discrimination** – Treating a person less favourably than others in similar circumstances because of a personal attribute that has no relevance to the situation.

**Age discrimination** - Discrimination based on age (regardless of age) or age-specific characteristics or characteristics generally associated with a person of a particular age.

**Disability discrimination** - Discrimination based on physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological or learning disability, physical disfigurement, disorder, illness or disease that affects thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement, or results in disturbed behaviour, and presence in body of organisms causing or capable of causing disease or illness (e.g., HIV virus).

**Racial discrimination** - Discrimination based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin and in some circumstances, immigrant status.

**Sex discrimination** – Discrimination based on sex, marital or relationship status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, family responsibilities, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

**Sexual harassment** - Any form of unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited sexual behaviour that is offensive, humiliating or embarrassing.

**Workplace harassment** - Repeated behaviour, other than behaviour amounting to sexual harassment, of one employee or group of staff members that is unwelcome, unsolicited and considered to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening by another staff member.

## Procedures

Branch Out Support complies with EEO requirements in relation to recruitment selection, pay, benefits, training and development, promotion, discrimination and harassment, performance appraisals and terminations.

staff will not be discriminated against based on sex, colour, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, pregnancy, marital or parental status, political belief or sexual orientation.

staff are not subject to no will engage in unlawful harassment (including racial vilification, sexual harassment, homosexual and transgender vilifications) or discrimination against another staff.

Branch Out Support is responsible for reporting any allegation of abuse if there is reasonable belief that an incident has occurred.

Branch Out Support takes breaches of this policy and procedure very seriously.

staff who feel they are the subject of discrimination or harassment should formally complain to the Director.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include reviewing and evaluating current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, and the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# WORKPLACE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This procedure provides guidelines for reporting, investigating and applying appropriate control measures when an accident or near miss occurs. The aim is to provide safe work systems and work environments in all Branch Out Support worksites.

## Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to providing a safe workplace for all staff, participants and other stakeholders and to establishing a formal process to report and investigate all workplace accidents, incidents and near miss occurrences. This includes identifying contributing factors and making the necessary recommendations to prevent a recurrence.

Branch Out Support will respond to any incident or injury immediately and support injured staff to return safely and sustainably to work.

**Definitions**

* **Accident** – an unforeseen event that causes damage to property, injury or death.
* **Harm** – Includes death, or injury, illness (physical or psychological) or disease that may be suffered by a person because of exposure to a hazard.
* **Hazard** – a situation that has the potential to harm a person (cause death, illness or injury) or environment or damage property.
* **Hazard Identification** – A process that involves identifying all foreseeable hazards in the workplace and understanding the possible harm each hazard may cause.
* **Hazard Management** – A structured process of hazard identification, risk assessment and control, aimed at providing safe and healthy conditions for staff, contractors and visitors while on the premises.
* **Incident** – an occurrence that causes (or could have caused, in the case of a ‘Near Miss) damage to property, injury/illness or death.
* **Dangerous Incident (including ‘Near Misses’)** - an incident that exposes any person to a serious risk.

## Procedures

Management will acquire and keep up-to-date knowledge of WHS matters including legislative requirement for reporting incidents.

Management will ensure Branch Out Support has appropriate resources and processes to minimise or eliminate risks to health and safety.

Management will ensure Branch Out Support has appropriate resources to manage incidents.

staff will follow mandatory reporting where the incident involves a participant, in accordance with relevant legislation and standards.

staff will undergo induction, which will include training in mitigating and responding to incidents, as well as mandatory reporting responsibilities.

**Responding to Incidents**

* Assess the situation and check for danger.
* Remove the person from danger if it is safe to do so.
* Call Emergency Services (dial 000) if required.
* Addressed the immediate needs of the people involved.
* Assess the situation and ensure no others are at risk of harm.
* Do not alter the scene.
* Notify relevant emergency contacts by telephone as soon as possible.
* Should the person not need medical treatment, notify the representatives, or family members.

**Types of incidents**

* Acts, omissions, events or circumstances that occur in connection with providing NDIS support or services to a person with disability and have, or could have, caused harm to the person with a disability.
* Acts by a person with disability that occur in connection with providing NDIS support or services to the person with disability and which have caused serious harm, or a risk of serious harm, to another person.
* Reportable incidents that have or are alleged to have occurred in connection with providing NDIS support or services to a person with a disability.
* Branch Out Support processes comply with the NDIS incident management guideline and monitor updates.

**Reporting Incidents**

All incidents and near misses must be reported to the Management within 24 hours through completion of the Incident Report.

Where an incident injures a staff member, this must be recorded in the Incident Register.

The Branch Out Support processes comply with the NDIS incident management guideline and monitor updates. All reportable incidents to regulatory bodies including NDIS will be reported immediately.

**Investigating and Resolving Incidents**

1. Management will work with the relevant state Workplace Health Safety authority and/or other relevant authorities to investigate the incident.
2. Management or their nominated representative will commence investigations immediately upon receiving a completed Incident Report.
3. Management will implement the most effective controls that do not introduce other hazards and monitor and review the situation.
4. Consult with staff who are, or are likely to be, directly affected.
5. Provide information and feedback to Management.
6. Track all relevant information in the Incident Register.
7. Upon completion of the investigation, Management must finalise the relevant Incident Report and record the outcomes in the Incident Register.
8. The completed Incident Report should be stored on the relevant staff members or participant’s file.
9. Incidents will be reviewed by the Management Team monthly, to determine if there are any trends or preventive measures that Branch Out Support can take to prevent future incidents.

**Debrief and Support**

Facilitate an informal debrief amongst supervisors and colleagues.

Ensure appropriate support and access to counselling is made available for person involved in incident.

**Workers Compensation**

All work-related injuries or illnesses must be reported in accordance with the ‘Reporting Incidents’ section of this policy and procedure.

A staff member who has a work-related injury or illness who is away from work for more than seven consecutive days should nominate and be assessed by a doctor. The doctor will determine the kind of treatment they require, including the frequency and duration of treatment. The doctor will also issue a Certificate of Capacity, which is required to make a worker’s compensation claim. The original Certificate of Capacity must be provided to Branch Out Support.

The staff member should also complete a Worker’s Injury Claim Form and submit it to the Director.

The Director must submit the completed Worker’s Injury Claim Form and the Certificate of Capacity to Branch Out Support’s workers compensation insurer within 7 days of receiving it.

The insurer will write to the staff member and Branch Out Support to advise if the claim has been accepted or if further information is required. Insurers are required to provide their decision about the staff member’s work capacity and entitlements to the staff member in a single notice.

If awarded workers compensation, staff can claim medical expenses and receive weekly payments if they need time off work. They must participate in an injury management plan if they need more than 7 days off work.

**Return to Work Program**

Branch Out Support’s Return to Work Program summarises the process that will be followed to manage staff with work-related injuries or illnesses. The program must align with the injury management program administered by Branch Out Support’s workers compensation insurer.

Branch Out Support’s Management team and Return to Work Coordinator are responsible for maintaining the program. It must be reviewed at least every two years and should be written in plain English. The policies, procedures, roles, responsibilities and communications described in the plan must support timely, safe and durable recovery at work and align with Work Health and Safety Act 2011 requirements and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to demonstrate that the organisations commitment to deal with all feedback including suggestions, complaints fairly, promptly, and confidentially. Branch Out Support will provide feedback in a timely manner and document this feedback following due process to reach mutually satisfactory and agreed outcomes.

## Policy

Branch Out Support manages feedback effectively to identify areas for improvement.

Branch Out Support has an effective complaints, compliment and feedback handling system that addresses the principles of visibility and accessibility, responsiveness, assessment, investigation, feedback and continuous improvement.

## Procedures

All complaints must be dealt with fairly and without reprisal or fear of retribution.

Complaints can be lodged by the following:

* Directly with a staff member or by providing a completed Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Form.
* By email
* By phone
* In writing
* At any time, people can make a complaint about NDIS service providers or the support they provide to the NDIS Commission.

Complaints to the NDIS Commission can be lodged:

* Online at [www.ndiscommission.gov.au](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/)
* By phone on 1800 035 544
* Complaints about the NDIA should be directed to the Agency itself or the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Complaints to the NDIA can be lodged:

* By phone on 1800 800 110
* By email to feedback@ndis.gov.au

Complaints to the Commonwealth Ombudsman about the NDIA can be lodged:

* By phone on 1300 362 072
* Online at www.ombudsman.gov.au.

staff must support people making a complaint about the NDIA to contact the Agency or Commonwealth Ombudsman, where this is required.

Complaints received by the Branch Out Support will be handled in the following manner:

* Within 1 working day all complaints will be recorded on a Complaint or Feedback form by the complainant or member of staff receiving the complaint.
* Within 1 working day the complaint will then be forwarded to the Director or delegate.
* If the complaint is about a member of staff, it is to be referred to the Director immediately and the Director will ensure the details are gathered and recorded in writing.
* The Director will record details of all complaint in the Complaints Register and allocate a suitable investigating officer unless the complaint is regarding the Director.
* The Acknowledgement of Complaint letter is sent to the complainant.
* If the complaint is regarding the Director, details are to be recorded by the person receiving the complaint and forwarded to an external mediator within 1 working day. The mediator will be convened to ensure a full investigation is undertaken.
* In instances when the complaint relates to suspected or actual assault, abuse, neglect or other criminal behaviour the Director will be informed immediately, and the appropriate investigative department will be informed.
* The allocated investigating officer (usually a Service Manager) or Director will commence investigation of the complaint within 1 working day.

The investigating officer will contact the complainant within 2 working days of receiving the complaint to:

* Clarify and document the nature of the complaint or concern and the resolution sought by the complainant.
* Explain the complaints procedure, individual’s rights and what to expect.
* Explain their right to an advocate.
* Document all information on the Complaint Investigation Form.

The investigating officer will interview the involved parties and develop a course of remedial action for the Director to approve.

When the action plan has been approved the investigating officer is to inform the complaint of the remedial action within ten working days of meeting with the complainant.

The Director will ensure the complainant is informed of the outcome in writing using the Outcome of Complaint Letter and advised of their right to take the matter to the Board or raise it with the relevant external bodies.

If either the complainant or other parties involved in the complaint are unsatisfied with the result or want the matter dealt with further, the matter will be taken to the mediator of Branch Out Support.

When the complaint cannot be resolved internally external mediation will be promoted.

All current complaints resolved and unresolved will be tabled in a non-identifying summary form at the next Management Meeting to inform of any potential problems.

In addition to addressing the specific complaint the organisation will utilise the information for feedback into the organisation’s continuous improvement cycle.

staff will be educated about the complaint’s procedure, their role and how to support participants and carers by making complaints. Education will occur when staff commence working at Branch Out Support and periodically through staff training and the staff newsletter.

Feedback is defined as “any comments or compliments made about any aspects of the services provided by Branch Out Support (including the actions of an employee, volunteer or persons otherwise engaged by Branch Out Support).”

Feedback may lead to Branch Out Support reviewing and adapting an aspect of service or may not require any action beyond acknowledging the feedback and passing on details to relevant parties.

Feedback will be recorded on the Feedback form by the person providing the feedback or the staff member receiving the information.

The information will then be forwarded to the people involved, the Service Manager and Director.

The Director will record the details on the relevant register and decide what action is required if any.

If the comment is negative, it may be necessary to implement the complaints procedure above.

Compliments will also be communicated at staff meetings to ensure staff are recognised and examples of best practice identified and acknowledged.

**Complaints Escalation and Dispute Resolution**

Where a complaint about Branch Out Support is made to the NDIS Commission, all staff must comply with any orders or requests made by the NDIS Commission, assist in any resolution process or inquiry undertaken by the NDIS Commission and ensure the complainant or a person with a disability who has been affected by the complaint are not adversely affected or fear retribution because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# PARTICIPANT INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidelines for reporting, investigating and applying appropriate control measures when an accident or near miss occurs.

## Policy

Branch Out Support has a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to ensure all participants are safe and takes proactive steps to protect them from harm.

Branch Out Support’s incident management system identifies, assesses, manages and resolves incidents that occur in connection with providing supports or services to a person or child with disabilities and have, or could have, caused harm to them. The system is appropriate to the business’ size and the classes of NDIS support the organisation provides.

Branch Out Support will provide support and assistance to people and children with a disability affected by an incident (including information about access to advocates such as independent advocates), to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing.

**Definitions**

**Abuse** – Verbal, physical and or emotional mistreatment and or lack of care of a person. Examples include sexual abuse and any non-accidental injury.

**Child abuse** - An act or omission by an adult that endangers or impairs a child’s physical and/or emotional health and development. Child abuse can be a single incident but often takes place over time. Abuse, neglect and maltreatment are generic terms used to describe situations in which a child may need protection.

**Racial, cultural and religious abuse** - Conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a person because of their race, culture or religion.

**Sexual abuse** - When a person uses power or authority over another person (including a child), or inducements such as money or special attention, to involve the other person (or child) in sexual activity. It includes a wide range of sexual behaviour from inappropriate touching/fondling of another person/child or exposing a child to pornography, to having sex with a child or with a non-consenting adult.

**Bullying** - Repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Bullying occurs when one or more people deliberately and repeatedly upset or hurt another person, damage their property, reputation or social acceptance.

**Child protection** - The term used to describe the whole-of-community approach to the prevention of harm to children. It includes strategic action for early intervention, for the protection of those considered most vulnerable and for responses to all forms of abuse.

**Disclosure** (in the context of this policy) – A statement that a child or person makes to another person that describes or reveals abuse.

**Discrimination** – Treating a person less favourably than others in similar circumstances because of a personal attribute that has no relevance to the situation.

**Impact** – the level of harm to a participant because of an incident.

**Incident** – also ‘Participant Incident’ - An event or circumstance that occurs during service delivery, which results in harm or has the potential to harm a participant.

**Incident Investigation** - a formal process of collecting information to ascertain the facts relating to an incident, which may inform any subsequent criminal, civil penalty, civil, disciplinary or administrative sanctions. Investigations may be carried out by service providers, the Department of Health and Human Services or external investigators. In the context of this policy, an incident investigation is an investigation into an allegation of abuse, poor quality of care or unexplained injury of a participant, undertaken or commissioned by Company.

**Duty of care** - Duty of care refers to the responsibility Branch Out Support must provide its participants with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury.

**Neglect** - The failure to provide a vulnerable person with the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the person’s health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

**Negligence** - Doing or failing to do something that a reasonable person would or would not do in a particular situation and which causes another person damage, injury or loss as a result.

Offender/Perpetrator - a person who mistreats and/or harms another person or child.

**Reportable Incident**:

* **the death** of a person or child with disability.
* **serious injury** of a person or child with disability.
* **abuse or neglect** of a person or child with disability.
* **unlawful sexual or physical contact** with, or assault of, a person or child with disability.
* **sexual misconduct** committed against, or in the presence of, a person or child with disability, including grooming for sexual activity; or the use of a restrictive practice in relation to a person or child with disability, other than where the use is in accordance with an authorisation of a State or Territory in relation to the person.

## Procedures

Management will ensure Branch Out Support has appropriate resources and processes in place to minimise or eliminate risks to health and safety.

staff will undergo induction, which will include training in mitigating and responding to incidents, as well as mandatory reporting responsibilities.

**Responding to Incidents**

* Assess the situation and check for danger.
* Remove the person from danger if it is safe to do so.
* Call Emergency Services (dial 000) if required.
* Addressed the immediate needs of the people involved.
* Assess the situation and ensure no others are at risk of harm.
* Do not alter the scene.
* Notify relevant emergency contacts by telephone as soon as possible.
* Should the person not need medical treatment, notify the representatives, or family members.

**Reporting Incidents**

The staff member who first becomes aware of an incident must report it as soon as practicable to the most senior staff member in the work area. The most senior staff member is responsible for reporting relevant incidents to the relevant Police. The report must be made as soon as practicable, once immediate safety and medical needs are met.

staff must report all participant incidents to the Operations Manager or another member of the Management team as soon as practicable.

Details of all incidents, their investigation and review must be recorded in Branch Out Support’s Incident Register.

**Reportable Incidents requiring notification within 24 hours**

The Director or another member of the Management Team must report the following incidents to the NDIS Commission within 24 hours:

* The death of a person or child with a disability.
* The serious injury of a person or child with a disability.
* The abuse or neglect of a person or child with a disability.
* Unlawful sexual or physical contact with, or assault of, a person or child with a disability; or
* Sexual misconduct committed against, or in the presence of, a person or child with a disability, Including grooming for sexual activity.

The following information must be provided:

* The organisation’s name and contact details.
* A description of the reportable incident.
* A description of the impact on, or harm caused to, the person or child with a disability (this may not be required if the reportable incident was a death).
* Immediate actions taken in response to the reportable incident, including actions taken to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the person or child affected by the incident.
* Whether the incident has been reported to the Police or any other body.
* The name and contact details of the person making the notification.
* If known, the time, date and place at which the reportable incident occurred.
* The names and contact details of the people involved in the reportable incident; and
* Any other information requested by the NDIS Commissioner.

Information provided to the NDIS Commission within the first 24 hours of an incident must be provided via telephone or using the Reportable Incident - Immediate Notification Form available at www.ndiscommission.gov.au. Information provided after the initial 24-hour period must be provided using the Reportable Incident – 5 Day Notification Form.

**Reportable Incidents requiring notification within five business days**

The Director or another member of the Management team must report incidents other than those that fall into the categories listed above to the NDIS Commission within five business days. All the information listed above must also be provided for these incidents.

Should significant new information about the incident change the kind of incident or is now considered a reportable incident, the Director or other Management must notify the NDIS Commission as soon as reasonably practicable by phoning 1800 035 544 or emailing

reportableincidents@ndiscommission.gov.au

Branch Out Support staff are Mandatory Reporters with respect to child protection matters. staff must report any suspected or actual Reportable Conduct regarding children (see Definitions) to the police or Child Protection authorities as soon as practicable after becoming aware of that conduct.

**Investigating Incidents**

The options for investigating incidents are:

1. **No further investigative action** – This may be appropriate where it can be clearly established that the report of the incident is inaccurate or there is no basis for concern about the safety of the participant or the quality of care the participant is receiving. If the decision is not to undertake an investigation, the grounds for this decision must be supported and recorded with reasoning backed up by evidence. The incident must then be the subject of a review (detailed below).
2. **Monitoring and support required** – Certain information may raise issues that do not necessarily warrant an investigation, but nevertheless require changes in practices. Branch Out Support may manage these issues by monitoring and supporting affected staff members or participants and documenting this on relevant staff and participant files. The incident must then be the subject of a review (detailed below).
3. **Internal investigation** – This option may be selected only where Branch Out Support has the capability to undertake an investigation independently.
4. **External investigation** – In other cases, Branch Out Support will need to commission an investigation by an external party to ensure the investigation is robust, objective and expert. The Investigation Manager may commission an investigator, or a person from another organisation, with relevant expertise.

For every Reportable Incident, or where an investigation is ordered by the NDIS Commission, the Director must appoint an Investigation Manager to determine the appropriate investigative action for an incident and oversee the incident’s investigation.

The Investigation Manager must determine the appropriate investigative action for all incidents within a maximum of 72 hours of Branch Out Support becoming aware of the incident. The Investigation Manager may seek advice from other staff members if appropriate.

Investigations must take a person-centred and rights-based approach, considering what is essential to the person or child with disability impacted by the incident. The person or child’s family should be invited to participate in the investigation and be provided the support they need to do so. The investigation must, however, always remain impartial and independent.

All investigations must be completed (including report finalisation) within 28 working days.

Branch Out Support must provide information on the investigation progress and outcomes of the person or child with a disability, involved in the incident or their representative or family.

The Investigation Manager must complete an investigation report. A report may also need to be provided to the NDIS Commission within 60 business days of the initial notification, via reportableincidents@ndiscommission.gov.au.

