



## 3.01 Service Access Policy

Practice Standard linked to: 3. Provision of Supports / 3.1 Access to supports

### Purpose

The aim of this policy is to ensure access to Muddy Puddles services is fair, equitable and transparent for all people within the target group, and based on relative need, available resources, and the mission of the service.

### Scope

This policy covers:

- non-discrimination regarding carers, assistance animals, disability aids and access to premises
- providing accessible information about the types of services available
- ensuring clients understand the service access and exit processes
- eligibility criteria, waiting lists and priority of access
- referrals to alternative support when services are not available
- seeking feedback from clients on their service access experiences
- monitoring and addressing unmet need and potential barriers.

### References

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwth)

### Related policies

Rights and Responsibilities Policy

Cultural Safety and Diversity Policy

Individual Planning and Service Coordination Policy

Feedback and Complaints Policy

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### Service Access Principles

To ensure access to Muddy Puddles services is fair, equitable and transparent for all people within the target group, Muddy Puddles must:

- provide accessible information for the target groups in a range of formats about the types of services available, and how eligibility will be determined for each service

- give clients options by providing information about all services available in the region, without showing bias towards Muddy Puddles services
- ensure adherence to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwth) regarding carers, assistance animals, disability aids, and access to premises
- maintain a process for determining eligibility that is robust and easily communicated, and based on the criteria in Appendix A, below
- ensure clients understand that eligibility does not equate to service entitlement, and that they may be placed on a waiting list if resources are limited, or referred to other services if Muddy Puddles is unable to meet the client's needs
- provide clear explanations when a service is not available from Muddy Puddles, along with information and support to access alternative services
- encourage clients to reapply if there is a change in the child's diagnosis or their circumstances
- seek input from families and carers regarding their access experiences, and make changes to the process where necessary
- monitor and address unmet need and potential barriers to access, including the availability of culturally appropriate information, modification of existing services and introduction of new ones.

## Service Access Process

### Entry to service

Information on the types of services provided by Muddy Puddles and how to access them must be made easily accessible to the target group through websites, social and print media and other advertising channels.

When seeking access to Muddy Puddles services, potential clients are to be invited to meet with a Muddy Puddles representative to discuss their needs (Service Planning meeting or Information Session). At or before this meeting, potential clients are to have access to:

- information on:
  - services in addition to Muddy Puddles that are available across the region, and how to access them
  - the types of services Muddy Puddles provides and the needs they are designed to meet
  - eligibility criteria for Muddy Puddles services
  - waiting list management
  - service fees
  - the exit process.
- Registration Form
- Service Planning Meeting Agenda
- Service Plan template
- supporting documentation related to Muddy Puddles policies and terms of service:
  - Rights and Responsibilities (flyer)
  - Feedback and Complaints (flyer)



- Privacy Statement (flyer)
- Child Protection Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Cultural Safety and Diversity Policy
- Community Participation and Social Inclusion Policy
- Valued Role Policy
- Individual Planning and Service Coordination Policy

Clients are to be advised at this meeting that children or young people who are wanting to enrol in outreach or group programs will undergo assessment to determine whether they are ready to participate in the chosen activity (if the child is not known to the service already):

- assessment may take place at the client's home or at the Centre, depending on the child's or young person's preference
- as a minimum, assessments will consist of two individual half-hour sessions with a therapist
- children or young people who are known to abscond may be found initially unsuitable for outreach activities
- children or young people with behaviours of concern may be found initially unsuitable for group activities
- in accordance with our Community Participation and Social Inclusion Policy, therapeutic services will be offered with the primary goal of enabling the child or young person to participate in their desired activity
- when participation is agreed, assessment will continue during the term of the activity and if at any time a therapist determines that a child or young person is not benefiting from the activity or the progress of other participants is being disrupted by behaviours of concern, the child or young person may be withdrawn and offered alternative services.

### Registration

If a potential client expresses a desire to register with Muddy Puddles, they are to be asked to provide Muddy Puddles with documentation confirming NDIS funding, or if not an NDIS participant, either provide documentation confirming the child's diagnosis or work with Muddy Puddles to obtain a diagnosis.

The client is to be informed within 5 working days of the outcome of their application for registration. For successful applicants, clients are to be asked to sign a Service Agreement detailing the services to be delivered and the expectations of both parties. If the client has a NDIS Plan that is managed by NDIA a service booking is to be set up in the My Place portal. If the client has a NDIS plan that is managed by a plan manager, details of the plan manager must be provided to Muddy Puddles for invoicing purposes.

