



**Know
your
rights**

**as a consumer of
community services**

As a consumer of community services in NSW, you have a right to expect that the services you receive will meet your needs.

Obligations are placed on services to promote and protect the rights of people who use their services. Some of these obligations are contained in laws; others are spelt out in service standards and policies, that those services should follow.



What services are we talking about?

Community services in NSW that are provided by:

- Family and Community Services NSW (FACS)
- a service provided by a non-government organisation that is funded, licensed or authorised by FACS.

These services include:

- child protection services
- residential out-of-home care services for children and young people, including foster care
- leaving care or after care services for children and young people
- family support services
- refuges for women, men and families
- youth accommodation services
- children's services
- assisted boarding houses
- adoption services.

What are your rights?

Respect

You should always be treated by your service provider with respect, courtesy and honesty. This includes respect for your cultural, religious, and social needs and beliefs.

Individual needs

You should receive services in a way that meets your individual needs. Your service provider should assess the level of help you need, review this regularly, and change the service as your needs change.

Health and Medical

If you are living in care, you have a right to health and medical services and to participate in a healthy lifestyle. Your service should help you to access doctors, dentists, counsellors, etc as required, and should help to ensure you have a balanced diet. You, or the person legally responsible for you, must give informed consent to any medical treatment. This means you have a right to information about any medical treatment before you consent to the treatment.

Connection to family and community

If you are living in care, you have a right to maintain and develop close relationships with the people who are important to you, such as family, friends and advocates, where it is safe to do so. Services should support you to participate in the community.

Privacy and confidentiality

Services should respect your privacy and the confidentiality of the information they have about you.

Safety and freedom from abuse

You should receive services in a safe environment, free from abuse of any kind.

No discrimination

No one should discriminate against you in the way you receive services; nor should you be subjected to harassment or exploitation.

Access to information

You have a right to information about the services you are getting, in a way that you understand – for example, how you will get services, your choices, how your money will be managed, the service's rules. You can ask any questions to help you be fully informed. You also have a right to access personal and health information that a service holds about you.



Participation in decisions

You should be able to participate in decisions that affect your life and the services you get. Your service provider should consider your views and preferences in a meaningful way, and clearly explain what it has decided to do. You can ask the service to put the reasons for its decisions in writing.

Complaints

You have a right to complain about the services you get, without fear of being badly treated as a result. The service should tell you how it handles complaints, and should keep you informed about the progress and result of your complaint.

Support

You are allowed to have a family member, Official Community Visitor, or other support person of your choice present when you talk to your service provider about the services you are getting.

Need help?

If you think your service provider is not respecting your rights, it is best to talk to the service about it first. Often, they will welcome you speaking up, because it helps them improve their services or uncover a problem.

If you feel uncomfortable about doing this yourself, you can ask a friend, relative or advocate to be with you when you talk to the service.

If this doesn't work, or you don't wish to talk to the service about it, the NSW Ombudsman may be able to take the matter up with the service on your behalf.

When you contact us, we will listen to what you say, give you advice and tell you what we can and cannot do to help.

The Ombudsman

The NSW Ombudsman is independent and impartial and reports to Parliament. The Ombudsman is not an advocate for individual consumers, but promotes the rights and best interests of consumers, and improvements in the delivery of community services, through its recommendations.

Contact us for more information

Level 24, 580 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

If you wish to visit us, we prefer you make an appointment. Please call us first to ensure your complaint is within our jurisdiction and our staff are available to see you.

Our business hours are:

Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm

(Inquiries section closes at 4pm)

Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS): **131 450**

We can arrange an interpreter through TIS or you can contact TIS yourself before speaking to us.

General inquiries: **02 9286 1000**

Toll free: **1800 451 524**

(outside Sydney metropolitan area
- mobile charges may apply)

NRS: **133 677**

Email: nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

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