

# **VALID -The Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc**

## ***Individualised Funding – Principles & Implementation Guidelines***

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This document outlines the principles adopted by VALID for the flexible use of individualised funding by people with an intellectual disability. Key implementation guidelines needed to implement these principles are included.

Individualised funding is defined as funds allocated to an individual, which can be used flexibly to support the person live as satisfying a life as possible. Funding is controlled by the person with a disability. If a person has limited decision making capacity, others formally responsible for their well-being will make decisions on their behalf, in consultation with the person as much as possible. When needed, support is provided by family, carers, advocates, friends and professionals.

Creative and innovative ways of meeting the person's needs and enhancing their quality of life are sought using individualised funding. Information, planning and support services need to be available as required. Possible sources of support include informal networks, community groups and the formal disability service sector. Individualised funding is an option that should be available to everyone receiving Government financial support as long as adequate supports and safeguards are in place. If the person with a disability receiving funding has reduced capacity to make decisions, the person or persons responsible need to be identified and accountable. Planning and review mechanisms are needed for all individualised funding users.

Principles underpinning individualised funding and key implementation guidelines are outlined below.

### **Principles**

Principles for the use of individualised funding have been drawn from the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006), Victoria's Disability Act 2006 and the *Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012* (Department of Human Services, 2002). These principles are important because individualised funding is not just a funding mechanism. Individualised funding promotes the independence and well-being of the person concerned. The key principles for each person are:

- Respect for the inherent dignity.
- Individual autonomy and independence.
- Self-determination and choice.
- Opportunities to realise individual capacity for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.
- Opportunities to participate in the social, economic, cultural, political and spiritual life of society.
- Adequate resources being available to meet needs.

## **Implementation guidelines**

Detailed processes to implement individualised funding for people with an intellectual disability are being developed in Victoria. VALID has identified the key features of individualised funding projects, which need to be included to ensure that the principles outlined above are enacted.

### **Support and information**

- The person with the disability is supported to make their own decisions as much as possible.
- Self-advocacy and advocacy training is available. Ongoing support is available as required by the person, their family and others who represent them to manage funding and to meet accountability requirements.
- Information is available to the person and their family and others responsible or involved in their care and well-being. Independent advice\* is provided regarding supports, resources and options available. Information and advice provided is timely and appropriate considering all communication and cultural needs.
- Support is available to the person, their family and others who represent them to be active partners with Government in developing individualised funding options.

### **Planning and review**

- Planning is based on the person's needs as well as their aspirations and goals, as much as possible, and takes into account the likely available resources.
- Planning considers all aspects of the person's life and all sources of available funding and support including informal, formal and Government sources.
- Planning is conducted in a transparent and person centred manner. Planning considers the person's rights, their well-being, opportunities available; it promotes access to community and universal services. A reasonable balance is needed between safeguarding the person's wellbeing and the right of the person to choose to participate in activities involving a degree of risk.
- Planning is conducted with an independent facilitator\*\*. Planning involves others as appropriate who are responsible or involved in the person's care and well-being, such as family, carers, advocates, friends and professionals.
- Planning facilitation is funded by Government and offered independent of service providers, including DHS and others with a potential conflict of interest.
- If verification of the plan and the budget is required, there is a simple and timely process.
- Plans can be reviewed and changed as required. Reviews ensure that the needs of the person with a disability are being met, quality outcomes are being achieved and the person's well-being is safeguarded.

## **Funding mechanisms**

- The funding allocation is adequate to ensure satisfactory access to a range of programs, services and activities that achieve quality outcomes.
- All allocated funding is brought together into one budget to the extent possible.
- Funding is allocated to the person and not allocated in blocks to disability support services.
- Funding is spent in accordance with an approved support plan.
- Funding can be used for activities, supports and services from informal networks, community services and from the formal disability service sector.
- The person, or their representative, can choose to manage the funding in one of three ways. Funding can be held by the person or their representative, by a financial intermediary\*\*\* service or by a disability service provider. Funds are portable and can be moved from one financial intermediary service or one disability service provider to another.
- When the person or their representative holds the funds, accountability requirements are as simple as possible.
- Unspent funds can be ‘rolled over’ from one financial year to the next.
- Financial intermediaries and disability service providers holding the person’s funds provide monthly accounts for all expenditure.
- Safeguards against emergencies and unforeseen circumstances needing more funding can be managed in one of two ways. Contingency funding can be kept available or there can be re-assessments of needs with the possibility of higher funding allocated when required.

## **Support workers**

Support workers can be employed in one of three ways:

- (1) Recruited from the open market by the person, or their representative, who becomes their legal employer;
- (2) Recruited by the person or their representative and legally employed by a third party agency (a disability service provider or cooperative); or
- (3) Supplied by a disability service provider who is the legal employer.

Support workers will be employed in accordance with industrial awards and conditions.

## **Range of available options**

- Government ensures that a satisfactory range of support and activity options is available. This needs to include infrastructure that ensures quality disability services offering individualised supports as well as community activities.

These implementation guidelines are designed to reflect the principles outlined above. As individualised funding projects for people with an intellectual disability expand and develop in Victoria, it is expected that new and improved ways of implementing these principles will become available.

## References

*Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012*, Department of Human Services, Victoria.

*Disability Act 2006*, Victoria.

*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006*, United Nations.

## Notes

- \* 'Independent advice' means advice provided by someone who does not stand to gain from decisions.
- \*\* 'Independent facilitator' means a facilitator who does not stand to gain from decisions.
- \*\*\* 'Financial intermediary' means a service that holds the funds, pays the bills and provides regular accounts but does not make planning decisions or provide other support services.