



Align Independence
Counselling, Consulting & Coaching

Participant Handbook

Your support, your choices and your rights

Support. Confidence. Independence.

Welcome to Align Independence. This handbook explains how we work with you, what you can expect, and how to raise a concern. You can ask Cassie to explain any part or help you access information in a way that suits you.

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Registered mental health nurse, counsellor and coach

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Align Management trading as Align Independence
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Section 1 Our Organisation



Welcome to Align Independence.

This handbook explains the disability services we provide and how they may assist you in achieving your goals. Importantly, this handbook explains how we partner with you to meet your support needs.

About Us

Align Independence offers person-centred counselling, nursing and clinical support. Cassie works with you to understand your goals and the support that suits you.

Contact Details	
Phone / Appointments	0406 943 133
Email	info@alignindependence.com.au
Website	alignindependence.com.au



Your Contact Person

Your Contact Person	
Name	Cassandra Thomas RN
Phone	0406 943 133
Email	info@alignindependence.com.au
Emergency	Call 000 in an emergency



Our Vision

Our vision statement:

To support people to feel heard, build confidence and live with greater independence.



Our Mission

Our mission statement:

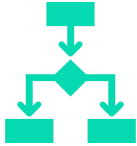
To provide person-centred, trauma-informed support that respects your choices, strengths and goals.



Our Values

Our values:

Respect, choice, safety, privacy, inclusion and honest communication.



Organisation Structure

Principal and contact person: Cassandra Thomas RN.

Cassie currently manages client services, enquiries and invoicing.

You can contact Cassie about your support or any concern.



Our Services

Align Independence provides counselling, community nursing and disability and clinical supports by agreement. Appointments may be in your home or community, by Zoom or by phone.

Ask Cassie which services are currently available and suitable for your needs. Positive behaviour support information will be added as this service develops.



Access and Entry Requirements

The NDIA decides who can access the NDIS. When applying, you must be younger than 65, live in Australia and meet citizenship or visa requirements. You must also meet the disability or early intervention requirements.

For the current eligibility information, visit:
ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/am-i-eligible

To be eligible for our NDIS services, you must:

- meet the NDIS eligibility criteria
- have an NDIS plan that identifies the services provided
- have an NDIS support plan that requires services that are included in our registration groups
- have funds available in your plan to pay for our services.

Note: We do offer a fee for service. Please let us know if you wish to pay the full fees.



Words We Use and What They Mean

Keyword	Meaning
Staff Worker or worker	the Director, senior management, employees, contractors, other service providers, or organisational volunteers.
Participant	you, your family, carer or advocate.
Workplace or environment	Service delivery, including in your home, during transport, community spaces, public spaces or other facilities.
Service	The services and activities we deliver are related to a service agreement and support plan.
We, us and our	Means the legal entity with the highest authority of Align Independence.

Section 2: Working with you



Data Security/Archiving Participant Files

Your records are protected with restricted access and backed up. We retain records in accordance with the requirements that apply to the record and the services provided. Ask Cassie about access to your information, retention and secure disposal.



Participant Service Suspension and Leave

When using our services, you may terminate them for any reason, and at any time, you need to provide us with the length of notice included in your service agreement.

You may request that your services be suspended per your Align Independence service agreement.

If you plan to be overseas for more than six weeks, tell the NDIA and check how this affects use of your plan. Discuss any pause in appointments with Cassie. Contact the NDIA on 1800 800 110 for advice about your circumstances.



Participant Access to Personal Records

Align Independence keeps personal records of our participants. At any time, you, or your advocate/guardian, can request access to your personal information. Included below is the process we will follow to provide you with your personal information/records:

1. You, or your appointed advocate/guardian, request access to your records, verbally or in writing.
2. The Director will confirm your request within forty-eight (48) hours.

3. The Director will update you about releasing your information within seven (7) working days.
4. A reply to your request for information will be provided within two weeks of your original application.
5. Personal information is only released with the approval of the Director.
6. When consent is received, we will provide your personal information to the agreed person.
7. The Director can assist you in understanding the information and will explain the terminology used.
8. On infrequent occasions, access to records may be denied. Denial is based on advice received from our legal representative. Should this situation arise, the denial will be discussed with you, your family and your advocate.



Participant Assessments and Choices

You are at the centre of our services. We will partner with you to learn about your strengths and preferences to design the right supports for you.

We were hoping you could tell us what services you need and how and when you want them delivered. This holistic and collaborative approach ensures that Align Independence can meet your expectations. We will design a service that assists you in maintaining and improving your lifestyle while increasing your independence and involvement in the community.

