

Guide Dogs.

Using GDN Client Services policy

Version history

Version	1.0
Owner	Practice Governance
Approved by	Chief Services Officer
Date	31 March 2025
Next Review	March 2026

Purpose

This policy lets people know if they are eligible to become a Guide Dogs NSW/ACT (GDN) Client, requirements for using services and leaving services.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- people who are considering using GDN's Client Services
- people who are using GDN Client Services
- GDN Client Services employees.

What do we mean by “Client”?

GDN considers a Client to be the person who is receiving services.

In some situations, Client may extend to significant others around the person receiving the service. For a child, their family or carer normally make decisions about services. We encourage children to develop their independence and gradually take on responsibility for decisions about the services they receive. This could start as early as 14 years, depending on the child's capacity.

If an adult does not independently make their own informed decisions, we will work with them and their advocate to help make informed choices about the services they receive.

What do we mean by “Client Service”?

You are receiving Client Services when you are attending a session with a GDN Assistive Technology Specialist, Connections Specialist, Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, Occupational Therapist, Orientation and Mobility Specialist, or Orthoptist. The session delivery method could be in-person, or via telepractice (phone, video conferencing) or using a telepractice assistant.

Client Service does not include when you are:

- Using skills you have learnt or doing activities your practitioner has given you, and you aren't with the practitioner.

- Traveling to or from your session without a GDN staff member.
- Giving feedback or participating in other GDN activities like media events, marketing events or focus groups.
- Taking part in a volunteer activity.
- Taking part in a group chat involving clients, such as WhatsApp or Client Connect (Facebook).

GDN service eligibility

You are welcome at GDN whatever your beliefs, values, attitudes, preferences, and appearance.

Our services are open to anyone who lives in NSW/ACT who has a difficulty functioning due to low vision or blindness. There is no minimum vision level such as legal blindness (<6/60) and while a vision report helps us understand your needs, having one is not essential.

There are some limits on the services we can provide. We can't start services with you if:

- Your difficulty or goals are not related to your vision.
- You are not willing to use funding options that are reasonably available to you.
- The service you need isn't currently available for your age group.
- The service you need isn't in our scope of practice (that is, we aren't qualified or don't have the capability to provide that service).
- We don't have the resources to provide service in your area and alternative service delivery methods are not available.
- You are already working on the same goals with another provider.
- You need GDN staff to use restrictive practices. We aren't registered for restrictive practices.

If we can't provide services to you, we will let you know why and where possible we will try and support you to find another provider who can meet your needs.

What we need from you:

Before GDN can provide services, we need you to:

- Consent to GDN collecting and storing your personal information in our Client management system.

- Agree to “My Service Standards” which includes your rights and responsibilities. If you have family members or other supports with you during service, they must treat our employees with respect and act in line with your rights and responsibilities.
- Accept your service agreement.
- Have a discussion with us about your goals, health needs and plans (e.g. behaviour support plan) and keeping you and others safe while we are working together.

Once we start providing services, it is important you keep talking to us. Let us know if your needs or circumstances change, or if there is something we can be doing better for you. If you have a problem with our services, please let us know. Our website [contact page](#) explains the different ways you can give us feedback. We won't treat you unfairly if you make a complaint – we will be happy you have given us the chance to do better.

What if you or GDN need to pause services?

You can pause your services at any time. This may be because you are going on a long holiday or have become unwell, or other priorities have come up in your life.

You can stop one GDN service and start another if your needs change and another area becomes more important to you.

GDN might pause your services if:

- You don't meet your responsibilities described in “My Service Standards”, including the Funding Position Statement. Serious disregard of your responsibilities might mean immediate suspension-see the section on **Serious disregard of your responsibilities** below.
- Your environment or behaviour is not safe for you, GDN employees or other people.
- There is an emergency or disaster in your area, or in the GDN staff member's location.

If we decide to pause your services we will let you know using your preferred method of communication. We will work with you to make a plan to deal with the issue. You might like to have someone support you while we work together to make the plan, like a friend, family member or an advocate.