**Incident Review**

Incident review includes monitoring and acting on trends identified through the analysis of incident information. The purpose of analysing incident data is to learn from patterns of occurring incidents to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of individual participants, as well as improving the quality of support.

The Incident Register must be reviewed at monthly Management meetings. The Operations Manager is responsible for ongoing monitoring of the Incident Register, to analyse and report on incident trends to identify and address any systemic issues underlying incidents.

Reviews should consider the causes, handling and outcomes of incidents, as well as feedback provided by staff and participants. If trends or preventative measures are identified, these must be tracked in the Continuous Improvement Register.

**Indicators of Abuse**

Indicators of abuse include but are not limited to:

* A participant alleges that abuse has occurred by a staff member, another participant, or other person.
* A staff member observes or is told about alleged abuse.
* A staff member suspects that abuse has occurred (for example, a participant may have unexplained injuries, a participant may be distressed or anxious, or clothes may have been ripped).
* A participant’s behaviour changes significantly (this might include self-destructive behaviour, sleep disturbances, acting-out behaviour, emotional distress, or persistent and inappropriate sexual behaviour); and
* A participant complains of physical symptoms, or a staff member observes symptoms (this might include bruising, abdominal pain, sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy).

Where a staff member considers that a participant’s behavioural changes or symptoms may be a result of abuse, they must report their concerns to the Compliance Coordinator who will refer this to the Operations Manager and Director.

Where an immediate police response is required, staff should call 000. Where a person or child does not consent to the police being called, see Compulsory Reporting in this Policy and Procedure for guidance on situations where police notification is mandatory.

In the case of alleged sexual abuse that has just occurred, to preserve any forensic evidence, the person or child should not be showered, bathed or offered drinks/food until after the police have been contacted and provide further instruction.

**Advising Parties involved of police Report**

In relation to a victim of assault, the staff member who first becomes aware of an allegation must advise the person or child’s family that the allegation will be reported to the police.

In relation to an alleged perpetrator, staff should consult with police as to whether the person should be told of the report to police. It is important that any steps taken do not undermine action that police may instigate.

If a victim or witness is under the age of 18 years, a parent, guardian or independent person must be present if they are going to give a statement.

At the time of contact the police must be advised if the person or child has a cognitive disability or mental illness and needs support of an independent third person during the interview or when a statement is being taken. Cognitive disability can include intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and dementia.

Where the person or child uses an alternative form of communication, such as symbols, signs or facilitated communication, an independent third person can usually assist the participant to communicate with the police. It is the responsibility of the police to contact the independent third person.

The police should be assisted in conducting their investigation. The investigation may involve the police taking photographs of any physical injuries. The police may need staff assistance to explain this procedure to the victim.

**Where a Participant is the Alleged Victim**

Where a participant is the alleged victim of an assault, Branch Out Support staff must assist them to make an informed decision whether to participate in the police investigation. staff should advise the participant and/or their representative or family that the matter has been referred to the police, and that the police may investigate the incident and may want to interview the participant and make a statement. The participant may choose whether to participate in the police investigation.

Participants with an intellectual/cognitive disability or a mental illness must have an independent third person present during any interview. The role of the independent third person is to facilitate communication, ensure that the participant understands his or her rights and to support them. The police are responsible for arranging an independent third person. Branch Out Support’s staff should not function as independent third person.

Where the alleged victim is under 18 years of age, they must have a parent, guardian or an independent person present when their statement is being taken. The role of the independent person is to provide support to the participant and ensure that their evidence is accurately recorded. If the child has a cognitive disability, then an independent third person should be present.

The police will decide whether to proceed with any charges. If the matter is taken to court, the participant will be required to give evidence.

The response by staff to a participant's disclosure of assault can be central to the participant's ongoing safety and their recovery from the trauma of assault.

It is important to listen to and support the participant, reassure the participant that they took the right step by talking about the assault, ensure the participant’s and other individuals’ immediate safety, health and wellbeing needs are met, such as medical attention and referrals to other specialist/victim support services. Ensure the participant's specific support needs are addressed including access to communication aides and resources, tell the participant what Branch Out Support plan to do next and with the participant’s consent, or if the participant is a child, engage family, significant others, an independent key support person or advocate to support the participant and advocate on their behalf.

A key support person may include a family member, significant other, or advocate who are independent of the perpetrator and/or service. The role of the key support person is to provide support and ensure the participant’s rights are respected in relation to any subsequent investigation or action taken. A key support person should be someone who preferably knows the participant well and has their trust. Specialist victim support services may include crisis care, counselling, advocacy, legal information and advice.

For participants who are from culturally and linguistically diverse communities or from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, staff should consider referring them to specialist agencies or staff for additional support. It may also be necessary to arrange an interpreter. Where the participant uses a language other than English or is deaf, an interpreter of the same sex as the participant should be arranged as soon as practicable to interpret for the participant, police and other individuals involved in the process.

Victims may be reluctant to speak to an interpreter because they fear that what they say may be passed on to their local community. In this case, it is possible to request a telephone interpreter from another state, or to not disclose the victim’s name to the interpreter. When using an interpreter directly, consideration should be given to arranging an interpreter who is not associated with the participant or their immediate cultural community.

Branch Out Support will support participants through the justice process, including police investigation, prosecution and crime compensation processes as appropriate. This may include ensuring they have access to appropriate communication aids and tools to facilitate disclosures and the provision of evidence.

**Where a Participant is the Alleged Perpetrator**

Staff must consult with police about whether to inform the participant of the report to police. The police may want to interview the participant to make a statement. Participants with a cognitive disability must have an independent third person present during the interview, and this will be arranged by the police. Where the participant is under the age of eighteen years, an independent person must be present during the police interview.

Staff must contact the service most solely responsible for the participant’s care who will ensure that the participant has legal representation and is assisted during the investigation and hearing.

Under no circumstances should anyone but the police interview the participant about the allegation. It is acknowledged however that some discussion with the participant may be required to establish safety and a basic understanding of what has occurred.

**Notification of Next of Kin or Guardian – All Participants**

If the alleged perpetrator is the participant’s next of kin or legal guardian, the staff member must ensure that the immediate needs of the participant are met, and an appropriate planned response is undertaken.

The Director or delegate must notify the participant’s next of kin or guardian where the participant is under 18 years old, if the participant is over 18 years old and consents to their next of kin or guardian being contacted Branch Out Support will notify them. If the participant is unable to make an informed decision regarding contact and the participant does not have an appointed guardian, Branch Out Support’s Director should contact the next of kin, legal guardian or guardian as appropriate.

The Director or delegate must explain to the next of kin or guardian:

* The nature of the allegation
* The standard procedure for reporting allegations to the police and that the participant may choose whether to participate in the police investigation; and
* Any action taken by staff since reporting the allegation.

If the participant is a child or young person who does not wish their next of kin or guardian to be notified, a decision in relation to notification will need to consider factors including the participant’s age, capacity, where they are living and their best interests. If necessary, legal advice should be sought and if a decision is taken not to notify the next of kin or guardian, this must be clearly documented and placed on the participant’s file.

A quality of support review must be undertaken by the Director, Operations Manager and Case Manager for participants who are victims or alleged perpetrators of an assault. Agreed actions for the participant’s immediate and ongoing needs must be recorded on the participant’s Support Plan. This must include steps being taken to assure the participant’s safety and wellbeing in the future, any treatment or counselling the participant and their family may access to address their safety and wellbeing.

**staff and Participant Debrief and Support**

After a serious and traumatic incident, it is likely that elevated levels of stress will be experienced by those connected with the incident. In relation to a sexual assault, the local Health Sexual Assault Service can assist with debriefing and providing a secondary consultation.

General arrangements to support staff may include allocating a safe place for refuge, giving staff the option of being immediately and temporarily relieved of their duties, providing communication with families and offering to organise transport home.

General arrangements to support participants may include allocating a safe place for refuge and communicating with the participant as well as supporting them and their families.

Participants have a right to complain about Branch Out Support’s services. The participant and their key support person/advocate or family should be alerted to Branch Out Support Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy and Procedure and external complaints bodies.

**Where a staff Member is the Alleged Perpetrator**

After reporting to the police, the Director must be immediately notified of the report.

Depending on the nature of the allegation, the Management team’s response regarding the alleged perpetrator should comply with Branch Out Support’s Human Resources Policy and Procedure. Responses include redirecting the staff member to alternate duties that do not involve direct participant care or standing the staff member down.

**Where a staff Member is the Alleged Victim**

Allegations or assaults where a Branch Out Support’s staff member is the alleged victim, should be dealt with in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Workplace Incident Management Policy and Procedure.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# NDIS PARTICIPANTS CHARTER

Branch Out Support is committed to upholding the rights of all participants. Branch Out Support commits to upholding the rights of its participants, as set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

**Participant Rights**

Participants have the right:

* To be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect.
* To be respected for their individual human worth and dignity.
* To realise their individual capacity for physical, social, emotional, cultural, religious and intellectual development.
* To live a life free from abuse, neglect or exploitation.
* To recognition of their individual autonomy and independence, including their right to dignity of risk and the freedom to exercise choice and have control over their life.
* Privacy and confidentiality, and access to all personal information kept about participants by Branch Out Support.
* To be assessed for service access in an equitable, non-discriminatory way, according to their needs.
* To participate actively in decisions affecting their life, including all decisions made about their care.
* To receive services that are appropriate, safe, of a high quality, are culturally relevant and adapt to their ongoing needs and goals.
* To make a complaint to Branch Out Support and to external agencies and legal rights, entitlements and obligations under the Disability Act.
* To have services and support provided by appropriately qualified staff.
* To change service providers and to receive support in doing so by Branch Out Support.
* To have a person of their choice support and advocate on their behalf in their interactions with Branch Out Support.
* To refuse a service or support without prejudicing their future access to services with Branch Out Support.
* To pursue any complaint about their service provision without fear of retribution and receive support to pursue complaints.

**Participant Responsibilities**

* Treat staff and other participants with courtesy and respect.
* Respect the human and legal rights and dignity of staff and other participants.
* Be responsible for their choices and the results of any decisions participants make.
* Proactively participate in the development, implementation and review of person-centred support /care plans.
* Communicate any changes in their circumstances and needs to staff.
* Promptly pay any fees and charges associated with the provision of their service.
* Inform Branch Out Support as early as possible when support is not required.

# CONTINUITY OF SUPPORT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Continuity management is an integral part of Branch Out Support’s operating plan, risk management and decision-making throughout the organisation. Continuity of care to Branch Out Support’s participants fall within this policy. Continuity of care planning contributes to improved quality, safety of care and increased satisfaction of the participant. staff and Branch Out Support will maximise the use of resources to provide the appropriate level of care and access.

The participant's NDIS Plan incorporates reasonable and necessary support. Any informal support that is already available to the individual (informal arrangements that are part of family life or natural connections with friends and community services) as well as other formal support, such as health and education. Branch Out Support will ensure that the participant has consistent support or services to allow them to undertake daily activities and support to maintain their life choices.

This policy applies to staff managing and working with participants.

## Policy

The Director will arrange schedules to ensure that participants know who is attending to their needs and supports. The Director will pair participants with workers who hold appropriate skills and knowledge. Participant’s requests are matched wherever possible. Examples of meeting the participant's wishes may include accessing a staff member who speaks the participant's first language, shares the same cultural background or meets the specific criteria that has been requested.

Staff will be placed with participants whose location is close to their home to reduce travel and increase retention. Continuous support and predictability will be planned through the allocation of a consistent staff to a participant. All support and strategies are recorded in the participant’s plan, all staff will use the plan when supporting the participant's preferences and needs (see Support Management Policy and Procedure).

## ProcedurE

To ensure participants have timely and appropriate support without interruption Branch Out Support's staff will:

* Access, read and comply with the participant’s plan.
* Review the strategies listed in the Support Plan before the provision of support.
* Provide quality services as listed within their plan.
* Document all the participant's preferences and needs to allow for a consistent approach.
* List all appointments and tasks related to the participant's needs.
* Be allocated according to the participant's requirements.
* Inform the Director of any absences in advance to allow time to allocate a replacement who meets the criteria of the participant and preferable is known to the participant.
* Contact participants if there are any changes or potential changes in their care, and
* Undertake emergency procedures as required.

No appointments are ever double booked. When travelling to participants, it is essential that adequate travel time is factored in to ensure the correct arrival time.

**Disruptions and changes**

Branch Out Support notifies participants when an unavoidable interruption occurs. Staff make every attempt to inform participants via telephone and email prior to any unavoidable disruptions to services or participant appointments. When that is not possible, the participants are briefed on arrival at the next meeting or scheduled service.

The Director contacts participant to:

* Seek participant’s agreement and to ensure that they are entirely aware of the changes.
* Explain alternative arrangements to the participant.

In case of an emergency, when a worker cannot attend work due to circumstances out of their control (such as illness, family emergency) then Branch Out Support will attempt to place a worker who is known to the participant but if this is not possible, Branch Out Support will send the best match to the participant. Branch Out Support will contact the participant, inform them of the situation, and give details of the replacement worker.

**Absence or Vacancy**

When a staff is absent, or a vacancy becomes available then Branch Out Support's Director will:

* Contact staff that are suitable for replacement such as staff members with the relevant qualifications or language requirement.
* Where possible, provide staff who have worked with the participant previously and are aware of the participant’s preferences and needs.
* Where possible, advise the participants about the replacement and gather feedback on the replacement staff.
* Replacement staff will be sensitive to a participant’s requirements and ensure that care is consistent with the participant's expressed preferences.

staff that are unable to work are required to contact the Director. If there is an intended absence (such as vacation or appointment), then the staff must inform the Director at the earliest opportunity, to allow time to prepare the participant for the change in staff member.

**Service Agreement**

Branch Out Support ensures arrangements are in place to make sure that support is provided to the participant without interruption throughout the period of their Service Agreement. These arrangements are relevant and proportionate to the scope and complexity of support delivered.

**Critical Supports**

Contingency plans are drawn-up and adhered to ensure the continuity of care of all participants throughout their time with Branch Out Support. In the case of a disaster, planning will incorporate strategies that enable continual support before, during and after the disaster. Critical planning will be undertaken for participants who have complex needs.

# ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to meet the requirements of the disability abuse prevention strategy. To understand, promote and enhance safeguards and prevent abuse. As well as preventing abuse from occurring.

This policy is relevant to all staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

## Policy

Branch Out Support is committed to all elements of the NDIS Code of Conduct. Branch Out Support will train staff in all elements of the Code of Conduct and ensure a Zero Tolerance approach is incorporated into practices.

Branch Out Support will follow the Code of Conduct and follow these guidelines as listed and ensure that Branch Out Support:

* Does not tolerate any form of abuse of people with disabilities by workers or other people with disabilities and promotes zero tolerance for abuse.
* Provides staff with training and information to correctly apply the obligations of the Code of Conduct.
* Assists staff to undertake their role, such as keeping Support Plans up-to-date and provide training opportunities (such as formal training, mentoring or on-the-job supervision).
* Acts on all reported cases of abuse or suspected abuse.
* Never take adverse action against any staff member or volunteer if they report abuse or neglect.
* Base all necessary disciplinary actions on the principle of procedural fairness if a member of staff violates the obligations of the Code of Conduct.
* Respects, recognises and values the diversity of people, their cultures and creates an inclusive environment where it is safe for people with disabilities to express their cultural identity.
* Actively maintains a working environment in which the risks of abuse are minimised.
* Creates and maintains a positive complaints culture in which people are not afraid to ‘speak up.’
* Fosters a culture of Zero Tolerance to abuse of people with disabilities.

Frontline workers must:

* Provide services without engaging in abuse, exploitation, harassment or neglect.
* Report any form of abuse or suspected abuse.
* Not engage in sexual abuse or misconduct and must report any such conduct by other workers, people with disabilities, family members, carers or community members.
* Show respect for cultural differences when providing services.
* Act ethically, with integrity, honesty and transparency.

**Definition**

**Zero Tolerance** Aims to provide an evidence-based, nationally applicable and contemporary approach to preventing and responding to abuse of people with disabilities. The aim is to assist service providers in developing positive organisational cultures and practices and robust safeguarding mechanisms relevant to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

## Procedure

Branch Out Support will train staff to be able to understand as well as act on a Zero Tolerance approach and ensure that staff understand people with disabilities are people first, who have needs, aspirations, preferences and feelings.

All staff are required to listen to all participants. So, they can determine their preferences, aspirations, needs and support where it is safe to do so.

Branch Out Support acknowledges that reporting abuse is critical to prevent abusive situations from escalating and future incidents from occurring.

All staff working with people with disabilities must report any form of abuse.

Branch Out Support will ensure that staff is informed that people with disabilities face significantly higher risks of sexual assault and exploitation than the general population. This is particularly true for women with a disability. In addition, there can be barriers to disclosure that make it difficult for a person with a disability to report sexual abuse and misconduct.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# DIVISON 3 - PROVISION OF SUPPORTS

# ACCESS TO SUPPORTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

To provide the participant with the dignity of risk where Branch Out Support’s team respects everyone’s autonomy and self-determination (or dignity) in making choices. The assessment process will provide relevant, reliable and valid data that assists in identifying a participant’s strengths and care needs.

Participants contribute to the assessment that is appropriate and considerate of their individual needs. The support delivery environment is to be designed to incorporate reasonable adjustments to ensure that the participant’s plan and their environment is fit for purpose, to allow the participant to have an excellent quality of life and independence.

## Policy

The Director or their delegate must seek eligibility information from the participant before commencing any assessment process. Branch Out Support will provide the participant with entry criteria and inform them of the associated costs. Easy-read documents are available to inform participants on the right to have a voice in their support requirements. Participants must be part of the decision-making process with their needs at the core of service delivery and planning.

Branch Out Support’s staff members will be helped to understand in what circumstances support can be withdrawn. Support will not be withdrawn or denied solely based on the dignity of risk choice that has been made by the participant.

Assessments must be undertaken before the commencement of the Branch Out Support’s service. Staff are required to determine if an interpreter is needed prior to the start of assessment to ensure that the correct data is gathered from the participant. The information obtained during the evaluation, such as areas of independence and identified needs, forms the basis of discussion with the participants to create their Support Plan.

## Procedure

**Access to Supports**

The Director will inform the participant of the eligibility criteria to access Branch Out Support’s support services and the associated costs for each service. Eligibility criteria for Branch Out Support’s NDIS services include that the participant currently holds a NDIS Plan that lists access to the organisation’s registration groups.

The Director will determine if the participant requires Branch Out Support’s Easy Read documents that inform them of their rights, their voice in the development of their Service Agreement, how to complain and how Branch Out Support will maintain their Privacy. An interpreter will be provided if required by the participant.

Assessment will be undertaken to ensure that Branch Out Support is able to supply the participant's services in the manner that the participant requires.

**Reasonable Adjustment**

The NDIA devises a NDIS Plan to address participant's reasonable and necessary supports. During Branch Out Support’s assessment process to develop the participant’s Support Plan, the Director or their delegate will consult with the participant, family and advocate to make reasonable adjustments to the participant's support delivery environment.

Any modifications must be discussed and negotiated with all parties then recorded in the Service Agreement. The reasonable adjustments are made to determine that the service provided is fit-for-purpose and that the changes support the participant's health, privacy, dignity, quality of life and independence.

**Withdrawal of Services**

Branch Out Support will not withdraw or deny support based solely on the dignity of risk made by the participant. Branch Out Support may withdraw supports if any of the following occur:

* The participant fails to do what is required of them under the terms of their Service Agreement.
* The participant fails to comply with the policies and procedures of Branch Out Support.
* The participant fails to communicate and provide information about changes to their support needs.
* Workplace Health and Safety considerations are ignored.
* Communication has broken down between the Branch Out Support and the participant, family or advocate.
* Payment for support and/or expenses has not been received as per the Service Agreement.

Under the National Disability Insurance Scheme Terms of Business for Registered Providers, withdrawal or termination of services must be no less than a 14-day notice.