Your support (or service) plan is developed with you as its focus. We will create the plan in collaboration with you, your family or advocate, our team, and any other required support professionals. Assessments will be undertaken before you receive service from Align Independence. Our Director will conduct all assessments face to face with you, your family and/or advocate.

Your support plan will be person-centred and take an individualised approach. The plan will focus on you as an individual and be designed to promote your independence. We will record your unique skills and strengths, together with your goals and aspirations. The plan will be flexible and open to change, depending on your progress and other factors. Align Independence will regularly review your support plan to ensure that we meet your needs and personal requirements. We welcome your feedback regarding the services we provide you.

You can ask your worker about your support plan. Whilst you are given a copy of this plan, you can seek more information and clarification from your worker. If it is out of their capability to inform you, we will contact you to discuss your plan.

Below is the process that is taken to commence the development of the support plan:

1. Align Independence will perform assessments face-to-face with you, your family and/or your advocate. Any specific access or entry requirements we have will be discussed with you.
2. Assessment interview time/s are arranged by telephone. Your advocate will be invited to be present (if applicable).
3. During your first meeting, the Director will explain our assessment process to you. They will provide information on collecting and using personal data, privacy, information-sharing, and confidentiality considerations. They will also remind you that an advocate can be arranged if you want one.
4. If you have specific communication needs, our Director will make the necessary arrangements to ensure these needs are considered. For example, interpreters and translated information can be provided. If you have a vision impairment or hearing loss, we will make the necessary arrangements for the essential support service during assessments.
5. The Director will explain information-sharing choices and any disclosure required by law.
6. The Director will review completed assessments. Identified areas of your independence and needs will form the basis of your care discussions.
7. Developing your support plan is a consultative process between all relevant parties. Here we will look at various areas related to your services, such as:
 - a. Risks to you and your environment
 - b. Emergency and disaster management
 - c. Mealtime management (if relevant)
 - d. Your health needs, including comprehensive assessments, oral health and medication requirements
 - e. How we can assist you in gaining vaccines or similar services
8. We will explain your support plan and give you time to review the plan. Let us know what needs changing or adjusting or if it works for you.
9. Once your plan has been determined and happy, we will ask you to sign off on it. You will be provided with a copy of your support plan.
10. Align Independence will regularly assess your support plan to check that your needs are being met.

11. Our Staff Worker will collect information when they work with you. This information is entered into your record so we have evidence-based information to check that our service delivery meets your current needs, interests and aspirations.
12. Align Independence will conduct regular assessments in the future with you to review your support plan and make sure the support you are receiving still meets your needs. This review will happen at least every year but may happen earlier if needed.
13. We can re-negotiate your service agreement to take into consideration any changes in your needs or circumstances, which may include a:
 - change to your support worker or representative
 - request to increase or decrease the number or types of services we provide.
14. We explain information-sharing choices and disclosures required by law. Ask us if you are unsure.



Communication with participants

Following our initial assessment of your communication needs, we will provide written, verbal or translated options to communicate with you on an ongoing basis.

If you prefer a communication method, please let our team know we can arrange this for you. Your support plan records how you wish to communicate with us and allows our staff to communicate how you wish.



Participant Assistance with Medication

The Director will discuss your medication requirements with you and then complete an assessment regarding your medication needs. If our Director has concerns regarding your ability to manage your medication safely, they will complete a Self-Administration of Medication Assessment.

If you need assistance with your medication, all oral medications will be provided in a Webster Pack (or another multi-dose-controlled medication pack).

During your assessment, our team will determine if you have any issues with taking medication and how we can arrange a medication plan to support you.



Smoking

If you smoke, we ask that you please not do so while our Staff Worker are performing their duties. We are committed to providing a safe workplace for our team.



Interpreter Services

If you are from a non-English speaking background, we can engage an interpreter if you would like one. We will only engage an interpreter if we have your permission.

The interpreter will attend meetings with you and record all meeting information in your record. We can arrange for a telephone interpreter service in an emergency or a crisis.



Management of Budgets, Statements and Fees

You receive an NDIS funding package to pay for your disability support and support management. Your package lets you decide the type of disability support you need, who provides it and where it is provided. Thank you for choosing Align Independence as part of your support team. Our team will never offer you financial advice or information.

We explain prices and any agreed travel or other charges before services begin. Your service agreement sets out fees, invoicing and payment arrangements.