Leaving GDN services

You can leave GDN services at any time, just let us know.

You might leave our services because:

- You have met your goals or completed the program.
- You have moved outside of NSW/ACT.
- You are transitioning to another service provider.
- Our service no longer meets your needs.
- Our service is no longer available. If this happens, we will try to help you find another provider.
- We have paused your services because you have disregarded your responsibilities and can't agree on a plan to resolve the issue or the plan hasn't worked.

We hold your information for a while, so we can quickly restart services for you.

If it has been 3 years or more since your left GDN services we will need to ask you some initial questions again.

Serious disregard of your responsibilities

Your responsibilities are listed in "My Service Standard" and in the behavioural expectations for any group programs. Not meeting some of them might be considered serious, for instance, if you don't:

- Respect our staff, property, and other people using our services.
- Act in a way that keeps you and others safe.
- Support us to create an environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation and vilification for everyone involved in service delivery.

Our response will depend on how serious the problem is. For very serious disregard of your responsibilities GDN has the right to immediately suspend your services and investigate the breach/alleged breach of your responsibilities. GDN also has the right to ask you to leave a group program if you don't meet the behavioural expectations.

Who decides if disregarding a responsibility is serious?

The Area Manager or Client Engagement Services Leader (Connections) will decide if the way you have disregarded your responsibilities is serious or not. If you are a Client of both Connections and other services, the Area Manager and Client Engagement Services Leader will jointly decide.

Investigations

Any investigation will apply the principles of procedural fairness to all parties which means:

- investigators and decision makers are fair and unbiased, and would not be seen as biased,
- anyone whose interests will be affected by a proposed decision will get the opportunity to present their version of events, provide supporting information and respond to any potential negative decisions, including the chance to respond to any information that could influence the decision and
- decisions are based on relevant supporting evidence.

Clients are welcome to have a friend, family member or advocate support them during the investigation.

The investigator will advise the client and relevant GDN staff of their decisions and any actions needed.

The investigator will also identify any changes GDN can make to prevent similar incidents.

If the client isn't happy with the investigator's decision they can:

- ask GDN to have an independent GDN staff member review the decision or
- refer the matter to an external authority such as the National Disability Quality and Safeguards Commission, the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission, NSW Fair Trading, ACT Human Rights Commission.

If GDN's independent review of an investigator's decision reaffirms the initial investigator's decision, no further internal reviews will be conducted.

There may be cases where a client has made a complaint about another client. If the person making the complaint is concerned that an investigation could affect their safety or wellbeing, we will limit the scope of the investigation in consultation with them unless we have legal responsibilities to investigate further. If we find evidence that the other client did not meet their responsibilities, we may take actions such as changing our processes to prevent similar incidents.

Definitions and acronyms

Term	Definition
Advocate:	An advocate helps the Client exercise choice and control and to have their voice heard. The advocate can be a family member or friend of the Client or an independent advocate who is not employed by any service provider or the agency providing funding and is free of conflicts of interest.
Client:	The person receiving Client services. In some situations, Client may include significant others around the person receiving the service such as a legal guardian, advocate or other nominated person. Where an adult may not be in a position to independently make their own informed decisions, they are still considered to be the Client. We will work with them and their advocate or nominee to make informed choices about the services they receive.
Client Services:	Client Services include Assistive Technology Services, Connections Services, Guide Dog Mobility Services, Occupational Therapy, Orientation and Mobility Services, and Low Vision Orthoptic Services.
Employee:	A person employed by GDN (including full time, part time and casual employees).
Nominee:	A person who is appointed to make decisions for a Client.
Personal information:	Information or an opinion about an identified person, or an person who is reasonably identifiable: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. whether the information or opinion is true or not; and 2. whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.
Supports	People who provide care, emotional support, physical assistance and supervision for people with disabilities. They can be unpaid supports such as the client's family, friends, carer and community networks or funded supports such as support workers, therapists, and support coordinators.