If Muddy Puddles is unable to provide the necessary services or the application does not meet the eligibility criteria (see Appendix A), every effort is to be made to support the family by identifying alternative service providers and assisting with referrals.

### Waiting List Management

Where a child is found to be eligible for and able to benefit from Muddy Puddles services but no places are currently available, the client is to be asked whether they would like to be placed on a waiting list. The waiting list for Muddy Puddles services is to be maintained as follows:



- the client must be informed that management of the waiting list will not be on a first-come/first-served basis, but will be based on relative need and prioritised in accordance with Appendix B below
- the client must be informed of the length of the waiting list, and given an estimate of how long it may be before a place becomes available and when they will next be contacted
- all clients on the waiting list must be contacted on a regular basis to determine whether they are still actively seeking Muddy Puddles services or can be removed from the list
- the waiting list is to be reviewed each month to determine whether vacancies are likely to arise, and also reviewed each time a child exits a service
- if a vacancy arises, the next client on the waiting list for that service is to be contacted and given 7 days to accept or reject the vacancy
- a report on the status of the waiting list is to be prepared each month and presented to the Muddy Puddles Board for review; a long waiting list indicates unmet need, and the Board may wish to consider applying for additional grants and/or establishing new services or extending or modifying existing services.

### Service Exit Process

The following procedures are to be carried out if a client informs Muddy Puddles that they wish to be removed from Muddy Puddles services:

- the client must be asked to provide an exit date
- if appropriate, the client is to be provided with information on other services in the area and assisted with referrals
- the client should be asked to provide feedback on the services they have received, including their experiences with accessing the services, and reasons for leaving; feedback is to be processed in accordance with the Muddy Puddles Feedback and Complaints Policy
- if appropriate, and with consent to release information, the child's case notes are to be transferred to any new providers
- remaining locked NDIS funds are to be released by ending the Service Booking after payment has been received for any services delivered (or the client refunded pro-rata for services paid in advance)
- outstanding charges to be invoiced and payment collected
- the client records must be updated
- the waiting list must be updated, and the vacant place reallocated if there is a client waiting.

### Versions and approval

Version	Change	Approved by	Date Approved	Review Date
V2.0	Update to new template; align with NDIS Practice Standards	Board	August 2019	August 2021
V1.0		Board Chair	May 2017	May 2018



## Appendix A: Eligibility Criteria

For a child or young person to be registered to receive Muddy Puddles services, the following criteria must be met:

1. The child or young person has been assessed by Muddy Puddles as having a disability or developmental delay and is able to benefit from Muddy Puddles services.
2. The child's or young person's condition does not present an unacceptable safety risk for other children using the service or for Muddy Puddles team members.
3. The child or young person must either be eligible for funding or qualify for a subsidised place in a program, or the family is able to pay the full costs of services.
4. Muddy Puddles has a place available or a realistic waiting list (less than 3 months).



## Appendix B: Prioritisation of Waiting Lists

The following factors are to be considered when prioritising clients on the waiting list:

- The urgency and/or complexity of need of both the child or young person and the family
- The extent to which the condition may hinder the child's or young person's full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others
- The age of the child and the urgency of early intervention
- The vulnerability of the child or young person to further deterioration
- The likely effect of the service provision in assisting the carer to maintain their caring role
- The likely effect of the service provided in assisting the child or young person to attain their goals, for example, reduced risk of admission to residential care or maintaining quality of life in the community
- Availability of resources.

Questions to be asked when prioritising include:

- How old is the child? (under 7 = higher priority)
- How severe is the disability or delay? (at least 2 areas of functional delay; more severe = higher priority)
- How is the family coping? (more complex family needs = higher priority)
- How vulnerable is the child or young person?

Additional need-specific questions may be asked by individual allied health professionals to manage caseloads.

Provision of services is to be scaled based on prioritisation:

**Priority 1:** Weekly or fortnightly services; longer term of service delivery

**Priority 2:** Fortnightly or monthly services to achieve specific goals within a block period, with 'homework' to be done in the child's or young person's natural settings; with or without the assistance of individual support person or therapy assistant

**Not eligible for service:** General information and referral to other services.