Any price change will be discussed with you and managed under your service agreement. A change to an NDIS maximum price does not, by itself, change your agreed fee. Applicable NDIS pricing and claiming rules must be followed.

Before services begin, we explain the agreed fees, invoicing and payment method. Private and plan-managed invoices include our bank transfer details. For NDIA-managed supports, claiming arrangements are discussed with you.

If you use the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to manage your funds, Align Independence will work with the NDIA.



Money and Property Assistance

Your money, or other property, will only be used with you and for the purposes you request.

If you require Align Independence to provide financial assistance, you, your family or your advocate must approve the arrangement and complete a Participant Money and Property Consent Form.

If your Support Plan requires Align Independence staff to be involved in handling your money, strict procedures will be followed to protect you from financial abuse. Your Service Agreement and Support Plan will outline the assistance you need relating to your money and property.

You, your family or your advocate should sign the Service Agreement and Support Plan. If you don't want to sign the Service Agreement and Support Plan, we will record the reasons for future reference.

Our staff are not permitted to provide you with financial advice or information other than what is required under your Support Plan.

Align Independence undertakes an annual audit of your money and property supports and will provide you with a copy of this report.



Gifts

Align Independence recognises that you may, on occasion, like to give a gift to a Staff Worker member. If you wish to give a gift, we prefer that it is something that can be shared by all Staff Worker, e.g. flowers, a cake or chocolates.

Please NEVER offer or provide money to an Align Independence Staff Worker member.



Re-negotiating an Agreement

When your needs or circumstances change (e.g. support worker or advocate), or where you request an increase or decrease in the number or type of services, re-negotiating your Align Independence service agreement may be required. Our Director will advise you if this is the case and arrange for a revised service agreement to be prepared.



Participant Authority to Hold Key/s

If our staff need to hold your house key, or have access to a house code, to provide your services, the Authority to Hold Key Form will need to be completed by yourself and our Director on your admission to our service, or when the need arises.

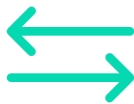
When you no longer want us to hold your house key or know your house code, you must complete a Withdrawal of Authority to Hold Key Form. The Director will help you to do this.



Participant Transport

During your initial meeting with Align Independence, we will discuss your transport requirements. Together, we will determine the most appropriate transport services to meet your needs and if this is required as part of your package or as an additional service.

If you did not arrange transport as part of your service agreement, we could help. Align Independence can arrange to include transport services as part of your package or as an additional service. Contact our Director for assistance.



Transition and Re-entry

Your needs and interests may change while working with our service, which may mean you need to transition (move) to another provider. Align Independence will assist and support you during this process. With your approval, we will work with the other service providers to ensure your smooth transition meets your needs.

If you leave our service and want to return, we would be pleased for you to come back. You will need to:

- meet the program requirements to access funding, including prioritisation
- be placed on a waiting list (if no positions are currently available) and be contacted once a position is available
- undergo a risk assessment that reviews the risks relating to staying and leaving our service
- undertake a screening assessment
- agree to the conditions of the program
- pay any relevant fees.

During temporary absences, such as a hospital visit or respite, our team will regularly contact you, your family or your advocate when planning your entry to or exit from our service. We will also assist you in contacting the hospital to book any appointments.



Withdrawal or transfer from our Service

Should you wish to stop your Align Independence services, please get in touch with our Director immediately for this to be arranged.

Align Independence has the right to stop providing services if you do not meet your responsibilities. You will never be excluded from service provision because of a 'dignity of risk' choice. In all cases, we will speak with you and discuss the reasons for any service withdrawal.

Where you agree, we will support you in finding another service provider.



Will

The Staff Worker of Align Independence are not permitted to advise you on making or changing your Will. Staff Worker are not allowed to witness any legal documents, including a Will.

Align Independence do not store Wills on your records. If you require a representative to assist, we recommend you contact the Public Trustee, who can arrange to manage your Will on your behalf.



Accessing Services

The best way to receive information about all the services available is to speak to your Align Independence contact person. You are entitled to receive information regarding our services, and we want to provide you with the most appropriate ones.



Service Agreement

Once Align Independence has been selected as your service provider, we will develop a service agreement with you, your family or your advocate (if required). This service agreement will list the schedule of supports, the responsibilities of Align Independence, your responsibilities (as a participant), your emergency and disaster plan and our cancellation policy.

Charter of Rights



Your Rights

As an individual, you have many rights, and we support and assist you in identifying and exercising these rights to achieve your goals. Align Independence adopts a policy of non-discrimination regarding eligibility and entry to our services and when providing support services to you.