Branch Out Support will always work in the best interest of the participant to achieve a safe transition to a new provider of services (see Transition and Exit Policy and Procedures.)

Upon termination of the Service Agreement by either party Branch Out Support will take steps to ensure:

* The cancellation of service has been reported to the National Disability Insurance Agency.
* All services that have been provided under the terms of the Service Agreement have been claimed.
* The participant has alternative support solutions in place for their safety and wellbeing.

**Assessment Principles**

Assessment tools utilised are validated or considered “best practice.”

The assessor understands and applies the principles of flexibility, validity and relevance to the assessment process.

The assessment process promotes independence, including the following principles:

* Determining the participant's abilities and difficulties.
* Setting expectations to enable a balance between the participant's abilities and their need for support.
* Service agreements acknowledge support needs, abilities to foster independence and the Participant’s goals.

**Undertaking Assessments**

Assessment interview time is negotiated with the participant, family and advocate. The designated staff members are to:

* Invite the Participant’s Representative/Advocate to be present if required or desired.
* Identify any special needs. For example, an interpreter and information in the participant’s preferred language are sourced for participants who are culturally and linguistically diverse.
* Ensure that the Easy Read documents are available.
* Contact Director to arrange an interpreter.

During the assessment process, staff will inform the Participant of their rights and responsibilities, by providing Participants with Branch Out Support’s Participant Handbook which includes:

* How information is collected and used.
* Privacy and confidentiality considerations.
* Opt-out options to data collection.
* The complaints and feedback process.
* Their Advocacy options.
* The organisation's Information-sharing requirements.

The assessment is designed to meet the participant's health, privacy, dignity, quality of life and independence needs. Information is recorded in the participant's records for future reflection. Once the assessments are completed, the Director reviews them.

**Responsibility for Assessments**

Only trained professionals can conduct assessments of the participant. The Director will determine and delegate this responsibility.

The assessment is documented in a Participant's file and in the Participant's Management System.

The interview and write-up times must be recorded against the participant in the management system.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# SERVICE ACCESS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure Branch Out Support offers each participant access to services based on consultation with the participant or participant’s representative. Branch Out Support will assess each participant comprehensively, the participant’s needs will be documented and agreed upon before Branch Out Support commences the service delivery.

## Policy

Branch Out Support will collaborate with the participant, their advocate, carer or guardian as part of a broader service delivery network, which enhances Branch Out Support’s own service delivery and provides the organisation’s participants with appropriate referrals and services that meet their needs.

Branch Out Support’s service delivery environment will be safe and engaging, accessible and responsive to its participants’ needs.

Branch Out Support’s eligibility, priority of access and waitlist management is implemented in a fair and transparent manner and is in line with Branch Out Support’s NDIS Participant Charter.

Branch Out Support will inform the community, potential participants and other services about its services and access requirements through active engagement strategies that encourage as well as facilitate participants and stakeholder participation.

## Procedures

Branch Out Support will build relationships with local agencies, health services, advocacy services and participate in relevant local networks including conferences to increase service and referral options for its participants and other stakeholders.

Branch Out Support will work with local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and CALD service providers to assist culturally sensitive service delivery to participants.

Branch Out Support will distribute marketing information about the organisation’s services in appropriate formats to local communities and other relevant agencies.

Branch Out Support will maintain an informational Handbook in appropriate formats on its services and distributes to the community when appropriate.

Branch Out Support will manage referrals from prospective participants.

Branch Out Support aims to provide quality services that are affordable and accessible to families of diverse economic status.

Branch Out Support has eligibility, priority criteria and entry rules in place for potential users to access the service based on capacity, available resources and funding.

To be eligible to receive Branch Out Support’s disability services, participant must have one or more identified intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairments or is a child with developmental delays.

Branch Out Support examines participants relative need compared to others who receive or want to receive Branch Out Support’s services.

Branch Out Support will consider priority access for people with special needs.

Branch Out Support adopts and applies non-discriminatory eligibility criteria, service entry rules with respect to age, gender, race, culture, religion, disability, consistent with funding obligations and applicable legislation.

The Operations Manager will schedule an Intake Interview with the participant within five working days of their initial contact with them or sooner if the person’s needs are considered urgent.

Branch Out Support’s entry and exit procedures are fair, equitable and consistently applied by staff.

Branch Out Support maintains an intake process to answer enquiries and take referrals.

The Operations Manager will conduct all Intake Interviews. They will provide the person with information about entry and exit procedures, eligibility, priority of access requirements, conditions that may apply to service provision and fees.

The Operations Manager will listen to the participant’s needs and help the participant to make informed choices, explaining carefully what can be delivered to and for them, assist in the participants’ area of need and explain how their needs can be met.

Participants are consulted and have choice and control over their daily lives as per Branch Out Support’s Decision Making and Choice Policy and Procedure.

A schedule of fees and charges is then given to the participant.

Communication is an open two-way process and participants can make an appointment to discuss items of concern with the service Manager.

All literature and information are explained in clear and concise English so that professional terms are understood, and interpreters will be utilised where necessary.

If services cannot be provided, the participant will be provided with an apparent reason based on eligibility criteria.

Participants who are refused services have the right to appeal the decision. Appeals should be directed in writing to Branch Out Support’the Management team will make s Director and a final decision.

Regulatory compliance will be on the agenda for all staff meetings.

Branch Out Support provides participants with the organisatiton’s Participants Handbook which provides information on:

* Service Access.
* Decision Making and Choice.
* Participants Monies Management and Complaints.
* Disputes and Feedback.

Staff are not permitted to sign or witness any legal documents for participants or participants’ friends.

Neither Branch Out Support’s management nor its staff are involved in any way with participant legal affairs.

Participants and/or their representatives are consulted before discharge from the service.

Consultation with participants and/or their representatives occurs before changes to service personnel or the service.

Agreed service changes are in writing and consultation occurs (where possible) before the changes take effect.

Staff are kept informed and consulted through regular memos and meetings.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# SUPPORT PLANNING AND SERVICE AGREEMENT COLLABORATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Branch Out Support’s aim is to work with participants, families, advocates, communities and other providers to achieve the best outcome for the participant. This communication will allow all parties to share ideas and knowledge to ensure that the support is relevant, appropriate and in line with the Service Agreement.

Branch Out Support is committed to ensuring that the staff understand the beneficial aspects of a collaborative approach to the participant.

## Policy

This collaborative approach requires staff to work with relevant parties when:

* Locating key workers with a family or other provider.
* Working with other providers to provide support or services.
* Assisting the participant in transitioning and exiting the service.
* Building the participant's capacity.
* Planning the support or services for the participant.
* Developing Service Agreements.

Staff must cooperate with other agencies in the delivery of services provided by Branch Out Support. This collaboration may include initial contact, sharing ideas and input from participants, families and advocates following through on ideas of provider, and actively listening to discussions. Branch Out Support will collaborate with all relevant parties to provide participants with the opportunity to access a service network that meets the full range of their needs. The Director will contact and establish communication with the relevant service provider for Branch Out Support to maintain collaborative relationships, protocols and participate in networks with relevant agencies.

Information, knowledge and skills are communicated and shared between the participant, family, advocate, Branch Out Support and other collaborating providers. Branch Out Support will work with the participant, their family and advocate ensuring that the participant maintains the functionality.

## Procedure

**Key Worker**

Participants and their families may require assistance to locate the right person for the participant.

Branch Out Support’s team will undertake the following process:

* Discuss the participant's requirements with the participant, family and/or advocate.
* Gain formal written consent to share and gather information with other providers.
* Contact other service providers working with the participant to collaborate and determine the criterion.
* Identify at least one (1) key support worker and contact the participant, their family, advocate, and/or other providers working with the participant.
* Inform the participant, their family or advocate of the identified staff, to allow them to contribute their opinion.
* Record the process undertaken and the results in the participant’s Service Agreement.

**Collaborating with Other Providers**

The Director or their delegate will make initial contact with other providers, after gaining consent from the participant, their family or advocate. Various methods will be used to maintain contact such as email, phone and networking. All records of contact are kept in the participant's Service Agreement.

**Transition and Exit**

The participant’s needs, interests or aspirations may change during the delivery of their support. These changes may lead to a need to transition to or exit from their current service. If this occurs, then Branch Out Support will, with the consent of a participant, contact the relevant service provider to:

* Collaborate with providers and the participant to develop a plan of action.
* Send or request documents relevant to the participant.
* Communicate current supports, practices and needs to enable the participant to transfer or exit smoothly.
* Identify risks and develop a Risk Management Plan.
* Develop a Transition and Exit process for each participant - communicate the details to the participant, then work with the participant during the process and review after the transition.
* Document the process in the Participant's Transition and Exit Plan.

Risks associated with each transition to or from Branch Out Support are identified, documented and responded to. (See Transition and Exit Policy and Risk Management Policy)

**Capacity building**

The participant’s capacity building process is designed to improve and retain their skills and knowledge to ensure they can maintain and improve their functionality.

To build and support the participant’s functional capacity Branch Out Support will collaborate with:

* The participants, their family and advocate to affirm, challenge, and support.
* The participants other service providers, to further develop the participant’s skills and to improve practices and relationships.

**Participant Outcomes**

Collaboration with the participant, their family or advocate is the basis for ensuring functional outcomes are based on the participant's needs, priorities, and their skills. The collaboration is to be recorded in the Service Agreement.

**Support Planning**

During the assessment and Support Planning process, collaboration is undertaken with the participant, family and/or advocate:

* Complete a risk assessment.
* Document the risk assessment.
* Plan appropriate strategies to treat known risks.
* Implement appropriate strategies to treat known risks.
* Review annually or earlier according to their changing needs or circumstances.

**Service Agreements**

Branch Out Support will collaborate with the participant to develop a Service Agreement which establishes:

* Expectations.
* Explains the supports to be delivered.
* Specifies any conditions attached to the delivery of support, including why these conditions are attached.

With the consent or direction from the participant Branch Out Support collaborates in the development of the Support Plan, with other providers to:

* Develop links.
* Maintain links.
* Share information.
* Meet the participant's needs.

# SUPPORT PLANNING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this policy is to outline the legislative requirements and practice procedures for undertaking support services for NDIS participants.

To comply with the requirements of NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators. Compliance with the policy is a condition of appointment for all persons engaged in providing services on behalf of Branch Out Support.

To inform Branch Out Support’s team how to collaborate in the development of the Support Plan that incorporates the participant's wants, needs and aspirations, including the preference of staff, time and length of the service linked to their NDIS Plan.

## Policy

All participants and their support networks are aided to collaborate and participate in the development of a goal-oriented Support Plan. The Support Plan will reflect an individual’s goals, aspirations and will look at the strengths and functionality of the participant. It is based on the presumption of capacity and will safeguard the risks and needs of the participant.

The Support Plan will incorporate both participant’s supports, including reasonable and necessary supports funded under NDIS (activities that support goals maximise independence, allow to live independently and undertake mainstream activities).

The Support Plan will provide transparent written information to the participant, detailing the services and type of support that they will receive from Branch Out Support. Where there is a change in the participant’s needs, preferences or goals an amended Support Plan will communicate the change in the support provided to the participant.

Staff must be screened, trained and qualified in the roles that they undertake.

Support Planning Principles:

* The Support Planning process is where the participant, family, friends, carer or advocate work together to identify strengths, needs and live goals with a focus on choice and decision-making.
* The participant’s preferences, values and lifestyle choices should be supported (wherever possible).
* Support Plans should promote the valued roles of people with disabilities, which is of the participants own choosing.
* Promotion of functional social independence and quality of life.
* Support plans will contain goals.
* Service choices agreed upon should reflect the participant’s personal goals.
* Support Plans should be creative, flexible and not developed by set patterns or methods of service delivery.
* Activities and support in the plan must be inclusive of the participant’s chosen communities and maintain connections with their community to allow for active participation.
* If a participant identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, then their community will be contacted to allow for engagement and support services.
* The Support Plan is reviewed regularly (at least annually) and amended to respond to participant needs and preferences.
* The Support Plan should be strength-based, seek to maximise independence and build on the participant's existing networks.
* The Support Plan should be provided to the participant in their first language, where appropriate and/or requested.
* The participants or their advocates may request a review of the Support Plan at any time.
* staff conducting Support Plan development will have the necessary skills and competence to undertake this function.
* Participants with a disability will also be facilitated to understand their NDIS plan, including:
* Understanding and self-directing their NDIS plan.
* Understanding the support in their NDIS plan.
* Funded support budgets.
* Purchasing general funded supports.
* Purchasing stated funded supports.
* Managing and paying for their support.
* Choosing their providers.
* Making agreements with their preferred providers.

## Procedure

**Support Plan Development**

**Planning:**

* Explain the Support Plan development process for the participant.
* Arrange a meeting time with the participant and (if applicable) their advocate or family.
* Develop the Support Plan with as much input, choice and decision-making from the participant as the participant wishes. Document the reasons (should a participant choose to have minimal input into their Support Plan).
* Prior to meeting with the participant review the Participant's Intake Form, Participant’s assessment information, any referral documents and other relevant notes or data available that will assist in understanding the participant as an individual.

**Providing Information to the Participant:**

* Emphasis the importance of the participant identifying their own personal goals and aspirations.
* Use the appropriate Support Plan as a prompt to assist the participant in identifying areas where Branch Out Support’s services may help them realise their goals.
* Outline the prompts on the plan, including the discussion of the participant’s physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural, community, social and financial needs.
* Provide the participant with a clear understanding of their choices and service options available so that they can make informed decisions about their choices and priorities.
* Explain to the participant any information-sharing requirements with other parties.
* Provide the participant with examples or suggestions of how Branch Out Support’s services may be able to help them achieve their goals.

**Facilitating the Development of Participant Centred Goals**

* Work with the participant and their advocate(s) to identify their personal goals.
* Ask the participant to identify the types of help or assistance that would be most important to them.
* Help the participant to recognise their strengths and capabilities.
* Transform the participant’s goals into SMART Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely)
* Example Simple Goal: To be able to get the mail.
* Example SMART Goal: To be able to walk to the mailbox each day by themselves to get the mail.
* Set a time limit with each goal so that progress can be determined.
* Example: To be able to walk to the mailbox each day without assistance collecting the mail. To achieve this by specific date.
* Use the participants expressed priorities, agreed actions and goals to develop their Support Plan.

Branch Out Support, will consider:

* The financial resource capacities and any limitations of the organisation’s services or specific programs to be utilised.
* The capacities, expertise and appropriateness of Branch Out Support’s staff to provide the services.
* The availability of specialised subcontracted staff or services (if applicable).
* Other services or individuals who will provide services (as designated by the participant).
* Any volunteer support is available.
* Determine with the participant how each goal will be measured so that progress can be recorded.
* Identify with the participant any potential barriers to achieving their goals and work out strategies to alleviate these barriers.
* Ask the participant to prioritise their goals if many goals have been identified. For each goal - list the actions, responsibilities, frequencies and the duration of services to be coordinated or supplied on behalf of the participant. Document all the information in the Support Plan.
* Identify all stakeholders (Participants, family, advocates, community engagement links, other services or agencies) that will undertake to help the participant achieve each goal and document this in the Support plan.

**Support Plan Delivery and Review:**

* Negotiate the specific days for services or support and document these in the Support plan.
* (Where possible) agree upon time ranges for the services to build a level of flexibility into the service roster. (e.g., start time of between 1 and 1:30 pm and 1hr of Domestic assistance).
* If not yet finalised negotiate service fees and record these in the participant Service Agreement and on their Support Plan.
* Ask the participant to sign the Support Plan to acknowledge their agreement with it.
* Agree on the criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of Branch Out Support service responses and document this in the Support Plan.
* Ensure all involved stakeholders have copies of the agreed Support Plan.
* Explain to the participant that the Director will monitor the progress of the Support Plan, but the participant may also request a review of the plan at any time.



# RESPONSIVE SUPPORT PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**Purpose**

To ensure that the participant has access to responsive, timely, competent and appropriate support that meets their needs, desired outcomes and goals.

To provide management and program design, individual planning, coordination and Support Management.

**Scope**

To ensure staff are always trained and act professionally when developing plans that empower the participant to achieve their needs, goals and aspirations.

To keep participants informed on their plan whilst undertaking a holistic approach that incorporates strengths-based and person-centred strategies.

## Policy

All Service Agreements and Support Plans are developed and delivered in collaboration with the participants or their advocates. All participants, family members, representatives or advocates must be included in any decision-making processes, choice of strategies or activities and approval for all aspects of their Service Agreements and Support Plan. Support Management will consist of delivery, monitoring, review and reassessment in a timely manner.

The Director or their delegate will ensure that the least intrusive options are planned using contemporary evidence-informed practices.

Reasonable efforts will be made to match the participant's key worker requirements to Branch Out Support’s current frontline workers.

Branch Out Support will collaborate with all relevant parties, including other service providers and only share information with the consent of the participant. Branch Out Support’s team will consult to ensure that Branch Out Support meets participants’ individual needs.

The Director will ensure that only appropriately trained staff work with the participants. The process of allocation will incorporate a skill and knowledge review of potential frontline workers.

Branch Out Support will utilise this policy to ensure the organisation maintains a contemporary approach to support management services.

## Procedure

**Support Management Principles**

Support Management includes Screening; Comprehensive assessment; Support Planning; Support Plan implementation; Monitoring; Review; and Case closure.

The Director or their delegate will:

* Match available resources and staff to the participant's needs.
* Work across the service boundaries to ensure that the participants with complex care needs can have access to a full range of allied health, health and social support services they need.
* Provide a single point of contact for the participants that require a complex range of services and/or require intensive levels of support.
* Branch Out Support's service is screened for eligibility and suitability in accordance with applicable program guidelines and the Access to Supports Policies and Procedure.
* Verify that consent for assessment and services were received and are recorded in the participant’s file.
* Review the participant’s referral information and confirm eligibility and suitability for Branch Out Support’s service.
* Contact the participant and arrange a suitable time for a comprehensive assessment.
* With the participant’s consent, arrange interpreters, advocates, guardians, or other service providers to attend the assessment, as appropriate.
* Determine (if possible) whether the clinical assessment of the participant’s health condition is required and arrange for the appropriate staff (i.e., RN or allied health professional) to attend the assessment.
* Ensure representatives identified by the participant such as family, advocate and carers are contacted and if necessary, assisted to participate in the assessment.
* The assessment should be carried out in accordance with the organisation’s Policy and Procedure as well as being based on the participant’s needs and situation.
* Within five (5) days after a comprehensive assessment contact the referrer and any existing providers for further information, if necessary.
* If indicated, arrange additional specialised assessments.
* Investigate potential options for sourcing support, including the availability of Branch Out Support’s staff/resources and the use of brokerage resources.
* If necessary, arrange a case conference with relevant services and individuals to discuss the participant’s situation.
* Ensure outcomes from Support Management are documented within the Support Plan and advise the Participant that their services will be continually reviewed by the coordinator for effectiveness.
* Where appropriate and with Participant consent, provide the Support Plan to the Participant’s General Practitioner or Representative.
* Develop a Support Plan that includes a Plan of Action that meets the participant’s needs, requirements and aspirations. The Support Plan will include:
	+ Participant information - personal details, health details, cultural and spiritual requirements, sexual identification, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
	+ Goals
	+ Advocates details
	+ Interpreter requirement
	+ Consent forms
	+ Active engagement planning
	+ Plan to develop, sustain and strengthen independent life skills.
	+ Medical information including conditions, doctors, medications, use and management.
	+ Risks to the participant and staff - management of the risk, if required.
	+ Any financial budget requirements (if application).
	+ The participant's involvement in any planning and decision-making process.

Monitor the relevancy of the Support Plan through regular contact with the participant, other representatives and service providers involved in the well-being of the participant.

The Support Review is an essential element in the provision of focused and relevant supports, occurring at various points in the support continuum, depending on the needs of the participant or family, urgency and complexity of the family’s needs and changes in family circumstances.

