

North West Residential Support Services Inc.
Policies & Procedures
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE
P-01-01/01/15

UNDER REVIEW

NWRSS provides disability support to people living in service-provided shared homes and people in private tenancy arrangements. It helps people find, create and maintain homes. It also helps people explore, choose, develop and retain lifestyles of their choice.

Our primary focus is helping people overcome or manage disability; our broader focus is to help develop inclusive communities.

Rather than the traditional, hierarchical structure of department silos dropping and spreading from line managers, NWRSS has grown an organic circular structure in response to the expressed needs of the people being supported and the staff who support them.

People need organic support systems that alter in response to their changing lives. The flexibility in our organic structure allows us to remain constantly relevant to those we support, and to counteract the systemic societal changes that work against their well-being.

The General Manager, Direct Service Manager and Operations Manager form a **Leadership Circle** around our **Development Pool** of support staff. The **Leadership Circle** works closely as a group to uphold the philosophical base that underpins the organisation. Samples of the fundamental beliefs that make up our philosophy can be found throughout our website. One of the most important is the belief that the people we serve are at great risk of being seen as less valuable than others and subsequently treated in ways that reduce their dignity, development, competence, wealth, health and even the lengths of their lives.

Each person in the **Leadership Circle** can take over any aspect of each other's positions at immediate notice if necessary.

Workloads are moved between the General Manager, Direct Service Manager and Operations Manager when necessary, such as when taking on new support contracts, taking holidays or responding to periodic external workload demands in areas such as; occupational health and safety, funding agency surveys and statistics, worker's compensation rehabilitation management and training. If, for instance, the General Manager is developing and delivering training a portion of his workload will be shifted to others for the duration of this exercise. If the Direct Service Manager is setting up a new and challenging support contract the others will shoulder some extra work until this

is settled. This keeps the people in these positions highly attuned to the nature of each other's workload and responsibility. Many an operational adjustment has been influenced by this exposure.

The Direct Service Manager has the authority to hire support staff and increase support arrangements prior to discussion with the General Manager.

Each person in the **Leadership Circle** can negotiate workload and time off to accommodate family, health and social needs.

The flexibility in this structure either becomes the solution to problems or provides comfortable space and time to find solutions.

The people in the **Leadership Circle** work from home-based offices with the provision of a vehicle and the electronic equipment of their choice. Each receives a small office overhead allowance.

NWRSS has no shop-front and associated overheads. We are repeatedly told by the people we support and their support staff that they don't like the complicated, distancing and frustrating reception-interfaces and communication systems that services are adopting from the commercial sector. Anyone in the **Leadership Circle** can be contacted directly by mobile, hardline or email. Each will refer callers to the right person in the group or other contacts.

The **Leadership Circle** draws accountancy, invoicing, payroll and secretarial services as needed from accountancy firm, Lawson Hyland. This includes keeping the organisation's financial records for the Board of Management and providing monthly reports specifically designed for lay readers. The independence of the external accountancy service provides safeguards at all levels and the security of an unbiased approach and opinion for the Board of Management.

Industrial workplace advice and corporate services are purchased as needed from Quartz Consulting. Staff training and human resources advice is purchased from the Real Learning Experience.

Meeting space is hired on an as-needed basis from a variety of sources including community clubs, a community house, libraries and community health centres.

The Board of Management provides a **Governance Circle** that surrounds the entire operation made up of people with direct personal or family experience of disability, disability sector work histories, and people with commercial business backgrounds with an interest in social justice and disability support.

This model frees the **Governance Circle** of direct management tasks and allows them to concentrate on the qualitative aspects of direct service delivery and the sharing of time with the people being supported.

Board meetings are held over a meal and formally include places for people receiving support, and staff members who are encouraged to make unedited presentations to the Board at these meetings.

Most of the direct-care support staff within the **Development Pool** have the skills and knowledge to take up many of the elements that make up management and supervisory tasks and responsibilities. The people in the **Leadership Circle** extract, quite specifically by the hour, the assistance they need from this pool. They draw, at their discretion, from support staff for assistance that is categorised into three skill and responsibility tiers.

The task only tier involves calling on support workers to carry out tasks such as:

- Being asked to go to a house and check the supply of forms, taking them to be copied and returning them
- Being asked to shop for an item for a shared home

These tasks only touch on team dynamics and individual worker considerations in direct relation to the task. There is nothing inherent in the tasks that require interaction with teams and individual workers beyond common courtesy.

The task plus limited responsibility tier calls on support staff to carry out tasks that might involve team dynamics and individual worker considerations.

Examples would be:

- Being asked to go to a shared home to read back through a resident's health diary to find specific information; asking support team members about this information, and reporting the information back to the **Leadership Circle**
- Being asked to consult each support team member about colour and brand preferences in preparation for purchasing an item for a home and reporting the information back to the **Leadership Circle**

Response to teams and individuals is not part of this level and must only be done through the **Leadership Circle**.

The task plus full responsibility tier calls on support staff to carry out a task and may include managing team dynamics and individual worker considerations such as:

- Being asked to chair life style-planning team meetings with all of the complications that come with this task
- Being asked to go into a home to see if individual communication boards are being used correctly, and gently engaging the person using the board and team members in extending its use

This tier entails being able to carry and teach the reasoning behind the beliefs that underpin the service, and modelling the required relationships, be it staff to staff or staff to client. An understanding of service limitations is also required.

The **Leadership Circle** draws together groups from the **Development Pool** to train and work together at various levels for various reasons such as, but not limited to, intensive support, palliative care, recreation, supervisory aspirations etc.

There is a time sheet for task delegation and meeting participation. Payment is in accordance with the task tier.

This model reduces the drain that silos, with their propensity to gather non-programmatic issues, make on limited funds and resources. It strengthens the emphasis on the people being supported. In this model there are no political networks for promotion or gaining favour and no place for political and non-programmatic agendas. The **Leadership Circle** has to choose carefully and achieve the required results to lighten their loads. Support staff have to learn and deliver the goods to remain an active and sought after member of the **Development Pool**. Progress for all parties is on merit alone. By only paying for what is needed at the time, funds are saved and directed back to enrich the lives of the people being supported.

Job comfort for the **Leadership Circle** is directly reliant on how well they train, mentor and use people from the **Development Pool**.

Most importantly this organic structure provides sector pathways for gathering the skills and direct experience required for supervisory and managerial roles. It also offers strong and protected succession pathways for the organisation.

The organisation's website is not a promotional website. It has been developed as an informational and educational resource for the people being supported, their families, support staff and the public. It transparently carries all of the organisation's foundation documents with no intellectual property restrictions.

www.nwrss.org.au