You have the right to:

- access supports that promote, uphold, and respect your legal and human rights
- exercise informed choice and control to maximise independence
- freedom of expression, self-determination and personal decision-making
- access supports that respect your culture, diversity, values and beliefs
- a support service that respects your right to privacy and dignity
- be helped to make informed choices that will maximise independence
- receive support that is free from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination
- receive supports which are overseen by strong operational management
- receive services that are safeguarded by informed and compliant risk and incident management systems
- receive services from workers who are competent, appropriately qualified and have expertise in providing person-centred supports
- advise consent to the sharing of information between providers during the transition
- ask how information is used and when disclosure is required by law.



Your Responsibilities

As individuals using our support services, we ask you a few essential things. The information below explains your responsibilities when using our services. We ask that you:

- respect the rights of Staff Workers, to ensure their workplace is safe and healthy and free from harassment
- abide by the terms of your agreement with us
- understand that your needs may change, meaning your services may need to change
- accept responsibility for your actions and choices, even though some decisions may involve risk
- tell us if you have problems with the care or service you are receiving from us
- provide us with enough information to develop, deliver and review your support plan
- care for your health and well-being as much as you are able
- provide us with information that will help us to meet your needs
- give cancellation notice under your service agreement; any NDIS cancellation claim must meet applicable NDIS rules
- remember that our Staff Workers are only authorised to perform the agreed number of hours and tasks outlined in your service agreement
- participate in the safety assessments of your home
- ensure your pets are controlled during service provision
- provide a smoke-free working environment
- pay the agreed amount for the services provided
- tell us in writing (where able) and provide appropriate notice when you want to stop receiving our services
- ask us about consent, information-sharing choices and disclosures required by law.



Our Responsibilities

Align Independence will:

- provide the supports that meet your needs at your preferred times
- regularly review the provision of your support with you
- communicate openly, honestly and promptly
- treat you with courtesy and respect

- discuss with you all decisions regarding your supports and how they are being provided
- listen to your complaints and feedback, and address any problems that may arise
- provide you with twenty-four (24) hours' notice if we need to change a scheduled support provision appointment
- keep your personal information confidential
- support your culture, community and any other needs
- implement policies and procedures to ensure your safety and the safety of others during service provision.



Conflict of Interest

Align Independence is committed to ensuring that actions and decisions taken at all levels in our organisation are informed, objective and fair. A conflict of interest may affect how a staff member acts or their choices. Identified conflicts of interest require action to be undertaken by our organisation to ensure that personal or individual interests do not impact your or our services, activities or decisions.

Align Independence requires all staff to declare their involvement in external work-related activities to allow for discussion and management of the potential conflicts of interest with the Director. Declaration and management of a conflict of interest are handled by the Director. If you undertake other (new) work outside our organisation, you must immediately inform the Director.

Please let us know if you feel a conflict of interest. We will provide you with a Conflict of Interest Declaration Form to complete.

If **you** declare or identify a conflict of interest, the Director will assess the conflict to determine if a conflict of interest exists (or if there is a perception that a conflict exists). A meeting will be convened to discuss the conflict, and you may be asked to:

- contribute to the discussion but abstain from voting or taking part in a decision on the matter
- observe but not take part in the meeting or decision-making
- leave the meeting during the discussion and before a decision has been made.

All potential and actual conflicts will be recorded in the Conflict of Interest Register to oversee the identified and declared conflicts.

You will be informed of the review outcome by the Director and advised how our organisation will manage the conflict if there is a conflict.



NDIS Code of Conduct

All NDIS providers and workers must follow the Code. This includes:

- respecting your rights, choices and privacy
- delivering safe support with appropriate skills
- being honest, transparent and accountable
- acting promptly on concerns about support quality or safety
- preventing and responding to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect
- preventing and responding to sexual misconduct
- not setting higher prices for NDIS goods without reasonable justification.

Read the current Code at ndiscommission.gov.au/rules-and-standards/ndis-code-conduct.



Harm and Risk of Harm

Align Independence recognises your right to feel safe and to live in an environment where you are protected from assault, neglect, exploitation or any other form of harm. We follow the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. Therefore we will support all children and young people to live in a safe and supportive environment and report any suspicions, real or potential risks of harm. Note: we have a Child and Young People Handbook that we provide to all children and young people under 18.