Support Plan Reviews may be held to:

* Determine if the current roles and responsibilities of staff and organisations meet the needs of the individual.
* Review if the frontline workers are meeting participant’s goals.
* Review the purpose, intent, and direction of the intervention.
* Review the service currently being supplied against the participant’s strengths, needs, goals and aspirations.
* Review previous assessment and determine if any more are required.
* Reassess the participant using the relevant assessment tool.
* Review using evidence gathered during work with the participant.
* Review the status of the Support Plan.
* Make decisions relevant to the participant, ensuring that all parties are informed.
* Review goals/actions.
* Schedule a case conference with a participant and/or relevant stakeholders to ensure their active involvement and to ensure any changes in the services are discussed.
* Plan towards any transfer or end of services if required.
* Records any changes to a Support Plan in the participant’s file and notes.
* Assess the need to change the Service Agreement.

**Exiting the Service**

When the participant’s needs begin to exceed program resources, or should the Participant change to another service provider, the Director will:

* Refer to the Transition and Exit Plan.
* Follow the guidance of Branch Out Support’s Transition and Exit Policy and Procedure.
* Inform the participant of any potential risk of transferring or exiting.
* Negotiate participant handover arrangements with the new service provider.
* Inform the participant of risk related to leaving the service.

# SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH PARTICIPANTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Branch Out Support undertakes the development of a Service Agreement during the Access to Supports and Assessment Process and with the collaboration of relevant parties. To ensure that all parties are aware of and agreed on all aspects of the services being provided.

It is the responsibility of the Director or their delegate to undertake the development of a Service Agreement with the participant to ensure it is designed specifically for the participant.

## Policy

Branch Out Support collaborates with each participant to develop a Service Agreement which establishes:

* Expectations.
* Explains the supports to be delivered.
* Specifies any conditions attached to the delivery of support, including why these conditions are attached.

The participant is supported to understand their Service Agreement and conditions using the language, mode of communication and terms that the participant is most likely to follow. Branch Out Support will supply an Easy Read format, as required.

The participants must give consent or direction to develop and maintain links utilising collaboration with other providers to share information and meet participant needs.

## Procedure

Branch Out Support undertakes the following process to develop a Service Agreement with each participant:

* Collaborate with the family, advocate or representative to ensure that the Service Agreement meets the requirements and is linked to the needs, interests and aspirations of the participant.
* Use appropriate communication methods to explore, explain and determine what is being provided within the agreement.
* Records are kept explaining the process undertaken, including consent or direction to collaborate with other providers to share information to enable the team to meet the participant's requirements.
* A copy of the Service Agreement is given to the participant.
* Should a participant not wish to keep a copy of the agreement, then the circumstance under which the participant did not receive a copy of the agreement must be documented and kept on the participant's file. It is good practice to have the participant make a note that a copy of the agreement was not required.

# SERVICE DELIVERY AND PARTICIPATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that Branch Out Support’s service delivery is built on person-centred principles to guide service delivery.

## Policy

Branch Out Support promotes a person-centred approach to its service delivery whereby individuals direct their services and are supported to maintain connections with their family, friends and community.

Branch Out Support’s service delivery promotes participants’ active participation and inclusion in their community and supports participants to develop and maintain independence.

Branch Out Support’s assessment and review focus on helping participants to take control and make choices to enhance their independence and community participation.

## Procedures

Branch Out Support puts the participant at the centre of decision-making in all aspects of their life and supports participants to actively participate in their community and pursue their interests and goals.

Assessment and review will help participants to take control and make choices to enhance their independence and community participation.

Where necessary and with consent from the participant, Branch Out Support will provide referral to other service providers that will enhance the participant’s community participation, inclusion and will provide support and assistance to help participants access these services.

Where possible and with the consent from participant, Branch Out Support will be referred to training, employment, education, health, wellness, recreation, leisure, cultural and community services activities and events, as well as public transport and affordable housing options.

Branch Out Support will help participants develop and maintain independence, problem solving, social and self-care skills appropriate to their age, developmental stage and cultural circumstances.

Branch Out Support respects participants personal, gender, sexual, cultural, religious, spiritual identity along with their special needs in accordance with relevant legislations.

Branch Out Support will support participants from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds to help them to maintain and strengthen their connection with their community.

Branch Out Support will provide training in cultural awareness training for staff.

Branch Out Support will refer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants (where necessary, and with consent from participant) to community service providers offering services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Branch Out Support will assist individuals to identify needs and life goals, particularly in relation to recognising the importance of people’s ties to their culture and language.

Branch Out Support will prioritise services to participants who have special needs to maintain and strengthen their connections.

Branch Out Support will provide training for staff who are likely to deal with participants with special needs.

Branch Out Support will refer participants with special needs (where necessary and with the participant’s consent) to community service providers offering services for special needs participants.

Information will be provided in clear and concise language.

If an interpreting service is required, interpreters will be made available to participants, additional fees may be charged.

Unless they are an accredited interpreter for their language skills, Branch Out Support’s staff members who speak a language other than English may only assist with communicating low risk information to participants.

Information regarding access to interpreters will be provided in Branch Out Support’s Participant Handbook and displayed at the front desk at Branch Out Support’s office.

Translated information services provide information that the participant can refer to and use for understanding.

**Lifestyle Risk Factors Policy and Procedure**

Participants are more likely to have poor physical and mental health, including cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancer, diabetes, oral diseases, depression and anxiety. These health conditions may be a direct result of, or made worse, lifestyle risk factors such as poor nutrition, obesity, smoking, alcohol intake and lack of exercise. This policy’s purpose is to support participants in their lifestyle choices to reduce their risks.

Staff working with participants and designing Service Agreements and Support Plans must be mindful of lifestyle risk factors and support the participant in becoming more active within their community.

This policy aims to assist participants in improving their health, nutrition, physical activity, adequate sleep, reducing stress, anxiety, alcohol intake, and stopping smoking. Loneliness and isolation are also lifestyle risk factors. For instance, the lack of a job, friends or hobbies can lead to many hours spent alone without purpose or connection.

Management must ensure that staff are trained in healthy eating, exercise, stress reduction, and a positive lifestyle, so information and support can flow to the participant.

This policy is linked to the NDIS Practice Standards, including:

* Support planning - Participants are actively involved in the development of their Support Plans. Support plans reflect the participant needs, requirements, preferences, strengths, goals and are regularly reviewed.
* Independence and informed choice - Branch Out Support’s supports participants in making informed choices, exercising control, and maximising their independence relating to the supports provided.
* Access to support - Participants access the most appropriate support that meets their needs, goals and preferences.
* Incident Management - Participants are safeguarded by the incident management system, ensuring that incidents are acknowledged, responded to, well-managed and used as part of Branch Out Support’s continuous improvement.
* Information Management - Participants’ information is managed to ensure that it is identifiable, accurately recorded, current and confidential. Each participant’s information is easily accessible to the participant and appropriately utilised by relevant workers.
* Human resource management - Participant’s support needs are met by competent workers holding relevant qualifications and who have relevant expertise and experience to provide person-centred support.

Lifestyle risks can be addressed by eating healthy food, increasing exercise, reducing stress and connecting. For example:

* Increasing movement throughout the day.
* Choosing food and drinks low in added sugar.
* Reducing the amount of takeaway food eaten.
* Becoming involved in a community activity that will create a connection with others.

Participants may not have had the opportunity to access or control their living environments, such as food, daily activities, exercise and community participation. Lifestyle changes happen through:

* Raising awareness.
* Provision of information about how everyday activities can affect health.
* Raising health awareness and giving ideas of how to make lifestyle changes that will address risks such as obesity, high blood pressure and stress management.
* Setting small achievable goals for change such as walking short distances, not taking sugar in coffee or tea will gradually build to bigger goals.
* Learning with peer support to increase connections, such as:
* Water aerobics or participating in a walkathon or fun run.
* Friends, physical training with a group.
* Joining a community garden.
* Joining an art class, music or dancing lessons.
* Changes to participant’s living environment and learning the new skills that may be needed.
* Making changes to the environment that can support goals.
* Changes can be small, such as having healthy food choices available, planning, shopping and cooking healthy meals.
* Encouraging physical activity, including:
* Increasing physical activity improves health and influences other lifestyle risks such as nutrition, stress, and smoking; positive outcomes are lower blood pressure, improvement of self-esteem and mental health.
* Encouraging positive ideas of physical activity and self-esteem.
* Increasing movement through normal daily activities is a way to feel more positive about Branch Out Support and participants’ bodies and movement.

Supporting participants

Branch Out Support will monitor participants’ health, safety and wellbeing by supporting participants to maintain their health and access appropriate health services. Branch Out Support will support participants to be empowered to live a healthy lifestyle and understand why it is important.

Below are the processes that Branch Out Support may support participants with:

* Link actions for a healthy lifestyle to the participant’s annual comprehensive assessment.
* Incorporate health promotion and ways to live a healthy lifestyle into the Support Planning.
* Provide support to make informed decisions regarding their lifestyle support to:
* Talk to their GP about their health and what lifestyle changes are needed to optimise their health.
* Understand any risks arising from their present lifestyle.
* Understand how they can improve their lifestyle to match their own health goals.
* Provide information about and support access to new interests and community activities in the local area such as a community garden, amateur theatre, start a walking group, cooking lessons or arts and crafts.
* Facilitate choice in lifestyle changes and understanding about their health, using accessible tools and resources.
* Support to access both information or professional assistance such as dietitians or exercise physiologists where the person’s lifestyle choices are inconsistent with their own health goals.
* Provide information about healthy lifestyles and different ideas to improve health, such as walking instead of driving, learning to cook a new healthy dish or taking up an exercise class.
* Suggest and support access to new activities or choices that link to the participant’s goals, dreams and how a healthy lifestyle may help them achieve this goal.

Engage the participants with encouragement and highlight their achievements so that they are motivated to develop a healthy lifestyle.

* Support the participants to make changes to their living environment that will support their goals, increase incidental exercise around the house, keep healthy food choices in the cupboard, and walk to places when possible.

Referrals to other professionals

Lifestyle changes can involve changes across various aspects of a participant’s life. A multi-disciplinary approach can assist the participant in developing new skills or identifying a support need, for instance, identifying an appropriate level and type of exercise or learning how to cook.

The types of professionals that may assist in lifestyle change include dieticians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, exercise physiologists, counsellors and NDIS behaviour support practitioners.

Training and development

As part of Branch Out Support’s training program, staff may receive training and skills in areas such as:

* Healthy lifestyles, nutrition and menu planning and exercise; and
* Positive communication skills to engage with participants and empower change.

Branch Out Support’s obligations

As part of Branch Out Support’s obligations to the NDIS Code of Conduct, staff must provide supports or services to participants that:

* Act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making following applicable laws and conventions.
* Provide supports services safely and competently with care and skill.
* Promptly take steps to raise and act on matters that may impact the quality and safety of support provided.

Branch Out Support will comply and demonstrate compliance with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018 related to delivering safe, quality support, services and managing risks associated with the supports the organisation provides to participants.

Resources

Below are some resources to assist staff in the provision of information to participants.

* Five-booklet toolkit developed by Inclusion Melbourne to assist people with a disability make choices about their life (my choice tool kit.)
* Healthy eating for adults Australian Government Department of Health brochure.
* Australian dietary guidelines, website links to a range of information and resources eat for health.
* Physical activity and exercise guidelines for all Australians, Australian Government Department of Health, include tips and ideas for fitting more activity into their day-to-day life.
* Link for information, initiatives and resources for healthy lifestyles Preventative Health, Australian Government Department of Health.
* Council for Intellectual Disability Health Fact sheets including healthy lifestyles.
* Healthy Mind e tool for people with intellectual disability Blackdog Institute.
* First Nations People, resource for planning, dreams, goals and lifestyle. First Peoples Disability Network Australia our way planning resources.

**Daily Personal Care for a participant live alone**

Participants have the right, choice and control to live where they feel comfortable. It can be living at home with family or alone. Their choice must be respected and Branch Out Support will ensure their safety and wellbeing is always maintained by taking necessary steps to prevent any complications. Participant’s choices and decisions are incorporated into their Support Plan, including:

* The type of care worker preferred.
* Specific activities and support needed (e.g., showering, dressing, eating, toileting, appointments.)
* Time limit for activities.
* Overnight support (if required.)

Participants living in their own homes have the right to be safe and live as autonomously as possible within their environment. It is Branch Out Support’s objective to effectively manage professional carers to ensure that they are providing services and support to meet the requirements of the participant.

Branch Out Support’s management team are responsible for ensuring Branch Out Support’s professionally trained staff are appropriately supervised and determining they are providing high-quality services that meet the NDIS (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018.

Personal care supports relate to assistance with daily personal activities, including assistance with, or supervision of, personal tasks of daily life, including:

* Personal hygiene (e.g., showering, bathing, oral hygiene, dressing and grooming.)
* Toileting, bladder and bowel management and menstrual care.
* Eating and drinking.
* Attending appointments.
* Use of aids and appliances, hearing and communication devices.
* Mobility and transferring (e.g., moving in and out of bed and on or off the toilet.)
* Application of splints, basic first aid due to injuries sustained due to a participant’s disability.

During the development of the Support Plan and Service Agreement, staff are required to actively listen to the participant and their support network to determine the goals, interests, and needs of the participant. Information is gathered and used to design the supports and services within the Support Plan to:

* Maximise the independence and functional skills of the participant.
* Suit the participant’s age and circumstances.
* Meet a participant’s needs in a less intrusive manner.

For participants who live in their own home and request a sole carer, Branch Out Support will undertake the following steps:

1. Design daily personal activities

* Detail and record all activities required as per the Service Agreement.
* Gather details on how the participant wants activities undertaken (e.g., how they like to be showered, what time of day, etc.).
* Determine hours and time limits for each activity.

2. Identify preferred carer/s (initial consultation)

* Listen to the participant to determine requirements (e.g., male/female, language preferences, cultural requirements, etc.).
* Identify the skills that the carer/s require.
* Review current care workers to determine potential matches.
* If no there is no match in Branch Out Support’s current workforce, then the Director will locate the appropriate care workers.
* The Director will locate at least two to three carers for each participant.

3. Complete the Safe Environment Checklist and Individual Risk Assessment Profile

* The Director will delegate a staff member to visit the home environment to determine the safety of the environment for both the participant and staff. The Safe Environment Checklist will be completed during this visit.
* All information gained from the visit is documented within the participant’s Support Plan.
* The Individual Risk Assessment Profile will be completed with the participant. Information will be used to develop appropriate risk strategies in the Support Plan.
* The Director will develop, finalise and detail the Support Plan strategies and objectives in collaboration with the participant, their family or advocate.
* The risk assessment must be reviewed quarterly or earlier if the participation circumstances change.

4. staff training

* Staff selected by the participants will be trained in all aspects of their care.
* The Director or their delegate will train the staff.
* A buddy system (of at least two shifts) is implemented to ensure staff are fully trained in all aspects of the role to meet the participant’s requirements.

5. Supervision

* The Director will determine an appropriate supervisor.
* The supervisor will visit the participant’s home environment at least every two months.
* During these visits, the supervisor will complete the Participant’s Home Monitoring Visit Report.
* The supervisor will meet with the Management team to report on their findings after each home visit. The meeting will identify risks or issues and inform continuous improvement required (e.g., additional training, staff changes, etc.)

6. Participant feedback

* The Director will seek the participant’s feedback regarding the performance of the staff at least every two months.
* The participant may provide feedback verbally, via email/letter, through the Complaints and Feedback Form or complete the Annual Participant Survey.

**Supported Independent Living (SIL) Policy and Procedures**

As a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider, Branch Out Support must undertake and submit documentation to meet the necessary registration group requirements. This includes using the Roster of Care (RoC) Submission Tool (the “RoC Tool”). The purpose of the Supported Independent Living (SIL) Policy and Procedure is to provide the structure to allow Branch Out Support’s staff members to work within the supported independent living registration group.

The RoC Tool is a Microsoft Excel document that assists the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to gain insight into a SIL participant’s typical week. Specifically, the RoC Tool aims to provide a mechanism for providers to communicate the supports they can deliver to meet a participant’s support needs and goals, which correlate with the participant’s agreement with the NDIA.

The Supported Independent Living registration group provides one type of help or supervision with daily tasks to assist Branch Out Support’s participants to live as independently as possible while building their daily living skills. Supported Independent Living provides paid personal support (e.g., having a carer to help with personal care tasks or cooking meals). Supported Independent Living support provision works towards building the participant’s skills to maintain or increase independence levels.

Supported Independent Living support takes place in the participant’s home. Participants can live in a shared home and receive SIL support. Supported Independent Living funding does not include items such as rent or other daily expenses (e.g., groceries).

Every SIL location must be inspected to ensure the safety of all participants. A SIL Checklist is used to review and analyse the safety status of the participants. Management must review this data and the individual requirements (see Individual Risk Assessment Profile) of each participant in the location to ensure the environment meets the needs of the participant.

The Director is required to undertake the following steps:

1. Review the SIL Checklist for any real or potential issues.
2. Review the Individual Risk Assessment Profile and Support Plan goals of each participant.
3. Determine the needs, goals and interests of each participant.
4. Determine how to maintain a healthy and safe environment for the participant.
5. Create a cleaning and maintenance schedule for each location.
6. Create a Roster of Care for each participant.
7. Submit the Roster of Care to the NDIA.

All staff working in the supported independent living environment will be provided appropriate training on how to work with each participant (as per their Support Plan) and to ensure that the environment is safe and suitable to undertake all SIL requirements. Every participant is reviewed at least annually and supported as per their Support Plan.

Overview

Branch Out Support will develop a Roster of Care (RoC) using the Assistance with Daily Living price limits so the NDIA can decide the type of supports to be included in a participant’s plan.

Branch Out Support is required to submit the RoC to the NDIA for consideration.

1. Location

All sites must be kept hygienic and safe with strong infection control measures. staff are required to follow health and hygiene procedures (e.g., handwashing and infection control) to ensure the environment is safe for the participant.

As part of Branch Out Support’s management of the location, Branch Out Support must:

1. Undertake a safe environment review of the site.
2. Identify any issues, as per the SIL Checklist.
3. Create a Risk Management Plan to eliminate or reduce identified risks.
4. Implement the Risk Management Plan.
5. Train Branch Out Support’s staff as per requirements.
6. Conduct an annual safety review, including fire and evacuation processes.
7. Undertake site visits at least every three months to ensure the environment is well maintained and meets Branch Out Support service standards.

2. Participant

Branch Out Support will collaborate with the participant and their nominee to complete the ROC SIL toolkit requirements and provide a copy to the participant.

Branch Out Support will ensure that the participant has the SIL registration group included in their NDIS Plan and has the appropriate funds to cover the required service (see Service Agreement with Participant Policy and Procedure).

Branch Out Support will undertake an Individual Risk Assessment and develop a Support Plan, as per the Support Planning and Service Agreement Collaboration Policy and Procedure, the Access to Supports Policy and Procedure and the Responsive Support Provision and Support Management Policy and Procedure.

Branch Out Support’s participants and staff are matched, and the information is recorded within the participants Support Plan.

Branch Out Support will ensure that the organisation’s rostering of staff meets the participant’s requirements.

Branch Out Support will review all staff members for the quality of their support and to determine if they are meeting the needs of the participant.

3. staffing

Branch Out Support will match the organisation’s staff members as per the requirements of the participant.

Branch Out Support’s training occurs in all aspects of support for the individual participant.

Branch Out Support’s performance management is undertaken annually (or as required) to determine if the staff are meeting the needs of supported independent living and the participants.

Branch Out Support will ensure two (2) buddy shifts are undertaken to provide feedback by a supervisor to confirm staff are supported in their roles.

