

CLIENT CARE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Breakaway Toowoomba Inc is committed to providing high quality and effective services. Breakaway Toowoomba Inc aims to understand client's needs and to provide services that meet those needs. Through its communication with clients, families, organisations and the general public Breakaway Toowoomba Inc intends to foster a two-way discussion on its services and how they should be provided.

All new staff members are to be given a copy of this policy as part of the induction process and clients and families will receive a copy as part of their information pack.

PROCEDURE

1. General

1.1. Staff

Staff will be polite and helpful at all times. Staff will be willing to listen to clients and will have access to relevant information enabling them to respond to client enquiries. Staff will respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of the client. Staff will provide accurate information and advice and will keep clients updated on any matter which takes some time to resolve.

Staff will treat members of the public professionally and courteously at all times and will not enter into heated discussions or arguments with members of the public. When making home visits all staff will carry official identity cards and show them to clients on request.

1.2. Office

The Breakaway Toowoomba Inc office will display opening hours clearly and these opening times will also be publicized in our Client Handbook and newsletter. The office is fully accessible to people with disabilities, including access to meeting and interview rooms, toilets etc.

Up-to-date information and advice about Breakaway Toowoomba Inc, its policies and procedures and about other agencies is available at the office. Within the reception area of the office, leaflets are available on a range of relevant subjects, including the Association's complaints procedure.

1.3. Visitors

Visitors will be acknowledged on arrival. Visitors to the office will not be kept waiting for long periods; visitors will be greeted within two minutes of arrival and will be seen within 5 minutes if they have an appointment. Visitors without an appointment will receive an answer to their enquiry, or an appointment at a later date, within 10 minutes. Appointments can be made to see either the Executive Officer or any of the Supervisors. This will either be through a home visit or an office interview. Appointments will be arranged within 5 working days of the request. Urgent matters will be attended to the same day. Private interview rooms are available at the Breakaway Toowoomba's office.

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1.4. Appointments

All appointments will be made at a mutually convenient time and date. Where a person through illness or adverse circumstances is unable to attend an appointment at Breakaway Toowoomba's office and would like to speak to a member of staff, a home visit will be made. If, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, a wait for an appointment is unavoidable, the client will be offered refreshments and an apology made.

If an appointment has to be cancelled by a member of staff due to, for example, illness then the client will be notified as soon as possible and a new appointment made.

1.5. Interviews/Meetings

All staff will be well prepared for meetings or interviews with clients and have relevant information and/or records to hand. A suitable room will be made available for all interviews and meetings with clients. Notes of the interview will be taken and a record kept of all meetings.

This will include a written account of the issues raised, recommendations, actions to be taken and any time scales agreed. Where there is a need to confirm an interview in writing this will be done within 5 working days of the interview. Where minutes of a meeting are to be circulated they will be dispatched within 10 working days of the date that the meeting is held.

In instances where language difficulties are a problem, a translation or interpreting service will be used to enable clients to express their views or needs accurately and fully.

1.6. Confidentiality

All interviews, correspondence and personal information will be kept in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. Staff will follow the Breakaway Toowoomba's confidentiality policy, a copy of which can be made available upon request.

Clients are entitled to have access to information about Breakaway Toowoomba. This covers not only personal information but also more general information about Breakaway Toowoomba and its activities. Breakaway Toowoomba has an access to information policy and procedure which can be made available on request.

2. Communications

2.1. Telephone calls

All calls will be answered as quickly as possible. All calls will be greeted by the name of the person answering. Calls will be answered initially by the Administration Officer who will establish the nature of the enquiry and either deal with the enquiry or pass the call to the relevant staff member.

If the relevant staff member is not available the call will either be diverted to another staff member who may be able to help or a message will be taken and passed onto the relevant member of staff who will then contact the client within 5 hours.

An answering machine will be in operation providing an alternative for callers who do not wish to hold at busy times. Messages are checked every morning and messages will be responded to within 5 hours if a return call is required or 10 days if a written response is required

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Staff will endeavor not to pass calls onto someone else unless specifically asked to do so; where it is necessary to pass on a call an explanation will be given to the client.

If any enquiries cannot be dealt with straight away a contact number will be taken and the client called back when the information required has been found or at a mutually convenient time. If the client does not have a phone he or she will be contacted in writing within 5 working days.

2.2. Email

Each e-mail requiring a response should be replied to within at least 24 hours and preferably within the same working day. If the email is complicated, then an email will be sent to the sender, acknowledging and notifying them that their email has been received and that an answer/reply to their email will be provided within 5 working days or sooner.

2.3. Out of Hours Service

When the office is closed the answering machine will be in operation. The phone messages will be clear, concise and up-to-date. Incoming messages will be taken daily, first thing in the morning. Messages which require a return call will be dealt with within 5 hours; where a written response is required this will be sent within 5 working days.

Special arrangements are in place for emergencies which occur outside office hours. Information on these arrangements is contained in the answering machine message. Clients are also given details of how to contact the after -hours number in the Client Handbook.

2.4. Letters

All correspondence from clients to Breakaway Toowoomba will receive an acknowledgement or reply within 10 working days. If for any reason a reply is likely to take longer the client will be informed and a reason will be given.

Requests for forms or general information will be dealt with within 3 working days of the request Letters will be clear, informative and written in plain English, and will indicate the writers name and who to contact to discuss the matter further.

2.5. Other Publicity

Breakaway Toowoomba will make freely available to clients a Client handbook, leaflets and other information about policies and procedures, and a newsletter. These will be easy to read and understand, will provide information about Breakaway Toowoomba's activities and will be written in plain English.

3. CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

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Breakaway Toowoomba provides opportunities for clients to influence the way in which our services are delivered. We provide a range of mechanisms, including surveys, meetings, written and telephone contact, elected representatives, committees and panels, in order to involve as many clients as possible in a way appropriate to them.

Clients are able to be involved in all reviews of this and other Breakaway Toowoomba policies. Breakaway Toowoomba will regularly seek the views of customers on our service delivery and will ask clients about their experiences dealing with the Breakaway Toowoomba. Services provided by Breakaway Toowoomba will be planned around what we find out from the involvement of clients and we will use what clients tell us to monitor our performance.

3. COMPLAINTS

If a client feels that the standards set out in this policy and associated documents have not been met they should complain using Breakaway Toowoomba's complaints' procedure. This is available in plain English from Breakaway Toowoomba's office and is also in the Client's Handbook.

Approved (Executive Officer) David BeaDate 12.04.09

Approved (Chairperson) Ron DennisDate 12.04.09