You can report a concern without fear of retaliation. We record and respond to incidents, assess whether they are reportable and notify the NDIS Commission or other authorities when required. Not every concern is an NDIS reportable incident. Call 000 if someone is in immediate danger.

You can make a report to whomever you feel comfortable and safe with; this may include one of our employees, our Director, a family member, your advocate or a trusted friend.

If you would like to speak with someone outside of Align Independence, you can contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission:

Phone: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677

National Relay Service and ask for 1800 035 544

Interpreters can be arranged.

You can also complete an NDIS Complaint Contact Form online. Go to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission website business.gov.au

Align Independence acknowledges that prevention is the best protection from harm, risk of harm and neglect and recognises our duty of care to implement prevention strategies that include appropriate protocols to identify potential risks. Our prevention strategies include only employing skilled Staff Worker, who respect participants' rights and are aware of current legislation and policies regarding abuse and neglect. Our Staff Worker can assist you, your family or your advocate to access our complaints process and raise any concerns regarding our service provision.

Where abuse, harm or neglect has occurred, Align Independence will respond quickly, considerately and effectively to protect you from further harm. We will give you access to any required counselling, medical and/or legal assistance.

When you make allegations of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation or discrimination, you have the right to have an advocate present. Align Independence can arrange this for you.



Family Assistance

Align Independence encourages and supports families to maintain contact with you. Your family is welcome to contact us for information and support with your permission. Your family or advocate can be involved in planning the services you will receive through your person-centred support planning meeting.

We can help your family by:

- communicating in a way they understand

- providing information regarding available services, including those offered by other agencies
- helping to build trust and respect between Staff Worker members, you and your family
- providing them with the opportunity to take part in service delivery planning
- creating opportunities to develop links with you
- assisting them in accessing counselling and support services
- providing them with access to effective complaint procedures
- helping them to access advocacy services where required.



Continuity of Support

The Director will arrange your support schedule, so you know who will work with you to deliver your services and support. We will provide you with a Staff Worker who has the skills and knowledge you require. Wherever possible, we will meet your support requests, e.g. you would like a worker who speaks the same language, is from the same culture or meets other specific criteria.

Staff Worker are allocated to you regularly so that you can feel comfortable with them and receive predictable and continuous support. The supports we provide are linked to your support plan and will demonstrate consistency with your needs and requests.

What will happen if your worker is absent?

- Align Independence will contact Staff Worker members with relevant qualifications as suitable replacements.
- Where possible, we will provide a Staff Worker member who has worked with you and is aware of your requirements.
- Where possible, we will advise you of details of the replacement Staff Worker member.
- We will gather your feedback on the replacement Staff Worker member on completion of the service.
- The replacement Staff Worker will be sensitive to your needs and ensure that care is consistent with your expressed preferences.
- We will seek your approval for the placement staff member and will never place someone to support you who you do not wish.



Emergency and Disaster Planning

We will create an emergency and disaster plan with you and other relevant support networks. This emergency plan will be trialled before we activate it, and staff will consult with you about changes and improvements. This plan will be adjusted depending on any current emergency or disaster.

This plan is attached to your Service Agreement.



Vaccinations

Our team will support you in gaining any vaccinations that you request. We will work out a plan with you. We will look at how you will get to the vaccination location and the support you need during and after the vaccination.



Infection Management

Your well-being is essential, and we will take all measures required to reduce contamination in your environment, including wearing masks or gowns, cleaning surfaces, handwashing, and using antibacterial gels. All staff are trained in infection management. Please ensure that you keep yourself and your environment as clean as possible.



Your Advocacy Rights

An advocate is a person who will listen to you, help you make decisions about what should happen in your life and then speak, on your behalf, to arrange for those decisions to be implemented. An advocate will ensure your rights are respected and speak out for you if needs are unmet.

You can ask anyone that you know well and trust to be your advocate, such as a:

- member of your family or a friend
- a person from a legal advocacy service.

Align Independence can help you find an advocate by providing a list of available advocacy services. Once you have selected an advocate, the Director will provide you with a form that must be completed called the Authority to Act as an Advocate Form.

With your permission, Align Independence will:

- provide your advocate with all the information they need to ensure that we (and any other service providers) are acting in your best interest
- work closely with your advocate and involve them in the planning of services that will be provided to you
- ensure our Staff Worker understand the role of your advocate.

Align Independence will ensure that your advocate is invited to attend:

- consultation meetings
- person-centred planning meetings and reviews
- any other relevant meetings or conferences.