4. Medication access and storage

Self-medicating participant – on site

1. Participants will complete a Self-Medication Assessment Form and it will be kept on the participant’s record.
2. The Director will assess risks regarding participant self-administering medicines and determine their competency.
3. If approved to self-medicate, the participant will complete a Risk Indemnity Form relating to self-medication.
4. The Director will review the participant’s capacity for self-medication every three months.
5. If approved to self-medicate, a predetermined locked cabinet either in the participant’s room or kitchen will be used to store their medication safely and securely.
6. Only the participants and their support workers are provided key access.
7. A Medication Storage Key Register will record details of individuals provided with key access.

Self-medicating participant – in participant home

1. Participants will complete a Self-Medication Assessment Form which is kept on the participant’s record.
2. The Director will assess risks regarding participant self-administering medicines and determine their competency.
3. If approved to self-medicate, the participant will complete a Risk Indemnity Form relating to self-medication.
4. The Director will review the participant’s capacity for self-medication every three months.
5. If approved to self-medicate, location of medication will be noted in the Safe Environment Checklist by the support worker.
6. The Director will recommend to the participant that all medication be stored in a locked cabinet.
7. Branch Out Support will assist in arranging a locked cabinet in the participant’s home if required.
8. Only the participant and their support workers will be provided key access if medication is stored in a locked cabinet.
9. A Medication Storage Key Register will record details of individuals provided with key access.

Provider medicating participants – on site

1. All medication will be stored in a predetermined locked cabinet either in the participant’s room or in the kitchen. The locked cabinet will be used to store medication safely and securely.
2. Staff approved to provide a participant’s medication will be included in their Support Plan.
3. Only support workers who have approval are provided key access.
4. A Medication Storage Key Register will record details of individuals who have key access.
5. Support workers will track the management of medication using the Medication Chart, as required.

5. Roster of care procedure

The Director or their delegated officer will complete the Roster of Care Submission Tool which details the staffing mix and level of shared support (through the ratio of supports), as well as the participant’s individual needs. Branch Out Support acknowledges that while participants are funded for SIL individually based on their support needs and goals, the RoC Tool considers the support needs of all the residents in shared living arrangements (as a result the supports for both NDIS and non-NDIS participants who share supports must be captured in the submission).

Together the RoC Tool, the RoC Template and any supporting documentation is sent for assessment and review to the NDIS via the following email address: SIL@ndis.gov.au

The RoC Tool combines a Roster of Care and Hourly Breakdown spreadsheets into one spreadsheet called Hourly Breakdown and automates the calculation of weekly summaries; this should, in turn:

* Reduce duplicate information provided to the National Disability Insurance Agency.
* Improve the accuracy of information shared between the National Disability Insurance Agency and providers.

6. SIL submission process

The Director will conduct reviews (annually) and follow the NDIS Operational Guidelines for Supported Independent Living. The delegated officer will undertake the following:

1. Confirm with the participant or their nominee (through the declaration section in the SIL RoC Template document) that they have been involved in developing the RoC with Branch Out Support and have been provided with a copy before it is submitted to the NDIA.
2. Send the submission (SIL RoC Tool and Template) on behalf of the participant to SIL@ndis.gov.au

Unless the participant has a change in circumstance, the same RoC as the previous plan will be used. If there has been a change of circumstance, Branch Out Support will submit evidence to support this and then repeat the above process to develop a new RoC.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# NON-RESPONSE TO SCHEDULED VISIT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to outline Branch Out Support’s response to participants who do not respond during a scheduled home visit.

## Policy

Branch Out Support is responsive to the individual needs of participants. Branch Out Support will always uphold participant’s rights. Branch Out Support will ensure participants have a plan in place to no response for a scheduled visit.

Branch Out Support’s no response plan to scheduled visits will be individualised for each participant based on their assessed needs.

## Procedures

Branch Out Support will develop an agreed plan of action with all participants and or their representative for situations where staff arrive for a scheduled visit and find the participant does not respond.

Branch Out Support will identify action to be followed by employees in their Support Plan.

Branch Out Support will ensure the participant is clear about their responsibilities to communicate with employees if participant will not be available for a scheduled visit.

Ensure participants are clear about who Branch Out Support should contact if the staff member finds the participant is not at home and cannot enter the premises.

Branch Out Support will ensure the participant has agreed and signed off on the possible course of action in a non-response situation.

If staff arrives for a scheduled visit and there is no answer Branch Out Support will implement the agreed non-response plan.

Management must be notified as soon as possible. Management will notify the persons(s) listed in the plan for a non-response to a scheduled visit. A revisit to the home may be necessary as soon as possible. Management may notify emergency services. If the participant is found Management and staff members must document all steps followed. Management will meet with participants and next of kin to discuss the event and their feedback. Management will debrief employees if the event has been traumatic.

Branch Out Support will consider suggestions or improvements that could be made for future situations and will review the no response plan as needed.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# PREFFERED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

All participants have the right to access supports that promote, uphold, and respect their legal and human rights. To enable them to exercise choice and control. Due to the variation in types of disability, there is a variation in the modes of communication that each participant will require.

This policy is designed to ensure that our employees understand each participant’s preferred method of communication. This preferred method of communication will then be embedded in the support and services provided to the participant.

Staff at initial contact and those who work with our participants must understand the participant’s preferred method of communication and put that preference into practice wherever possible. The Director will inform the staff members of each participant’s communication requirements and will always endeavour to place staff that can communicate effectively with a participant.

**Definitions:**

**Interpreter** - A person who interprets, especially one who translates speech orally or in sign language. An interpreter translates the spoken words based on whatever grammatical knowledge they have of the language from which they interpret. Their interpretation is based on their expertise in the subject.

**Translator** - A person who professionally translates from one language into another.

A translator must be equipped with great linguistic skills. They must have a sound knowledge of grammar and should be able to express the thoughts presented in the language to a participant.

**Mode of communication** - The medium or channel through which communicative intent is expressed. Typical communication modes include natural speech, facial expression, and gestures. Exceptional communication modes include the use of graphic symbols or synthetic speech.

**Easy Read documents** - Easy Read documents simplify information, so it is easy to understand for the participant. Typically, it uses plain text, pictures to assist in explaining text and has lots of white space.

## Policy

The best means of communicating with a participant is determined at the initial contact and will be recorded and used from that point forward. Staff are required to treat all participants with respect and use their preferred mode of communication wherever possible. Variations in the mode of communication may include:

* Written documents with no adjustments.
* Verbal explanations.
* Demonstration.
* Easy Read documents – explanations and forms.
* Interpreters (oral).
* Translators (written).
* Participants may use their own interpreters and access their advocate to assist them.

## Procedures

At the initial contact meeting, staff will consult with the participant, and their family or advocate to determine the most preferred mode of communication.

**Initial Meeting**

The Director will undertake the following steps:

* Determine the best means of communication via discussion or assessment.
* Record this mode of communication in the Support Plan.
* Inform all staff workers who work with the participant.
* Match staff with these skills, or train and support staff in how to communicate.
* Arrange for an interpreter or translator (if required).

**Provision of Information**

Staff are to use the information gained in the initial meeting to provide information to the participant in their mode of communication where information must be discussed with the participant. Methods that will be used may include:

* Providing information in written form without any adjustments.
* Providing information in written form using Easy Read Documents.
* Explaining the information orally for those with issues with reading or comprehending written documents.
* Demonstrating information (if able to do so).
* Accessing an interpreter via Translating and Interpreting Services, Department of Home Affairs.

# DAILY PERSONAL CARE FOR PARTICIPANT LIVING ALONE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Participants have a right and choice and control to live where they feel comfortable. It can be living at home with family or alone. Their choice must be respected, and we will ensure their safety and wellbeing is always maintained by taking necessary steps to prevent any complications.

## Policy

At Branch Out Support, we prioritise the safety, wellbeing, and autonomy of the organisation’s participants who choose to live alone. Our Daily Personal Care for Participants Living Alone Policy and Procedure is designed to respect their rights and choices while ensuring participants receive the necessary support and care. Through active listening and collaboration, Branch Out Support incorporate participant preferences into their Support Plan, including the selection of care workers and specific activities required.

Our professional carers undergo comprehensive training and supervision to deliver high-quality services that align with the NDIS standards. We conduct regular home visits and risk assessments to create a safe environment for both participants and staff. Participant feedback is essential, and we actively seek their input to continually improve the organisation’s services. With Branch Out Support’s dedicated team and personalised approach, the organisation aims to empower participants to lead fulfilling lives in their own homes.

## Procedures

**Participant-Centred Support Plan:**

Branch Out Support ensures that participants' choices and decisions are integrated into the Support Plan. This includes preferences for the type of care worker, specific activities, time limits, and overnight support if required.

**Autonomy and Safety in Home Living:**

Participants residing in their own homes have the right to live safely and as autonomously as possible within their environment. Branch Out Support's objective is to effectively manage professional carers to provide services and support that meet each participant's requirements.

**Personal Care Supports:**

Personal care support encompasses assistance with daily personal activities such as personal hygiene, toileting, eating, attending appointments, using aids, and mobility.

**Active Listening and Collaborative Planning:**

During the Support Plan and Service Agreement development, staff actively listen to the participant and their support network to determine their goals, interests, and needs. This information is used to design supports that maximise independence, suit the participant's age, circumstances, and meet their needs in a less intrusive manner.

**Sole Carer Request Process:**

For participants requesting a sole carer while living in their own home, Branch Out Support follows specific steps:

**Designing Daily Personal Activities:**

Activities are detailed and recorded as per the Service Agreement, considering the participant's preferences and time limits.

**Identifying Preferred Carers:**

Branch Out Support’s Director listens to the participant’s requirements and identifies suitable carers based on their skills and preferences. They review current care workers to determine potential matches. If no matches are found in our current workforce, the Director will locate appropriate care workers. For each participant, at least two to three carers will be located to meet their needs and preferences.

**Completing Safety Checks and Risk Assessment:**

A staff member conducts a Home Safety Checklist visit to ensure safety for both the participant and staff. The Individual Risk Assessment Form is completed with the participant to develop appropriate risk strategies in the Support Plan.

**Support Plan Finalisation:**

The Director collaborates with the participants, their family, or advocate to develop, finalise, and detail the Support Plan strategies and objectives.

**Ongoing Risk Assessment Review:**

The risk assessment must be reviewed quarterly or earlier if the participant's circumstances change.

**Staff Training:**

Staff selected by the participant receive comprehensive training in all aspects of care. The Director or their delegate provides the necessary training, and a buddy system is implemented to ensure full compliance with participant requirements.

**Supervision and Home Visits:**

An appropriate supervisor visits the participant's home environment at least every two months. The supervisor completes the Home Safety Checklist, and the findings are discussed with management to identify risks or issues and inform continuous improvement efforts.

**Seeking Participant Feedback:**

The Director actively seeks participant feedback regarding staff performance at least every two months. Participants may provide feedback verbally, via email/letter, through the Complaints and Feedback Form, or complete the Annual Participant Survey. This feedback is essential for enhancing service quality and meeting participant needs effectively.

# TELEHEALTH POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Telehealth, in the context of the Australian healthcare setting, can be defined as the use of videoconferencing technologies to conduct a consultation where audio and visual information is exchanged in real-time. Telehealth can be conducted between Branch Out Support’s clinician and a participant in a supported or unsupported format.

Branch Out Support’s clinicians will review the participants and only undertake telehealth consultation with participants who have the capacity to participate in a videoconference, to ensure appropriate provision of support and access.

## Policy

This policy has been designed to allow Branch Out Support to meet the needs, interests and goals of the organisation’s participants during natural disasters, pandemics, or when specific circumstances warrant this approach. During events of this type, changes and adjustments to Branch Out Support’s service provision may occur, requiring the adaptation of current practices to meet government or participant requirements.

The role of telehealth, in the overall management of a participant, will be determined by the clinician and other relevant providers. The implementation of telehealth will depend on the specialty of the clinician, the participant’s requirements and location. Clinicians should be mindful of the limitations of telehealth and communicate these limitations to all video conference participants.

## PROCEDURE

**Participant selection**

Clinicians should determine which participants are suitable for telehealth based on available resources, technology and care requirements. Branch Out Support will determine whether a telehealth consultation is the most appropriate type of consultation for each participant. The decision to use telehealth incorporates the following factors:

* **Clinical**: Continuity of support and the best model of support for the individual.
* **Practical**: Availability of appropriate technology. The quality of the technology at a remote site will play a significant role in the information received during the clinical consultation.
* **Participant needs**: Ability to travel and consideration will be given to their family, work and cultural situation. Clinicians should also consider the participant’s capacity to participate (e.g., a video consultation may be inappropriate for participants with vision or hearing impairments).

**Prior to a telehealth consultation**

Branch Out Support clinicians will inform the participant on how the consultation will proceed; this may include:

* Providing the participant with plain language information about telehealth.
* Informing the participant of the other available support options (if available).
* Informing the participant of any charges for telehealth consultations in comparison to other available options.
* Indicating the length of the telehealth consultation.

Clinicians will ensure that the participant has been given adequate information regarding the telehealth consultation and they will liaise with the participant’s workers to ensure the participant is sufficiently informed.

**Seeking participant consent**

Branch Out Support’s clinicians will need to ensure the participants have consented to participate in the telehealth consultation.

In cases where the participant is not competent and cannot provide consent, consent should be obtained from an advocate in the same way as for a face-to-face consultation, using a Telehealth Consent Form instead. The clinician will arrange for a Telehealth Consent Form to be provided to the advocate who has the requisite legal authority (e.g., enduring guardianship), so they can provide consent on the participant’s behalf.

While it is not Branch Out Support’s standard practice to record a video conference, on occasion, the participant will record the telehealth consult; therefore, their consent applies to this recording. Where a recording is made by Branch Out Support for assessment purposes, the participant will be informed prior to the recording taking place. The participant must provide verbal approval to record the consultation and agree to the planned use of the recording at the start of the telehealth consultation.

**Consultation**

Telehealth is no different from any other type of consultation and should be conducted similarly to a face-to-face consultation. A telehealth consultation of high quality is one in which the participant has audio and screens are shared. Listed supports actioned and active listening is undertaken as per current best practice models.

In supported consultations, a support worker is present with the participant for some, or all, of the video consultation. The support worker should confirm both their identity and the participants to the clinician.

For unsupported consultations, the participant may be alone or may elect to have a family member present. For the first unsupported consultation, the clinician and participant introduce themselves, the clinician provides some background information including their credentials and experience.

**Privacy and confidentiality**

Telehealth consultations should be private and confidential. Clinicians should have processes in place to facilitate this as per standard face-to-face consultations. The participant’s privacy and confidentiality should always be maintained.

Branch Out Support’s reviews privacy and confidentiality risks associated with telehealth consultations and develops procedures to mitigate such risks, which include, but are not limited to:

* Implementing an appropriate system to prevent interruptions during a consultation (at both clinician and participant end).
* Requesting that participants join a telehealth consultation in a quiet room where they will not be interrupted.
* Alerting other staff that a telehealth consultation is being conducted and requesting not to be disturbed.
* Storing all recorded telehealth conversations securely, so the participant’s privacy and confidentiality are maintained.
* Selecting telehealth video conferencing technology (hardware and software) that offers appropriate security features.
* Storing all reports provided or generated from, the telehealth consultation securely online with password access.
* Informing the participant if there is a valid or clinically appropriate reason for the recording of a consultation and requesting the participant’s verbal consent.

**Technology**

**Basic requirement of telehealth**

The basic requirement of telehealth is the transfer of audio and visual data in real-time between the clinician and the patient.

Only specific telehealth technology (hardware and software) appropriate for participants will be used to conduct telehealth consultations.

Encryption, ease of use and access are considered as part of the software selection (e.g., Zoom has encryption storage capacity and is accessible from home computers and tablets).

**Adequate performance**

The information and communication technology used for telehealth should be fit for the clinical purpose of the consultation. Specifically:

* The equipment is reliable and works well over the locally available internet network and bandwidth.
* The equipment is compatible with the technology used by the participant’s health worker.
* The equipment and the network are secure, to ensure privacy and confidentiality are assured during the consultation.
* The equipment is of a high enough quality to facilitate clear communication with all participants and to transfer accurate clinical information.

**Risk management**

Branch Out Support will conduct a risk analysis to determine the likelihood and magnitude of foreseeable problems using telehealth consultations. The analysis will include:

* Identifying the limitations of technology being used.
* Developing procedures for detecting, diagnosing, repairing equipment and repairing connectivity issues.
* Availability of equipment and connections.
* Software support services available.

**Risk management strategies**

**Computer breakdown**

* Contact the technician to repair.
* Purchase a new computer.
* Have a spare computer available.

**Privacy and confidentiality**

* Consent in writing.
* Verbal consent at the beginning of each consultation.
* Encrypted video kept in participant’s file.
* Secure encrypted server.

**Internet failure**

* Contact the participant via telephone.
* Reschedule.

**Encrypted end-to-end software**

* Locate encrypted software.
* Determine if accessible via participant systems.
* Inform the participant of any breach.

**Zoom**

* Encrypted storage.
* Review for end-to-end encryption (currently being developed).
* Use of waiting room.

# SERVICE EXIT AND TRANSITION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to demonstrate Branch Out Support’s commitment to transparent and service exit procedures that respect the rights of participants and support the transition to other service providers when required.

## Policy

Branch Out Support understands the right of participants to exit from the organisation’s service and transfer to another service provider. Branch Out Support understands that participants have the right to terminate their services with Branch Out Support.

Branch Out Support will ensure exit procedures are fair, transparent and respect the rights of the participants.

## Procedures

* All participants have the right to terminate their service provision at any time.
* Branch Out Support will provide exiting participants with an Exit Interview and will outline reasons for service termination (if applicable) and obtain feedback.
* Branch Out Support will track service exit and referral information on the participant management system.
* If required, participants will be provided with information and support to access a representative of their choice to help them with access to the service.
* Branch Out Support will inform participants of their rights and responsibilities.
* If a participant is asked to leave the service, information regarding the reason for being asked to leave will be provided to the participant and their representative.
* Branch Out Support will only terminate the participant’s service, when the participant cannot be cared for with the resources available to Branch Out Support or the participant’s condition changes to the extent that the participant no longer needs home care.
* On termination of services, the participant will be informed of their rights in writing for future service provision and information regarding advocacy.
* Participants who have their services terminated by Branch Out Support have the right to appeal.
* Appeals should be directed in writing to the Management team and a final decision will be made by the Director.
* Participants who successfully appeal will be supported to continue accessing Branch Out Support’s services.
* Participants who are not successful in their appeal will be provided advice in writing regarding the outcome.
* If a person is unhappy with the outcome of their appeal, they will be directed to Branch Out Support’s Complaints and Feedback process.
* Branch Out Support will work with participants and their representative to identify alternative services and referrals that could best meet their needs.
* An Exit Plan will be agreed with the participants with their informed consent.
* The Plan will contain identified time limits outlining actions and those responsible to implement the actions.
* Participants who have chosen to exit the service have the right to re-access services within a 30-day period of exiting, without having to follow formal access processes, provided the necessary service resources are available.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# DIVISION 4 - SUPPORT PROVISION ENVIRONMENT

# PARTICIPANT MONIES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidelines for Branch Out Support in relation to the management of its participant’s funds and to ensure relevant checks and balances are in place to ensure compliance.

## Policy

Branch Out Support works with participants and their representatives to develop an Individualised Budget as per the participant’s NDIS Service Agreement.

Branch Out Support can charge participants an establishment fee which will captured in the participant’s NDIS Service Agreement.

## Procedures

NDIS participants’ individualised budgets will include:

* The participant’s goals assessed needs and preferences.
* Funds available in their plan.
* Service preferences and selections outlined in the Support Plan.
* Individualised budgets must be amended whenever the participants’ Support Plan or costs change.
* Branch Out Support will provide participants with a monthly statement of funds available and their expenditure in respect of the care and services delivered.
* Branch Out Support will provide families and/or their representatives with reports about participants’ funds on an as required.
* Branch Out Support will report to the relevant stakeholders including government bodies where any discrepancies in the money management system occur.

