

## 1. Introduction

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### 1.1 COMMITMENT AND AIMS

Hills Community Options Inc. (HCO) is committed to the pursuit of an equal society which values diversity and the unique contribution to the community of persons with an intellectual disability. We aim to maximize the development of the potential of our client group and their participation in an inclusive community through:

- working alongside and enabling people to achieve their preferences and goals in relation to personal and social well being;
- contributing to a socially just society through the promotion of the ideals of equality, diversity, human dignity and worth and accessibility; and
- provision of a learning culture in order that optimum potential is possible

This is achieved by:

- upholding people's moral and legal rights and interests;
- working toward equitable access and involving others in the process;
- providing support as necessary to individuals so that independence and their choices are attainable;
- raising community awareness about the strengths and abilities of our client group;
- promoting policies and practices that achieve outcomes for our clients;
- engaging in actions that enhance social change;
- promoting self advocacy;
- actively engaging in research and development, resulting in best practice; and
- providing for individual lifestyle options.

HCO subscribes to the principles and aspirations of the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *United Nations Rights of the Disabled Person*, the national disability standard of *Protection of Human Rights and Freedom from Abuse*, *The Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care* and the SA Government's *Information Sharing Guidelines*.

## 1.2 PURPOSE

This *Code of Ethics* expresses the values and principles which are integral to the organization and are intended to assist all employees and Board members to act in an accountable and ethical way at all times and in all circumstances.

In their employment capacity, all persons are required to abide by this *Code* and to indicate an understanding of the intent and content expressed in the *Code*.

The purpose of the Code is to:

- clearly demonstrate the values and principles which underpin our practice and support;
- provide a guide and standard for ethical conduct and accountable service;
- provide the opportunity for honest, conscious reflection and decision making;
- act as a basis for investigation of formal complaints about unethical conduct; and
- assist employees to identify and act in accord with the professional obligations of their role.

## 2. Values and Principles

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In order to achieve its aims, HCO is committed to the following seven basic values:

- **Human dignity and worth**, whereby all persons are regarded as whole complete individuals with positive attributes and characteristics.
- **Integrity**, whereby all aspects of our service are undertaken with honesty and openness.
- **Social equality**, in that we both acknowledge and strive for the recognition of the inherent worth of all individuals and their right to an equal footing in the society.
- **Community inclusion**, a two way process, whereby we support individuals to take their rightful place in society and to promote the values and contributions that persons with an intellectual disability bring to the community.
- **Diversity**, which constantly applauds difference and the enhancement such difference brings to all.
- **Citizenship**, which is a legal right and carries a legal and moral responsibility for our own actions and those of our clients
- **Self determination**, whereby all individuals are afforded the supports necessary to make reasoned and informed choices relevant to their lives.
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In undertaking our roles within the organization we will always act with *integrity* in promoting *human dignity and worth*, within an *inclusive community* that applauds *diversity* and gives opportunity for *self determination* and the enjoyment of *citizenship* in an *equal society*.

## **2.1 Value: Human Dignity and worth**

All individuals are unique and have a moral right to well being and self fulfillment.

### **2.1.1. Principles**

All workers show:

- respect for the human dignity and worth of others, by their attitude, actions and words;
- consideration of others, in the manner that they undertake their roles;
- concern for individual well being, autonomy and personal/social responsibility;
- respect for the identity and independence of persons with disabilities; and
- acknowledging that all people are different and therefore require different approaches and supports.

## **2.2 Value: Integrity**

HCO values honesty, reliability and impartiality in service delivery.

### **2.2.1 Principles**

All workers demonstrate:

- a proper Duty of Care to clients, in accord with organisational policy and practice;
- transparent operations pertinent to financial, governance and client matters;
- the upholding of confidentiality and privacy in respect of clients and staff, by not divulging any information outside of the particular program in the organisation;
- active non-disclosure of personal and client records and information in accord with the Privacy Act and the SA Government's *Information Sharing Guidelines (ISG)*;
- promotion of a high quality of professional conduct at all times, behaving with dignity and responsibility and in accord with policies of professional behaviour; and
- a restraint from the imposition of personal values, views and preferences on clients.

## **2.3 Value: Social equality**

Every society has a responsibility to pursue social equality in order to provide the maximum benefit to all members of the society and to protect its vulnerable members from injustice and an inequity in the distribution of resources.

### **2.3.1. Principles**

All workers ensure that:

- distributive justice and fairness is promoted, with respect to access to resources and supports in line with others in the community;
- barriers to choice and opportunity for clients are reduced, through implementation of Person Centred Planning;
- incidences of inequity or inequality are addressed;
- the exercise of rights is always possible, with the appropriate level of support and informed input;
- social structures that impede equality and justice are challenged; and
- action is supported that promotes social well being and advocates for equality of resources.