**Fee for service participants**

* Participants are given a list of fees for their required services when they enquire about support services.
* Services are agreed, documented and signed.
* When participant preferred payment option is direct debit, a direct debit form is completed.
* Details of the participant payment method are sent to Management (a copy is given to the participant.
* A monthly tax invoice and statement is sent to each participant, clearly showing fees for support and services provided.
* When an adjustment is needed, a ‘fee adjustment form’ is used; a new original and copy are required, the obsolete forms are written across as ‘obsolete’ with date and the initials of the employee making the adjustment.
* When a participant leaves the service, Management is to be informed so they can make any adjustments or reimbursements in a timely manner.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# DISASTER MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of the Disaster Management Policy and Procedure is to ensure Branch Out Support’s participants feel safe in the event of a disaster (natural or pandemic), knowing Branch Out Support will provide them with continuity of services. Branch Out Support focuses on maintaining service delivery to the organisation’s participants in times of stress and uncertainty.

Disasters and emergencies may be infrequent, Branch Out Support acknowledges the organisation’s services are especially important before, during, and after such events, as many participants are beyond the reach of other services and Branch Out Support provides them with an essential support lifeline. Branch Out Support recognises that preparedness for disasters and emergencies is a priority for the organisation and a requirement to ensure the safety of Branch Out Support’s participants.

Branch Out Support will strive to provide an adequate level of service to Branch Out Support’s participants before, during and after all types of emergencies.

The scope of this policy includes Branch Out Support’s participants and staff. Branch Out Support’s participants will be informed of the organisation’s emergency procedures to assist them to prepare for an emergency, build their resilience, and maintain their confidence in Branch Out Support. Staff will be well informed and prepared to assist them in coping with an emergency within the community and to strengthen Branch Out Support’s disaster resilience.

## Policy

Branch Out Support places the safety and care of the organisation’s participants at the forefront of all the operational procedures. During a disaster, Branch Out Support’s team will adhere to this policy framework to work within any additional guidelines and instructions provided to Branch Out Support by state and federal government authorities.

During any type of disaster, Branch Out Support’s senior management will undertake the following actions:

* Follow all relevant government guidelines and instructions.
* Communicate Branch Out Support’s response to staff, participants and any other relevant parties.
* Prepare participants (before any actions are taken) by informing them of how the current situation may affect their services.
* Brief Branch Out Support’s entire staff on any possible or real action steps required by them.
* Attempt to keep key workers allocated to the same participants.
* Work towards maintaining continuity of support for each of Branch Out Support’s participants.

## Procedure

**Preparing for disasters and emergencies**

An emergency is a situation of grave risk to health, life or environment. A disaster is any phenomenon, natural or man-made, that has the potential to cause extensive destruction of life and property. The mere mention of either of these two words is enough to make the community, particularly Branch Out Support’s participants, extremely nervous.

Some disasters and emergencies Branch Out Support may face include:

* Flood
* fire
* heatwave
* snowstorm
* storms or cyclones
* pandemic.

Branch Out Support will:

* Stay informed regarding all state/territory and federal government directives and act upon these directives appropriately.
* Advise other organisations who work with Branch Out Support, of the disaster procedures and processes.
* Identify personnel who are critical in the delivery of essential frontline services.
* Identify Branch Out Support’s participants, and their stakeholders, whose services may be impacted by the situation.
* Implement this policy in conjunction with Branch Out Support’s Risk Management Policy and Procedure, Information Management Policy and Procedure and Human Resource Policy and Procedure.

**Supporting the supporters**

Vicarious trauma is a real and grave health concern for staff and volunteers of community service organisations such as ours, mainly when working with disaster-affected individuals and communities.

Branch Out Support will determine the best means to support staff in a disaster situation and will implement all appropriate measures as detailed in Branch Out Support’s Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure.

**Participant’s preparedness**

Branch Out Support understands that it is more likely that the organisation’s participants will be adversely impacted by an emergency or disaster than others in the community.

Branch Out Support acknowledge that the organisation may not be able to provide the same level of services to the participants during, or immediately after, an emergency or disaster situation. For these reasons, it is imperative that all the organisation’s participants are supported by Branch Out Support to prepare for changes due to a disaster or an emergency.

Branch Out Support will:

* Inform participants of the current situation and how the provision of their services and workers may be impacted.
* Continue to provide participants with the same key workers if they are available.
* Replace key workers with experienced workers who have the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate care to the participant.
* Inform the participant of any service changes and outline the reasons/s for these changes.
* Seek support within the local care community if Branch Out Support’s staff are unavailable, ensure that any new workers are appropriately experienced, trained and hold all relevant checks required.

**staff preparedness**

Branch Out Support’s team is the organisations greatest asset, it is Branch Out Support focus that participants and their loved ones remain safe during an emergency or disaster situation.

Branch Out Support will help prepare staff members for an emergency or disaster by implementing the following:

* Inform all staff of the situation and what is required by them via email, online messaging, Zoom meetings or similar.
* Train workers in all required measures, e.g., infection control, social distancing and evacuation
* seek feedback from participants regarding their services to adjust information distribution, if necessary.
* Inform staff of Branch Out Support’s participants requirements outlined in their Support Plan.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure the safety of staff, participants and other stakeholders during emergencies such as a fire or other emergencies.

## Policy

The health and safety of staff and participants is of paramount importance to Branch Out Support. Branch Out Support is committed to the health and safety of its staff, employees, volunteers, contractors, participants, families, carers and visitors.

Branch Out Support are committed to the implementation of clear and effective emergency management procedures. Branch Out Support will comply with all laws and mandatory standards relating to fire protection, health and general safety. Branch Out Support will ensure that participants in its care are appropriately protected from fire risk.

Branch Out Support will respect the homes of participant’s who live in the community, whilst balancing the provision of support, their duty of care to participants, and the need to keep participants, staff and volunteers safe whilst they are receiving and delivering services.

## Procedures

Branch Out Support will provide comprehensive emergency procedure training for all employees including mandatory fire safety training.

Branch Out Support will provide employee’s emergency training yearly.

**Participants Planning**

* Branch Out Support will develop an individual emergency plan (within the Support Plan) for all participants taking into consideration their physical and mental condition, their location and mobility, e.g., epilepsy management plan.
* Branch Out Support will work with participants to document the plan and ensure they understand how employees will work with them in an emergency.
* Branch Out Support will keep an emergency contact list for participants and employees up to date.
* Branch Out Support will ensure all participants have gas, electricity and emergency numbers clearly displayed in their home.
* Branch Out Support will keep participant’s medical history, allergies, mobility status and walking aids, vital medication details and communication devices or difficulties on the master list for emergencies.
* Branch Out Support will liaise with local disaster management committees.
* Branch Out Support will list local area evacuation centers.
* Branch Out Support will identify lines of communication with participants and employees.

**Fire Emergency / Community Disaster**

* On days of extreme fire danger, Management is to keep employees and participants informed of local dangers and the need for evacuation as required.
* Employees must know and understand where and how to access their local evacuation areas and the evacuation areas for participants, which are noted on each participant’s Emergency Plan.
* Participants who live remotely or in high fire risk areas will need to include family and neighbours as part of their Emergency Plan, including relevant numbers listed on their plan.
* Employees must activate the Emergency Plan in a timely manner on days of extreme fire danger.
* Management will need to keep informed on emergency updates on days of extreme weather warnings.
* Participants and employees will need to understand each participant’s Emergency Plan.
* Emergency contact details will need to be kept current and checked at each review.
* Emergency procedures and guidelines to be mandatory yearly training.
* Participants to understand that Branch Out Support will do all the organisation can to assist, it may not be possible for employees to assist each individual participant in an emergency, Branch Out Support will follow their individual plan in the case of high fire risk.
* A list of emergency accommodation to be listed in the Emergency Plan.
* Planning for summer fire season should take place in winter months to ensure readiness prior to the summer (fire danger months).
* Management is required to list local fire and emergency services contact numbers and local council emergency numbers on the Participant’s Emergency Plan.
* Ensure all participants have an emergency kit including water, torch, batteries, protective clothing that could be used in an emergency and a list of their medications including their preferred doctor/pharmacy.
* Branch Out Support’s staff members will keep themselves and participants away from any fallen wires.
* Branch Out Support’s staff members will not attempt to drive until the area is declared safe.
* If in an evacuation centre - staff and participants should not return home until it is safe to do so.
* Management is required to call and arrange a debrief meeting post fire to ensure staff and participant management was handled well and if not, outline improvements that could be implemented for the future.

**Participant emergency readiness**

Branch Out Support will actively work to improve the safety of vulnerable people in emergencies through encouraging and supporting participants to undertake personal emergency planning.

Where there is recognised bushfire risk, specific bushfire planning will be undertaken in addition to basic personal emergency planning.

Branch Out Support will support participants to exercise their choice and control in emergency response processes through listening to their needs and preferences for care, as well as seeking participants and other relevant stakeholder’s participation and feedback when identifying risks and developing solutions.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that Branch Out Support provides a safe and secure work environment for all participants, staff and other stakeholders.

This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards. It should be read in conjunction with Branch Out Support’s Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure.

## Policy

Branch Out Support ensures the safety and security of staff, participants and visitors by implementing a variety of security measures.

## Procedures

* Branch Out Support’s premises have a security alarm system.
* All visitors to the service may gain entry to Branch Out Support’s premises via the front door to the office, a doorbell will be installed to alert staff of visitor entry.
* The office is in a building that allows pedestrian access for staff with a key, at the front door. The front door will remain unlocked during office hours and staff are expected to lock the office door after 5.00pm. Staff can gain entrance to the car park garage via a security remote device (automatic gate opener) supplied to authorised staff.
* The last staff member to leave Branch Out Support’s premises each day is to turn off all the office lights, set the alarm at the front door and lock and bolt the front door.
* The Director will be informed of and approve work taking place after hours or on weekends.
* All staff and visitors must follow instructions given by Branch Out Support’s nominated fire warden or the Operations Manager during security and fire drills or during an emergency.
* Staff members must ensure that any participants or visitors are escorted to the evacuation point, provided it is safe to do so.
* Staff will be provided with a key lockable drawer or cabinet in which to keep their valuables.
* In the event of damage or theft of personal property, staff, participants and visitors should inform the Director who will take further action such as contacting the police.
* Any theft or damage to Branch Out Support’s premises or property will be reported to the Director who will take further action, such as contacting the police and relevant insurance company.
* Incidents relating to safety and security should be reported in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Incident Management policies and procedures.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# PHYSICAL ACCESSIBIILTY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that Branch Out Support provides a physically accessible service environment that is responsive to its participants’ support and communication needs.

This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards. It should be read in conjunction with Branch Out Support’s Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure.

## Policy

Branch Out Support ensures that its services are physically accessible and safe. It takes a continuous improvement approach to ensuring ongoing accessibility for all staff, participants and other stakeholders.

## Procedures

Information for participants will be provided in a variety of formats such as different languages, Easy English, face-to-face or phone explanation by staff and the use of interpreters or advocates. Specific formats provided will be responsive to demand data (see Branch Out Support’s Service Access Policy and Procedure) and individual participant needs.

Branch Out Support will provide suitable participant resources to accommodate the local population. This will consider cultural backgrounds, disabilities, age and developmental stage where appropriate any premises signage will also be consistent with local population requirements.

Where physical access issues are identified, the Director will consider how the premises might be modified to accommodate a person’s needs. Where reasonable, the Director will ensure permanent modifications are made.

Where participants or stakeholders are unhappy with any aspect of the service’s accessibility, they will be directed to Branch Out Support’s Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy.

Branch Out Support premises and service provision will consider wheelchair accessibility such as ramped access to the premises, proximity to public transport and phone service reliability during advertised opening hours.

Entries and exits will be clearly lit, slip-resistant, signposted and clearly marked. Appropriate entries and exits will be available for mobile equipment, such as wheelchairs (where possible).

Branch Out Support’s office will have steps and/or a ramp or lift to aid wheelchair or disability access. Whilst participants can visit the office, at times, it is preferable to make alternate arrangements including meeting with participants in their home or within the community.

Aisles and walkways will be at least 600mm wide, free of furniture and other obstacles, and where necessary clearly marked with yellow lines. Staircases will be guarded with upper and lower rails, with a handrail on at least one side.

Power-operated doors and gates will have safety features to prevent people being struck or trapped. They will also be suitably signposted, to warn of potential hazards.

Staff will always maintain good housekeeping practices and a tidy workplace to reduce the risk of injury from slips and trips.

Work areas will have enough space to allow someone to move about freely without strain or injury and evacuate quickly in case of emergency.

Where noise, heating or manual tasks are involved, a larger work area will be provided where possible.

Floors will be slip resistant and free of any hazards, such as cables and loose tiles, which can cause slips or trips. Carpet or mats will be used in office areas where staff are undertaking static standing work.

The Operations Manager will ensure there is sufficient light to enable staff to perform tasks without straining their eyes or adopting uncomfortable postures. Additional lighting will be used at places of particular risk.

Internal workplaces will be properly ventilated with windows and doors, fans or air-conditioning.

The service environment temperature will be maintained between 20°C and 26°C. Staff, participants and other stakeholders should report conditions that are too hot or too cold to the Operations Manager.

Equipment must not produce noise that exceeds the maximum noise level recommended by the Standards Association of Australia or as specified in local laws. If noise causes discomfort, staff, participants and other stakeholders should report the problem to the Operations Manager and options to reduce noise/provide PPE may be considered.

Branch Out Support will provide clean, safe accessible toilets, drinking water, washing and eating facilities, as well as secure storage for personal items.

Where staff, participants or other stakeholders are working or undertaking activities outdoors, they will have access to shelter for eating meals, taking breaks, and to protect themselves in adverse weather conditions. They will also be given personal protective equipment (PPE) for protection against the sun.

Working alone or remotely increases the risk of any job, particularly exposure to violence and poor access to emergency services. Staff who are required to work alone will be provided with appropriate communication systems and other safety equipment.

Incidents relating to physical accessibility should be reported in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Incident Management policies and procedures.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# FOOD STORAGE & PREPARATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that Branch Out Support’s staff prepare and store food to ensure it does not become unsafe or unsuitable for consumption.

This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards. It should be read in conjunction with Branch Out Support’s Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure.

## Policy

High standards of hygiene and product protection will be maintained in relation to food handling throughout all programs and services in accordance with all relevant regulations, acts and standards.

## Procedures

Information for participants will be provided in a variety of formats such as different languages, Easy English, face-to-face or phone explanation by staff and the use of interpreters and advocates. Specific formats provided will be responsive to the organisation’s demand data (see Branch Out Support’s Service Access Policy and Procedure) and individual participant needs.

Branch Out Support will provide suitable participant resources to accommodate the local population. This will consider cultural backgrounds, disabilities, age and developmental stage where appropriate. Any premises signage will also be consistent with local population requirements.

Staff should report any observed practice by any other person that they believe to be against general hygiene standards to the Operations Manager immediately, to rectify the problem.

Staff are expected to report to work each day in clean clothing. Hair should be clean, tidy and secure in place. Appropriate hair covering must be worn if hair is longer than shoulder length.

Clean gloves must always be worn while preparing food and should be changed regularly. Gloves should not be used when handling money.

Tongs or other appropriate utensils must be used in handling food where gloves are not appropriate. Smoking, eating and drinking is not allowed in areas where food is stored, prepared or served. Hands must be kept clean and must be washed regularly with soap and hot water, especially:

* When entering a food handling area.
* Before touching any cooked or prepared food and after handling raw food.
* After using the toilet.
* After having a cigarette.
* After handling garbage or cleaning equipment and chemicals.
* After using a handkerchief or tissue or stifling a sneeze or cough.
* After handling money.
* Before resuming work after any break or change in work area; or
* After touching hair, face or other parts of the body.

staff involved in food preparation should immediately report the following to the Operations Manager:

* Any skin irritations (eczema, dermatitis etc.) especially on the hands.
* Any stomach complaints or bowel conditions.
* Feeling unwell.
* Any changes in health which may affect their ability to perform duties.
* All cuts, scratches and wounds which may contaminate food.

All staff involved in food preparation and storage must familiarise themselves with this policy and procedure and follow all control measures to prevent food contamination/illness. Where further guidance is required, refer to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code and Safe Food Australia - A Guide to the Food Safety Standards.

Staff must ensure that the temperature of potentially hazardous food is either at 5°C or colder or at 60°C or hotter when it is received, served, transported or stored.

Examples of potentially hazardous foods are raw and cooked meat or foods containing meat, such as:

* Casseroles.
* Curries and lasagna
* Dairy products.
* Seafood.
* Processed fruits and vegetables.
* Salads.
* Cooked rice and pasta.
* Foods containing eggs, beans, nuts or other protein rich foods, such as quiche and soy products.

Staff do not have to keep potentially hazardous food at any specified temperature when preparing it because that would be impractical, but they must keep the processing or preparation time as short as possible to ensure bacteria does not get a chance to multiply to dangerous levels or form toxins.

Previously cooked and cooled potentially hazardous food must be reheated rapidly to 60°C or hotter. Ideally, food should be reheated to 60°C within a maximum of two hours to minimise the amount of time that food is at temperatures that favors the growth of bacteria or formation of toxins.

Potentially hazardous foods should be cooled to 5°C or colder as quickly as possible. There may be food poisoning bacteria in the food even though it has been cooked. Faster cooling times limit the time when these bacteria can grow or form toxins.

Food must be cooled from 60°C to 21°C in a maximum of two hours and from 21°C to 5°C within a further maximum period of four hours.

Incidents relating to infection control or infectious diseases should be reported in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Incident Management policies and procedures.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# VEHICLE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure the safety of staff, participants and other stakeholders when service delivery requires the use of vehicles.

This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards. It should be read in conjunction with Branch Out Support’s Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure.

## Policy

The health and safety of all Branch Out Support’s staff, volunteers, contractors, participants and visitors are of utmost importance, including when service delivery requires the use of vehicles.

## Procedures

The management team will review the appropriateness of vehicles used by Branch Out Support’s staff for the types of work activities they are undertaking.

The Management team will ensure comprehensive insurance and a roadside assistance scheme is in place for all Branch Out Support owned vehicles (where applicable).

The Management team will implement a maintenance program for vehicles used in its service delivery (owned, leased and privately owned) to ensure safety, roadworthiness, reporting/clearing of defects and passenger comfort.

The Management team will review and analyse all vehicle incidents.

Operations Manager will:

* Ensure relevant staff have valid driver’s licenses and verify these annually in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Human Resources Policy and Procedure.
* Ensure staff using their own vehicles have current registration and compulsory third party (CTP) insurance for their vehicles in place.
* Ensure staff transporting participants have current criminal history checks in place.
* Ensure staff have properly maintained vehicles and all vehicles are checked prior to use.
* Escalate concerns about vehicles and staff driving capabilities to the Management team.
* Ensure all vehicles are supplied with equipment such as first aid kits, fire extinguishers (where required), reflective vests, reflective triangles, emergency contact numbers, torches and other required emergency supplies.
* Review and analyse all vehicle incidents with the Management team.
* Staff must apply normal hazard and risk management techniques in their day-to-day work and whenever driving any vehicle.
* Certain driving environments will present a greater hazard than others. staff must take the following actions to manage the risks:
* Do not drive unlicensed.
* Do not drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
* Conduct pre-use safety checks of vehicles (see below).
* Where possible, ensure participants being transported are not sitting behind the driver and are secured appropriately.
* Always follow all applicable road rules.
* Take regular breaks from continuous driving as required and at least one break every two hours.
* Do not drive 2WD vehicles in off-road environments.
* Report any vehicle accidents immediately to the police and Operations Manager, or another member of the Management team.
* Inform the Operations Manager when entering areas where there is an increased potential for vehicle immobilisation; and
* Report immobilisation events including breakdown and bogging as an incident in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Incident Management policy and procedure, to enable better information to be gathered regarding the suitability of vehicles and the training provided to staff.

When undertaking vehicle pre-use safety checks, staff will, at a minimum ensure the manufacturer's specified service schedule is being adhered to, inspect all external lights (grime can reduce their effectiveness by up to 40%), inspect wiper blades to ensure they clear the windscreen effectively, clean the windscreen and rear window, check all fluid levels - engine oil, transmission fluid, brake fluid, power steering fluid, windscreen washer fluid and the radiator coolant, check the radiator hose condition and that hose clamps are tight, check the tyre pressure/condition and ensure mirrors are present and oriented correctly for use.

By law, all occupants of a vehicle must always wear seatbelts. If a seat belt is starting to show signs of wear and tear, (frayed, not retracting back) the vehicle needs to be seen by an authorised repairer. For Branch Out Support owned vehicles (where applicable), staff should refer the matter to the Operations Manager.

Staff must not use a hand-held mobile telephone when driving. Staff must pull over and stop the vehicle’s engine before answering phone calls, making a phone call or reading/responding to texts.

Staff must drive at a speed that suits the road conditions, vehicle, weather, their driving experience and not exceed the applicable speed limit for the road used.

Staff should undertake a risk assessment to determine if a participant can be transported alone in a vehicle.

Participants with behaviours of concern should not be seated behind the driver and must wear a seat belt.

Staff must use accurate manual handling techniques when transferring mobility restricted participants or handling wheelchairs or equipment.

Vehicle incidents should be reported in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Incident Management policies and procedures.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# PARTICIPANT MONEY AND PROPERTY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that staff assisting a participant to manage their financial affairs, or who have access to a participant’s personal belongings, do so in an honest, transparent, accountable manner, and in the best interests of the participant.

This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards as set out in Schedule 1, Legislative References for NDIS Services.

NDIS documents relevant to this policy and procedure include:

* Financial Management Policy and Procedure.
* Participant Charter.
* Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure.
* Human Resources Policy and Procedure.
* staff Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure.
* Protecting Participants from Harm Policy and Procedure.
* Service Access Policy and Procedure.
* Compliance Policy and Procedure.
* Risk Management Policy and Procedure.
* Participant Incident Management Policy and Procedure.
* Participant Rights and Responsibilities Policy and Procedure.
* Service Delivery and Participation Policy and Procedure.
* Protecting Participants from Harm Policy and Procedure.
* Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure.

## Policy

Branch Out Support recognizes that there is a balance between aiding participants to manage their own financial affairs as much as possible and protecting the rights of people who may be vulnerable to exploitation. Direct responsibility for managing participants’ financial transactions should only be assumed by staff where the participant is unable to do so themselves.

Branch Out Support has processes in place to ensure any staff access to a participant’s money or

other property is managed, protected and accounted for. Any assistance provided should promote autonomy, choice and independence as well as protect the participant and Branch Out Support’s staff.

**Definitions**

**Financial abuse** - any act which involves misusing the money or property of a person with disability without their full knowledge and consent. This includes theft of money, pension cheques or property as well as misuse of a power of attorney.

## Procedures

**Participant Funds**

Staff must maintain confidentiality regarding participants’ funds and accounts. Any inquiries about a participant’s finances by third parties must be directed to the Director.

Where a staff member believes a participant cannot manage their own financial affairs with some

assistance from a support worker, they must refer the matter to the Director. A substitute decision maker may need to be appointed for the participant (see Branch Out Support’s Decision Making and Choice Policy and Procedure).

Where assistance in managing financial affairs is required, a Consent Form must be obtained from the participant and retained on their file. Participants’ money may only be used for the purposes intended by the participant. The arrangements for supporting participants to manage their finances must also be clearly set out in their NDIS Service Agreement and Support Plan, which are to be reviewed on at an annual basis.

Staff must support participants to keep their funds safe and not use a participant’s PIN or other access codes when assisting them to manage their finances. A participant’s funds may only be used for their benefit of that participant. Staff must not make personal purchases with the participant’s money or borrow money from the participant.

While staff may share, at no cost to themselves, in meals and other special occasions that are part of a participant’s activities, they must pay for their own meals when solely accompanying the participants. The use of a Companion Card is encouraged to cover the cost of entry into venues or entertainment for a staff member when they are accompanying a participant as part of their Support Plan. Where a Companion Card is not available or accepted, staff must not allow a participant or their family to pay for their entrance to any venues or entertainment. Such instances should be referred to the Director, who will determine who should pay for the entry cost.

Staff must not provide participants with financial advice or information, other than that reasonably be required under the participant’s NDIS or Support Plans.

More generally, in managing participants’ Support Plans, the Director will:

* Assist participants with budgeting and the purchase of goods and services from Branch Out Support and other services, ensuring that as fair as possible, that participants are receiving value for their money and that they are not taken advantage of.
* Monitor the appropriateness of fees levied by the organisation against participants.
* Check the transactions that occur within management of the participants' Plan against funds received and payments made.
* Monitor the appropriateness of signatories of participants' finances.
* Ensure invoices and statements are provided to participants on at least a monthly basis; and
* Collate and store all current or previous checked and audited accounts.

Participant Account:

* Participants who are over 18, shall have an account in a bank under their own name. All incomes and payments should be through this account, if applicable.
* The participants account that are managed by a staff member shall have at least two approved signatures for any withdrawal/receipts for each transaction and should have them available for further checks.
* It is always recommended to implement direct debit for transactions, if possible.

Unwanted or Incidental Payment or Withdrawal:

* Participant’s money kept in their premises should be the minimum amount.
* Signatories shall be able to identify whether the transaction is genuine or not and is for benefit of participants.
* Signatories are encouraged not to sign any blank withdrawal forms under any circumstances.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Workers and staff**

If workers are directly involved in participant’s fund management, are responsible for:

* Assisting participants with their money handling as well their purchases in a way that doesn’t involve any advantages for themselves and is all for participant’s benefit.
* Money withdrawal in emergency cases, money withdrawal should be requested, and all receipts shall be available for further information and check.
* Ensuring that money withdrawal is in the stated limit if they are a signatory.
* Ensuring that funds are kept in a safe area to be always accessible.
* Any discrepancy in the participant’s account shall be reported to the relevant manager.
* Creating a report on participants funds and present it to the relevant managers, regularly.

If workers are in any role that is related to monitoring participants funds, are responsible for:

* Checking participant’s fund on a regular basis.
* Providing reports to the participant’s families, if required.
* Ensuring that participant’s income is deposited correctly into their account.
* Prepare managerial reports to the Director related to all audits.
* Keeping records of all current and previously checked receipts.
* Checking whether the received funds and withdrawal funds are even.
* Checking the payments whether those are appropriate or not.

**Participant Property**

Branch Out Support does not accept liability for loss or damage to property, valuables or

essential participant equipment but staff members must take all reasonable care in the management of the participant’s belongings.

Where supports are delivered in the participants’ homes, reasonable wear and tear to equipment such as vacuum cleaners, toasters, kettles, etc., should be expected and it is the responsibility of the participant to meet such costs.

When supporting participants in the community, staff must ensure the amount of property the participant has with them is kept to a minimum and is kept securely by the participant (where possible) or supporting staff member when not in use.

**Reporting**

Suspected or alleged financial abuse must be reported in line with Branch Out Support’s Participant Incident Management Policy and Procedure. Where loss or damage to a participants’ property, including money, that may have involved Branch Out Support’s staff member or occurred during service delivery, it must also be reported in accordance with the Participant Incident Management Policy and Procedure.

Participants and their supporters also have access to Branch Out Support’s Feedback, Compliments and Complaints processes, should they wish to provide feedback or make a complaint regarding the handling of their finances or property.

Branch Out Support’s Director and staff members will not undertake the management of a participant’s personal funds.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# INFECTION CONTROL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to minimise the transmission of infections.

Branch Out Support has commitments to ensure infections are controlled and high levels of hygiene are maintained.

## Policy

Branch Out Support understands the organisation has a duty of care to protect the health and wellbeing of service users and to encourage other staff to protect themselves. Branch Out Support is committed to preventing and/or minimizing risk to employees, participants and visitors from infectious diseases.

**Definition**

**Infectious diseases** – known as communicable diseases; caused by organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. These micro-organisms can invade and reproduce in the human body, and then cause harmful effects. In healthcare settings, the main modes for transmission of infectious agents are contact (including blood borne), droplet and airborne.

## Procedures

Branch Out Support’s staff may encounter participants with infectious diseases in the course of their work.

All staff and volunteers will receive infection control training.

Branch Out Support staff and volunteers will follow infection control guidelines and procedures.

Notifiable diseases are diseases that must be reported to the Health Department by health practitioners. Any staff member that has a notifiable disease must not attend work until such time as they are cleared by their doctor. A list of notifiable diseases can be found at: <http://www.health.gov.au/casedefinitions>

All necessary equipment will be available for staff and volunteers.

Staff have a responsibility to educate service users about correct infection control procedures and should act as models of appropriate behaviour.

Hand hygiene and washing are considered the most important measures in infection control substances.

The following precautions should be taken:

* Gloves must be worn when handling blood and body substances.
* If a staff member has hand or other body lesions that cannot be covered, a medical practitioner should assess them before the staff member continues with work.
* If hands or other skin surfaces become contaminated with blood or body substances, they must be washed immediately or as soon as practicable.
* An alcohol hand rub may be used in emergency situations or when hand-washing facilities are limited or not easily accessible.
* Toothbrushes, razors and other personal items should never be shared.
* Towels and linen should not be shared and should not be used to clean or wipe down areas.
* Work areas need to be kept clean and safe.
* Everyone involved in preparing and servicing food should maintain high standards of personal hygiene, avoid injury to hands and ensure any open wounds are securely covered with a waterproof bandage.
* Clean and used linen should be transported and stored separately.
* Branch Out Support is aware of the potential hazards of sharps and other objects hidden in linen.
* Any clothing or linen soiled with blood (including menstrual blood), or body fluid should be handled with gloves and put into bags at the point where the soiling occurs.
* Used linen should not be rinsed or sorted in participant/service user areas.
* The staff responsible for sorting laundry should wear gloves.
* Staff should take care when handling blood and body fluids, as well as items or surfaces soiled with blood or body fluids, to protect exposed mucous membranes (mouth, eyes, etc.) and any areas of broken skin.
* Any part of the body splashed with blood or body fluid should be washed immediately.
* Disposable gloves should be worn whenever contact with blood or other body fluid is likely to occur.
* Body fluid spills (e.g., faeces, urine) can be cleaned with detergent.
* Blood spills can be cleaned with either detergent or chlorine solution and cold water depending on the risks involved.
* If a spill occurs on carpeted/soft areas, take care not to damage the area with chlorine. Detergent may be more appropriate.
* Arrange for the carpet to be shampooed with an industrial carpet cleaner as soon as possible.
* Branch Out Support will provide a fully equipped first-aid kit for staff who are trained in first aid.
* If a needle-stick injury occurs, the wound should be washed as soon as possible with water and soap as well as encouraging to let the wound bleed.
* The wound should then be dried and covered by a waterproof bandage.
* The injury should be reported to the manager and fully documented.
* It is recommended that the individual seeks a medical opinion about the risk of infection and should be referred to an appropriate service.
* Incidents relating to infection control or infectious diseases should be reported as per the Incident Management Policy and Procedure.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# CHEMICAL USAGE AND STORAGE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure the safety of staff, participants and other stakeholders when handling and storing chemicals. This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

The policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with Branch Out Support’s Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure.

## Policy

The health and safety of staff and participants is of paramount importance to Branch Out Support. Branch Out Support is committed to the health and safety of its staff, employees, volunteers, contractors, participants, families, carers and visitors.

Branch Out Support is committed to ensuring that when chemicals are introduced onto Branch Out Support premises that they are recorded, handled and disposed of appropriately.

## Procedures

The Operations Manager will ensure that all dangerous goods and hazardous substances are identified and clearly labeled or signed within the workplace.

The Operations Manager will ensure details of all dangerous goods and hazardous substances stored or handled in the workplace are entered into a Chemical Register.

The Chemical Register is to be reviewed when new or additional quantities of chemicals are introduced into the workplace, or when risk controls have changed, or are no longer effective.

The Operations Manager will ensure Safe Work Procedures (SWP) specific to the handling of dangerous goods and hazardous substances stored in the workplace are developed and implemented.

The Operations Manager will ensure a hard copy collection of current Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) from manufacturers and suppliers is maintained. The SDSs obtained for each chemical must be the authorised version prepared by the manufacturer.

The Chemical Register and associated SDSs are to be kept by the Operations Manager in a suitable location which is known and accessible to all staff in the workplace, as well as any other person who is likely to be exposed to the dangerous goods or hazardous substances.

The Operations Manager will ensure that all dangerous goods and hazardous substance storage containers are clearly labelled. The label on the container in which the dangerous good or hazardous substance is supplied must remain intact, legible and unaltered. The date of receipt of a hazardous substance should be marked on the original container to allow for monitoring of the age of the chemical and promote the use of older materials first.

Containers with unknown substances in them should be labelled ‘CAUTION DO NOT USE: UNKNOWN SUBSTANCE’ and then disposed of appropriately.

The Management team will ensure that appropriate emergency management provisions are available for use in the event of a chemical emergency. The emergency management provisions may include:

* Spill kits or containment equipment.
* Safe work procedures for spills or release of chemicals.
* Fire blankets/extinguishers.
* First aid kits.
* Eye wash stations/eye wash kits/emergency showers.
* Emergency shutdown procedures for equipment.
* Appropriate numbers of trained emergency wardens and first aiders.
* Appropriately displayed emergency contact details.

The Operations Manager will regularly refer to current SDSs to determine the health surveillance requirements for any staff exposed to hazardous substances in the workplace.

The Operations Manager and Compliance Coordinator will ensure that storage of chemicals is appropriate and only compatible substances are stored together (refer to SafeWork Australia Model Code of Practice: Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/managing_risks_of_hazardous_chemicals2.pdf>).

The Operations Manager will ensure that if the workplace is storing dangerous goods exceeding minor storage quantities, placards are provided as a visual warning.

The Operations Manager will ensure that all purpose-built cupboards, cabinets and refrigerators for storing chemicals are labelled to indicate the type and class of chemicals being stored in them. Additional warning signs may also be required, such as “DO NOT USE TO STORE FOOD.”

The Operations Manager will ensure that chemical waste is properly packaged, labelled and stored in suitable designated areas whilst awaiting collection. Labelling must include at a minimum the product identifier, workplace details and a hazard pictogram consistent with the correct classification of the chemical (if relevant).

The Operations Manager will ensure dangerous goods, hazardous substances and chemical waste are disposed of as per the SafeWork Australia Model Code of Practice: Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace.

The Operations Manager will ensure that arrangements are in place for consultation with staff in relation to chemical management. Consultation should occur in relation to the introduction of new chemicals to the workplace. The Operations Manager will identify and assess risks associated with chemicals at the workplace, decisions about control measures to be implemented and induction and training requirements.

Hazard identification and incident reporting relating to chemicals should be carried out in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Incident Management policies and procedures.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# MEDICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure Branch Out Support promotes duty of care principles that require staff to maintain an elevated level of competency when administering medication to participants.

## Policy

Management and administration of participant medications is important to Branch Out Support.

## Procedures

All participants requiring medication, regardless of the level of medication assistance required, must have a Medication Chart that contains a list of current medications (or any other pharmacy prescribed items) developed by a Medical Practitioner or Pharmacist, kept in their home and on their file. This list must be updated with any change in medications (or any other pharmacy prescribed items).

Staff must ensure they are never involved in the management of medication that is beyond their skills and training.

Staff must maintain up-to-date records of participants’ medication. NDIS Service Agreements and Support Plans must include clear instructions, agreed upon with the participant about what steps staff members will take to help the participant with their medication.

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of Branch Out Support’s participants, all staff members involved in assisting with medications must complete the necessary training before performing these duties. This includes training on medication administration, medication storage and handling, and the potential risks and side effects of medications. The training must be completed prior to any staff member being authorised to assist participants with medications and ongoing training refresher courses will be provided as needed, to ensure continued competence in this area. Branch Out Support’s commitment to the health and safety of the organisation’s participants requires that the organisation takes every precaution necessary to ensure that medications are administered safely and appropriately by Branch Out Support’s staff.

**Participants self-administering and managing their own medications**

Participants will manage and administer their own medication where appropriate. Where required, the Director will request written advice from a participant’s medical practitioner or guardian, notifying that a participant has appropriate training and skill to assume responsibility to manage their own medication. Participants will be provided with every opportunity to safely manage and administer their own medication. The self-administration and management of medications by the participant is properly supervised, documented and recorded by Branch Out Support’s staff.

**Participants unable to self-administer their own medications**

Staff members are to provide the participant with whatever physical or other assistance is necessary and appropriate to enable the participant to take their own medication, unless the participant objects.

Staff who provide medication administration services will be provided with appropriate training.

**Practical Requirements for the Administration of Medications**

All medication must be administered in strict accordance with the directions of the prescribing medical practitioner or the manufacturer’s directions as appropriate and recorded on the appropriate medication chart.

All participant medications are to be taken or administered from the Webster pack packages.

Medication is not under any circumstances to be given out or administered to a participant by another participant.

**Medication Records**

A medication chart is to be maintained for each participant prescribed medication. The chart is to be completed by the participant’s Medical Practitioner and updated whenever a medication is changed.

Where the Director (or delegate) has uncertainty about a participant’s medication, this should be immediately clarified with the medical practitioner or the dispensing pharmacist.

**Disposing of Medications**

All medications (including those self-administered and managed by participants) are to be returned to the pharmacist when ceased.

No ‘prescription only’ medication may be kept as Branch Out Support’s stock. Participant’s medication is to be returned to the participant at the end of the medication regime.

No medications are to be used by or for another participant or kept or allowed to accumulate with other participant’s medication for use sometime later as ‘stock’ medication.

**Reporting**

Incidents relating to medication such as misuse, missing dose, overdose, missing medication etc. should be reported in accordance with Branch Out Support’s incident management policies and procedures. A medication incident report must be filled out and the Director, family/guardian, pharmacy and the GP to be notified.

When administering medication, all support staff must comply with the following guidelines in the event of an incident involving medication. An incident report must be completed and submitted as soon as practicable to the office staff in any of the below instances:

* If there is an error or adverse reaction to medication administered, staff are to contact emergency services if appropriate. Staff are to contact the on-call staff member to advise them of the event and follow advice of emergency services until they arrive if applicable.
* If a participant refuses to take prescribed medication, staff members need to report to the on-call staff member and complete incident report.
* If a participant’s medication has not been administered by staff, this is classified as missed medication and staff need to contact the on-call staff member and complete the incident report.
* If a participant’s medication has been administered incorrectly in any way e.g., partially administered or incorrectly dated or expired medication administered an incident report must be completed.

**Participant Allergies**

Participant allergies are to be recorded in the participant file with their medication information. Staff are to familiarise themselves with the participants’ file and what to do should an allergic reaction occur.

**Medication Prompting**

The self-administration and management of medications by the participant is properly supervised, documented and recorded by Branch Out Support’s staff.

Staff must identify on the Support Plan that the participant requires prompting to self-medicate at specific times.

Staff must prompt the participant to self-medicate at the specified times and record each prompt in the participant’s Medication Prompt Record Log.

**Medication Administration**

Any staff involved in prescription of medication will be appropriately qualified and meet legislative and regulatory requirements. Staff involved in the storage, transportation, administration or prompting of medication will be trained and assessed as competent prior to undertaking any medication function. All medication must be administered in strict accordance with the directions of the prescribing medical practitioner or the manufacturer’s directions.