## **2.4 Value: Community Inclusion**

HCO acknowledges that all persons with a disability have the same rights of access to and participation in the wider community and to interact with all manner of persons in the community. There is both a legal right in terms of access and a moral right in terms of acceptance and participation.

### **2.4.1 Principles**

All workers ensure that:

- the rights of our clients are expressed by effective access to all aspects of community that are consistent with client choice;
- clients are supported in developing behaviours that underpin independent participation;
- effective networks and alliances are developed with community groups, business, and other agencies which support increased inclusion;
- participation in disability specific groups, in particular for those clients in accommodation support, is reduced and kept to a minimum; and
- appropriate support is given to clients in order that they are successfully included in community activities, groups and pursuits.

## **2.5 Value: Diversity**

HCO values difference and the benefits that variant contributions, skills and thinking bring to the community and the organization, and is committed to promoting diversity in all of its activities.

### **2.5.1 Principles**

All staff will consciously:

- value and accept others on the basis of their personhood, and not expect them to fit a particular category of person;
- acknowledge the positive aspects of being different;
- commit to and promote cultural awareness whereby all persons from any background are accepted and included; and
- act to dispel any forces opposing diversity, whether actively or in a passive mode.

## **2.6 Value: Citizenship**

HCO acknowledges that persons with disabilities are legitimate citizens and have both a right and a responsibility to be accepted and acknowledged.

### **2.6.1 Principles**

All staff will ensure that:

- a responsibility the one to the other is maintained;
- impartiality is actively pursued and demonstrated in all aspects of our work;
- all clients recognize and enjoy their place as equal citizens in the community;
- they accept accountability for their actions and assist clients to do likewise;
- clients are supported to understand the need to act according to the law; and
- clients are given the opportunity through various means, such as involvement in Client Reference Committees, suggestions to local Council, to have their say on matters pertinent to their community.

## **2.7 Value: Self Determination**

HCO is committed to maximizing the choice and control of persons with a disability over their own lives and supported to make informed decisions relevant to their current and future situation.

### **2.7.1. Principles**

All staff will ensure that:

- a priority of client interests in all situations is both ascertained and adhered to;
- informed consent is gained for matters relevant to the client's life and lifestyle subject to the provisions of the SA Government's *Information Sharing Guidelines (ISG)*;
- individuality is fostered, but not at the exclusion of others;
- the goals of each individual's Person Centred Plan are attained and the process implemented;
- where clients have a limited capacity to comprehend or grant informed consent, information is provided in accord with the client's level of understanding, whilst restricting their freedom of decision and action as little as possible;
- if in the event that informed consent cannot be granted by the client, informed consent from a family member, advocate or other empowered person, in accordance with relevant state legislation, is given on the client's behalf; and
- in situations where self determination is limited because clients may be involuntary, support to assist in negotiating alternatives and other services will be provided.

## **3. Responsibilities To Clients**

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HCO at all times will maintain a *Priority of Client Interest* and will safeguard the rights and interests of clients, whilst remaining aware of any *Potential Conflicts of Interest* which may affect their ability to exercise professional discretion and unbiased judgement.

In addition, HCO will respect the legal right of clients to a relationship of trust, ensuring:

- *privacy and confidentiality* of their information and the responsible use of information subject to the provisions of the SA Government's *Information Sharing Guidelines (ISG)*;
- provision for *safe and secure records*, with access to such information by clients or their advocate, and
- the obtaining of relevant consent when sharing information across agencies subject to the provisions of the SA Government's *Information Sharing Guidelines (ISG)*;

## **4. Responsibilities To Colleagues**

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### **4. RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES**

All workers will relate to other HCO staff and staff from other agencies with respect, integrity and courtesy acknowledging the benefits of differing perspectives and viewpoints.

Co-operation and the ability to both value and utilize individual expertise and knowledge to enhance the team and improve overall service delivery are encouraged and expected.

Any suspected or confirmed misconduct, incompetence, unethical behavior or negligence will be addressed through the organizational complaints/ workplace grievance procedures.

Staff will consider carefully the potential for professional conflicts of interest where close personal relationships, social or sexual relationships with colleagues are contemplated or existing.

Management of HCO will undertake specific ethical responsibilities in respect to:

- the encouragement of non-discriminatory policies and practices;
- arranging for appropriate mentoring / supervision of staff;
- ensuring that all staff receive ongoing professional education and training; and
- providing for debriefing and crisis intervention for staff.

All workers will uphold the ethical principles and responsibilities of this Code of Ethics and any attempt to resolve conflict between ethical principles and organisational policies and practices should be consistent with the values and principles of this Code.