All medications are to be taken or administered from the original containers or packages in which they were originally dispensed. Where the participant is not able to administer their own medication, this must be administered by staff trained in medication administration and be dispensed only from the participant’s Webster pack.

When administering medication to a participant, staff must always comply with the seven rights of medication management:

* **Right person**: Check photographic identification on the medication packs or the participant’s file to ensure the medication is for the right person.
* **Right medication**: Check the name of the medication on the blister pack or medication packaging against the name on the medication chart for the person.
* **Right dosage**: For blister packs check that the right number of tablets or pills is contained in the blister. For other medication ensure the dose is clearly documented on the pharmacist’s label attached to the medication.
* **Right time**: Ensure medication is being taken at the prescribed time. Some medications will have further instructions that must be followed such as, to be taken with food, 30 minutes before food or after other medications.
* **Right route**: Ensure medication is taken, applied or inserted using the prescribed route.
* **Right record keeping**: All instances of medication administration must be recorded in the participants’ Medication chart.
* **Right to Refuse:** Any individual has a right to choose whether they want to take the medications or not, unless advised differently by the healthcare professionals.

**Prohibited Practices**

Staff must not administer any medication that is not prescribed in accordance with this policy, including ‘over the counter’ medication.

Staff must not administer medication to a participant who is clearly objecting in an informed manner, unless there is an approved protocol in place.

Staff must not administer medications to participants in a manner that is clearly for organisational convenience and not reflecting the preference or needs of the participant.

Staff must not leave medications of any type in an area where the medication is unsupervised and accessible to participants or unauthorised persons.

Branch Out Support’s staff, providing medication support will utilise Medication Prompt Record Log and Medication Administration Form.

**Storing Medication**

Medication for participants will be stored in an accessible container in a cupboard or on top of the fridge. Medications that require refrigeration must be stored in the fridge.

For participants who are at risk of mistaking medications, medication must be stored in a locked container, which can only be accessed by the participant’s staff.

Staff must adhere to the manufacturer’s instructions for storing medication.

Stored medication must be easily identified and differentiated and only accessed by appropriately trained staff.

When medication needs to be transported, it should be placed in an appropriate storage container where required.

All medications (including those self-administered and managed by participants) are to be returned to the pharmacist when ceased.

No ‘prescription only’ medication may be kept as Branch Out Support’s stock. Any participant’s medication is to be returned to the participant at the end of the medication regime.

No medications are to be used by or for another participant or kept or allowed to accumulate with other participants’ medication for use sometime later as ‘stock’ medication.

**PRN medications**

Background

The term PRN (from the Latin pro re nata: for an occasion that has born/arisen) is given to a medication which is to be taken ‘when required’ and is usually prescribed to treat short-term or intermittent medical conditions and not to be taken regularly, i.e., not given as a regular daily dose or to only be offered at specific times, e.g., medication rounds. Analgesics, occasional night-time sedatives and laxatives are amongst common examples of medicines prescribed in this way.

PRN prescribing is a highly advantageous and effective way for a participant to be treated if they are suffering from an acute or irregular condition. However, the participant is also open to abuse if the medication is used inappropriately or excessively. The PRN Protocol is used as a tool to support good practice. It is designed to both provide sufficient information to staff members and highlight any overlooked areas, to minimise risk and encourage appropriate use of PRN medication that is administered to participants.

To ensure the medication is given as intended, a specific plan for the administration of PRN medication must be made. Information on why the medication has been prescribed and how to give it should be sought from the prescriber, the supplying pharmacist and/or other healthcare professionals involved in the treatment of the participant.

As it is for occasional use only, the PRN medication should only be offered or provided at times listed on the Medication Administration Form. The participant should be offered the medication when they are experiencing the symptoms or as specified by the prescriber (as per the medication plan information provided by the prescriber).

**PRN as a chemical restraint**

If a participant has behaviours of concern, a functional behavioural assessment must be completed, regardless of whether chemical restraint is used.

If a medication is not correct, a psychiatrist or other specialist should review it.

If the participant has difficulty communicating, then a communication assessment will help find strategies that the person could use to communicate their issues.

When unsure if the use of medication is classed as a chemical restraint, Branch Out Support’s will seek appropriate advice.

A chemical restraint is a restrictive practice that involves the use of a medication or chemical substance (often referred to as psychotropic medications) for the primary purpose of influencing a participant’s behaviour. It excludes the use of medication prescribed by a medical practitioner for the treatment, or to enable treatment, of a diagnosed mental disorder, physical illness or condition.

There is evidence supporting some medications (e.g., Risperidone and Lithium) to manage some behaviours of concern. In general, however, the evidence for using medication to treat behaviours of concern (e.g., aggression in people with an intellectual disability) is not strong. It has the potential for long-term side effects. Also, many medications are not licensed for this particular purpose.

Two examples of when a medication requires authorisation as a chemical restraint are outlined below:

**Example 1:**

Chemical restraint – Authorisation is required.

Diazepam is prescribed (other than for a diagnosed anxiety disorder) to help a participant remain calm through the day to address and minimise the likelihood of behaviours of concern.

Not a chemical restraint - Authorisation is not required.

Diazepam is prescribed and used for the primary purpose of treating a physical illness (e.g., used as a muscle relaxant after seizure activity) and not as a chemical restraint.

**Example 2:**

Chemical restraint – Authorisation is required.

Sodium valproate is prescribed to stabilise a participant’s mood to decrease the likelihood of target behaviours and is used for the primary purpose of influencing the participant’s behaviour. This is classed as a chemical restraint.

Not a chemical restraint - Authorisation is not required.

Sodium valproate is prescribed to treat or minimise seizure activity for the primary purpose of treating a neurological condition. This is not classed as a chemical restraint.

High doses of psychotropic medications can cause side effects, including drowsiness, tardive dyskinesia (e.g., tongue protrusion, tremor and restless legs) and toxicity. A medical practitioner should regularly review medications and reduce doses where possible.

Taking a mix of different medications (e.g., benzodiazepines, antipsychotics, and antidepressants) can increase risks of side effects and toxicity in the participant. Although participants are often prescribed a combination of medications, it should be avoided where possible.

**Side effects**

There are five major categories of medications that may be used to alter behaviour; they are as follows:

* Antipsychotic medications: (e.g., Olanzapine or Risperidone) Used to treat psychosis, as they can reduce or eliminate delusions, hallucinations and thought disorders.
* Benzodiazepines: (e.g., Diazepam and Nitrazepam) Create a calming effect by depressing the central nervous system and can have a sedative or sleep-inducing effect. They are sometimes used to manage the side effects of other medications and seizures or to manage short term anxiety or sleep disturbance.
* Mood stabilisers: (e.g., Clonazepam and Lithium Carbonate) Mood stabilisers are used to treat mood disorders such as bipolar illness and depression, seizures and epilepsy. They are sometimes described as an anticonvulsant.
* Antidepressants: (e.g., Fluoxetine and Sertraline Hydrochloride) Used to treat depression, manage anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorders. May also be used to reduce sexual arousal in men.
* Hormonal medications: Hormonal medications have different purposes and effects for women and men:
* Women take hormonal medication (e.g., Mestranol) for contraception, gynecological issues or to suppress menstruation.
* Men take hormonal medications (e.g., Cyproterone Acetate) to deliberately reduce sexual arousal.

Information source: Restrictive Practices Guidance Chemical Restraint - fac.gov.au

Branch Out Support will access the Health Direct website to locate medication by searching using the medication name or active ingredient. The delegated staff member will:

* + - 1. Access the Health Direct website https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/medicines
			2. Identify the drug or active ingredient.
			3. Locate the list of side effects for the drug.
			4. Link to the participant’s information.
			5. Inform other staff members of the side effects.

**Records**

There must be appropriate medication records available for all PRN medication, including the outcome for the participant once the medication is taken.

Information about the medication will be identified and recorded using the following:

* + - 1. Medication Administration Record Chart.
			2. PRN Intake Checklist - staff will review the PRN against participant current medication and requirements.
			3. PRN Care Plan.
			4. Medication administration record chart.

PRN medication must be recorded on the MAR Chart stating the:

* Name of medication.
* Route (if other than oral.)
* Dose.
* Frequency.
* Minimum time interval between doses.
* Maximum number of doses in 24-hours.

**PRN Care Plan**

A specific person-centred care plan (PRN Care Plan) must be drawn up for every PRN medication prescribed to the participant. A copy of the plan will be kept with the participant’s medication records. To ensure clinical decisions are not made by non-clinical staff members, clear dosage instructions must be obtained for each PRN medication. For the dosage instructions to appear on the medication label and Medication Administration Form, the prescriber must first provide specific instructions on the prescription.

Note: If a variable dose is prescribed there should be clarity at the outset on how the decision to administer, for example, one or two tablets by non-clinical staff member will be made.

The response to medication should be clearly stated in the information gathered and a record of whether the medication is achieving the expected outcomes should be made.

Other medications that the participant may be taking must also be considered. For example, paracetamol is taken as a regular daily dose, and co-codamol (which also contains paracetamol) is prescribed as a PRN for breakthrough pain. The prescriber/pharmacist must provide specific instructions and raise awareness of the paracetamol content in both preparations. The appropriate direction should be provided for staff members. It is essential that administering staff members are educated to understand the requirements to give only one of the medicines within the required time limit.

**Reviewing PRN medication**

The PRN medication will be regularly reviewed to determine the ongoing need and effectiveness. A date for a formal review of the medication should be stated in the participant’s PRN Care Plan. However, feedback from the staff members is essential as part of the review process. Should staff recognise a need for a review before the stated review date, then the prescriber should be contacted.

The outcome of the review must be documented in the PRN Care Plan. Examples for staff members to consider are as follows:

* Is the expected outcome being achieved?
* Is the participant taking the PRN frequently?
* Should this become a regular medication?
* Should an alternative be considered?
* Is the participant taking the PRN very infrequently?
* Is there still a need for medication?

**Discontinuing PRN medication**

Should the prescriber authorise the medication to be stopped, then the following must take place:

* + Cross out the medication on the Medication Administration Form, writing the date it was stopped and by whom. The chart will be signed and countersigned by a second member of staff.
	+ Update the participant’s notes to reflect the change.
	+ Contact the general practitioner to confirm that the records at the practice reflect the change.
	+ Notify the supplying pharmacy that the medication has stopped, so it does not appear on the next Medication Administration Form.
	+ Monitor the participant in case symptoms reoccur, in which case a further review will be required.
	+ Dispose of remaining medication as per medication disposal procedure.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor progress of any improvements identified and where relevant feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.

# WASTE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure participants, Branch Out Support’s staff and any other person are protected from harm because of exposure to waste, infectious or hazardous substances generated during the delivery of supports.

This policy and procedure apply to all staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and standards. It should be read in conjunction with Branch Out Support’s Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure.

## Policy

Branch Out Support may generate waste that is unsafe to dispose of with general waste, as part of its delivery of NDIS support. Waste disposal is important for infection control. Distinct types of waste have different waste management procedures that need to be followed.

Staff involved in the management of waste and hazardous substances are trained to ensure safe and appropriate handling. This includes training on any protective equipment and clothing required when handling waste or hazardous substances.

**Definition**

**Bulk** – free flowing liquids normally contained within a disposable vessel or tubing, not capable of being safely drained to the sewer.

**Chemical waste** – waste generated using chemicals in medical, veterinary and laboratory procedures. Chemical waste should be classified in accordance with the step-by-step waste classification process in the ADG Code.

**Clinical and related waste** - waste resulting from medical, nursing, dental, pharmaceutical, skin penetration or other related clinical activity, being waste that has the potential to cause injury, infection or offence. It includes clinical waste; cytotoxic waste; pharmaceutical, drug or medicine waste; and sharps waste.

C**linical waste (including pathological waste)** – waste that has the potential to cause sharps injury, infection or offence. Includes sharps; human tissue (excluding hair, teeth and nails); bulk body fluids and blood; visibly blood-stained body fluids and disposable material and equipment; laboratory specimens and cultures; and animal tissues, carcasses or other waste arising from laboratory investigation or for medical or veterinary research.

**Cytotoxic waste** – material contaminated with residues or preparations containing materials toxic to cells, principally through action on cell reproduction. This includes any residual cytotoxic drug, and any discarded material associated with the preparation or administration of cytotoxic drugs.

**Generator of waste** – a person conducting work in a Branch Out Support workplace, including participants’ homes, where waste (for the purpose of this Policy and Procedure) is created.

**Hazardous waste** - waste arising from medical, nursing, dental, veterinary, pharmaceutical or similar practices, and wastes generated in clinical or other facilities resulting from the investigation or treatment of participants or research projects. Typical hazardous waste includes sharps, anatomical waste, clinical waste, chemically contaminated waste, infectious waste, human tissue, cytotoxic waste, pharmaceutical waste, animal waste, laboratory waste, chemical waste and radioactive waste (or items contaminated with this material such as paper towels, gloves, etc).

**Sharps** - any object capable of inflicting a penetrating injury, which may or may not be contaminated with blood and/or body substances. This includes needles and any other sharp objects or instruments designed to perform penetrating procedures.

## Procedures

Branch Out Support has a Waste Management Committee (WMC) that is responsible for implementing its Waste Management Plan. The WMC operates under specific Terms of Reference, includes representation from key areas of the business, other entities covered by the Waste Management Plan (WMP), Work Health and Safety and includes expertise in waste management.

Branch Out Support’s Waste Management Plan must be developed in consultation with other co-located services such as pathology services.

Branch Out Support Waste Management Plan must cover governance, including oversight by the WMC and clarity of responsibilities where there is more than one business included in the plan.

Branch Out Support’s Waste Management Plan must include procedures for segregating, collecting, transporting, storing and disposing of waste from various areas of the service; contract management, including contractor details, contact arrangements, auditing, safe operating and spill management procedures and relevant insurances and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) licences.

The Waste Management Committee must regularly review contractors’ reports regarding waste management and collection.

Branch Out Support must consider how to minimise waste, without compromising work standards, environmental outcomes or participant and staff safety.

Branch Out Support will ensure waste is effectively segregated through education and training to all staff who generate waste by:

* Reviewing Safety Data Sheets for waste classified as hazardous (e.g., hazardous chemicals and dangerous goods) to ensure that waste components are handled safely, including storage and disposal.
* Ensuring there is identifiable colour coding and labelling for waste and providing suitable containers and bags in appropriate locations.

**Clinical Waste**

Clinical waste classifications are determined by the level of infection not the type of waste item. Section 2.6.3 of the Australian Dangerous Goods (ADG) Code stipulates that:

* Medical or clinical wastes containing Category A infectious substances must be assigned to UN2814 or UN2900 as appropriate. Medical or clinical wastes containing infectious substances in Category B must be assigned to UN3291.
* Medical or clinical wastes which are believed to have a low probability of containing infectious substances must be assigned to UN3291. For the assignment, international, regional or national waste catalogues may be considered.
* Clinical or contaminated waste must be bagged, labelled and disposed of in an appropriate clinical waste bin (yellow base with yellow lid) prior to the collection date. Waste may need to be frozen prior to disposal to minimise decay.

UN3291 clinical waste can be packed in portable and mobile bins if each bin complies with each of the following requirements:

* Rigid construction with a lid that can be secured during transport.
* Designed to be easily handled or moved.
* Strong enough to withstand manual or mechanical handling and shocks and loadings normally encountered during transport, including trans-shipment between vehicles and warehouses.
* Able to retain liquid under normal conditions of transport.
* Easily identifiable by its colour.
* Correct labelling and symbols indicating that it contains UN3291 clinical waste.
* Portable and mobile bins containing UN3291 clinical waste must be marked, labelled and placed as required by chapters 5.2 and 5.3 of the ADG Code.

**Pharmaceutical Waste**

Pharmaceutical waste must be bagged, labelled and disposed of in an appropriate clinical waste bin (red base with red lid) prior to the collection date. Pharmaceutical waste bins must be lockable.

Pharmaceutical waste containers must be marked with the label PHARMACEUTICAL WASTE. No symbols or signage are required.

**Sharp Waste**

Sharps injuries are a common cause of getting infected by a blood-borne virus. The following basic requirements should apply if sharps are used or found:

* Whoever uses the sharp, disposes of it.
* Do not pass sharps by hand, use tongs.
* Use disposable sharps.
* Don’t put a used needle back in its cover, put it in a sharp’s container.
* Do not separate a needle from a syringe.
* Do not break, burn or manipulate a sharp.
* Do not clean re-usable sharps by hand, use a long-handled brush and tongs or, better still, a machine.
* Do not put hands or fingers into garbage bags, laundry bags, crevices etc. – use tongs; and
* Do not manually compress garbage bags – use tie–straps to lift and carry the bag.

Sharps must be disposed of in an appropriate sharp’s disposable container (yellow base with yellow lid). Sharps containers that are resistant to impact, penetration and leakage, are stable, have integrity of the handles/other carrying features and closure device, and have a capacity indicator (fill line) marked on the outside wall of the container must be used.

Staff MUST NOT use drinks cans, bottles or cardboard boxes to dispose of sharps – they may find their way into domestic waste and present a hazard to council workers and the public.

Staff should never try to retrieve anything from a sharp container or press down on the contents to make more room. Containers must be labelled and regularly emptied.

Sharps disposable containers must bear the Division 6.2 label.

**Waste Transport and Disposal**

Branch Out Support disposes of contaminated or hazardous waste using licensed contractors for the treatment, reuse, disposal, and/or destruction of hazardous waste.

Where the contractor is required to transport Infectious Substances, Branch Out Support may be required to supply them with transport documents that describe the dangerous goods being transported and appropriate emergency information for those goods. This requirement commonly applies to clinical waste identified by the numbers UN 2814 and UN 3291.

Branch Out Support must ensure that:

* The organisation’s Waste Management Plan sets out procedures for waste spills.
* Staff involved in spill management are trained in emergency procedures and handling requirements, including the use of spill kits.
* Spill kits are readily accessible and clearly labelled and mapped.
* The organisation stocks PPE and emergency spill kits appropriate to the waste handled.

Spill kits are disposed of with the relevant waste. Spill kits are restocked with the necessary components immediately after use, returned to their locations and regularly inspected for malfunctioning or missing components.

**Personal Protective Equipment**

Staff must use appropriate PPE, when necessary, that is suitable for the nature and degree of the identified hazard. For tasks involving hazardous chemicals, the PPE recommended in the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) must be used.

Staff must be trained in the proper selection, fitting, storage and maintenance of PPE. All waste collection contractors and staff must comply with all WHS and other legislative requirements, including wearing the appropriate PPE.

**Reporting**

Incidents relating to waste management and disposal should be reported in accordance with Branch Out Support’s Incident Management policies and procedures.

**Emergency Plan**

In case any issues or accidents occur relating to clinical waste or hazardous substances, the following plan is to be implemented.

During an emergency such as a body substances or hazardous substances, spills or where someone within the scope of the provider has been exposed to a biological substance that may pose a threat to the health of a person (biohazard), staff will follow the relevant applicable below steps:

* Evaluate the significance of the emergency scenario. The staff must evaluate the scenario and if he/she believes they cannot have a proper evaluation the staff member must contact the supervisor or line manager immediately.
* Contact local emergency if needed.
* Notify relevant staff (emergency nominated staff) immediately.
* Follow the nominated emergency staff order.
* Activate evacuation procedure if needed.

Following an emergency, the director or their delegate will:

* Record the incident.
* Notify any relevant regulatory body if applicable.
* Review the actions and evaluate their effectiveness.
* Follow the incident management procedure.

**Monitoring and Review**

Branch Out Support’s Management team will review this policy and procedure annually. This process will include a review and evaluation of current practices, Branch Out Support’s service delivery, the Incident Register. staff, participants and another stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. Feedback from service users, suggestions from staff and best practice developments will be used to update this policy.

Branch Out Support’s Continuous Improvement Plan will be used to record and monitor the progress of any improvements identified and where relevant, feed into Branch Out Support’s service planning and delivery processes.