You can use your advocate:

- any time you wish to communicate with us
- during your initial assessment consultation
- during your interviews and reviews
- during service delivery
- when you want to make a complaint
- when you want to give feedback.

We encourage you to bring your advocate to your initial assessment meeting to hear your voice during the planning process, guiding and developing your person-centred support plan. Your advocate is welcome to attend any meeting and speak on your behalf.

Align Independence will allow your advocate to discuss problems or concerns they may have. Failure to adequately address your advocate's concerns will lead to our team informing them of our complaint process and providing the governing agencies' contact details which are responsible for ensuring we perform our job correctly.

You can change your advocate at any time. If you change your advocate, please inform us as soon as possible to update your information and ensure that we talk to the correct person.



Consent

When you consent, you give your permission or say that it is okay for something to happen. You must always fully understand why a person requires your consent. If you have any doubt about this, you should ask our Director, or your advocate, for help.

You can withdraw your consent at any time. For example, the withdrawal of consent means if you are participating in a particular program and decide that you do not like the program, you can tell us that you no longer want to participate.

Align Independence will need your consent to:

- read the information that service providers have about you and for us to provide any information about you to other service providers, your family or your advocate
- collect data relating to you for funding bodies
- ask people to attend your person-centred planning meeting
- carry out any training programs or behaviour change programs we want to put in place for you
- assist you in seeing a doctor or a dentist
- provide appropriate services and supports
- provide you with medication.

Usually, consent will be documented in your support plan. However, we will ask you to sign a consent form to release your personal information. We will always ask for your permission and explain the reasons for accessing your information when providing it to Staff Worker or another service provider. If you are unsure during this process, you should ask your advocate for help.

If you feel you cannot consent to issues in your life, we can talk to your family or advocate and ask them to assist. If you do not have family who can make decisions for you, we will help you apply to the court, or other government bodies, to appoint a Guardian who can legally help you make these decisions.



What is a Guardian?

A Guardian is usually a person legally appointed by a court to make decisions on your behalf. This person may be a friend, a family member, or a person from your State Government Advocate.



Privacy Statement

Align Independence complies with all relevant privacy legislation and has systems for the collection, use, disclosure, quality, security, accuracy and correction of personal information relating to you as our participant.

Your privacy and dignity will always be maintained. You will be asked to sign a Participant Information Consent Form to collect, use, and disclose your personal information to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988*. Information regarding your privacy is also included in your service agreement.

Your privacy contact is Cassandra Thomas RN.

Website: alignindependence.com.au

Phone: 0406 943 133

Email: info@alignindependence.com.au

Contact Cassie to request access to, or correction of, your personal information, or to raise a privacy concern.

Failure to receive a response within thirty (30) days or you are dissatisfied with the response, you may complain to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) via:

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Information about health privacy, access and correction:

www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/your-privacy-rights/health-information



Critical Incident

While we hope that a critical incident does not occur, in the event it does, we are prepared to support and assist you by following procedures that appropriately deal with a critical incident.

A critical incident is an event (or alleged event) that occurs because of, or during, the delivery of services and has caused, or is likely to cause, a significant negative impact on your health, safety or well-being.

If an incident does occur, we will engage the required authorities to support you during this time.

Critical incidents that relate to you may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- an unexpected death, serious injury or alleged assault (including physical, sexual abuse, sexual assault or indecent assault) that occurs as a result or during the delivery of services
- allegations of serious, unlawful or criminal activity or conduct involving an Align Independence employee, subcontractor or volunteer that has caused, or has the potential to cause, serious harm to you
- an incident where you assault or cause serious harm to others (including our employees, volunteers or contractors), as a result, or during the delivery, of services
- a severe fire, natural disaster, accident or another incident that will, or is likely to prevent, service provision, or that results in closure or significant damage to premises or property, or that poses a substantial threat to your health and safety.

Align Independence has established procedures that identify, manage and resolve incidents which include:

- Staff Worker members will report all incidents to the Director
- completion of an incident report that identifies and records an incident
- the Director is responsible for reporting incidents that are 'reportable incidents' to the NDIS Commissioner and other required agencies
- NDIS (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018
- supporting and assisting you if you are affected by the incident
- review of the incident by the Director if you or others were affected
- collaborating with you, your family and/or advocate to manage and resolve the incident

- reviewing the incident and making necessary amendments to systems and processes to reduce the risk of recurrence.



Complaints and Feedback

Your feedback allows us to provide high-quality services; we actively seek your input. Feedback can be provided anonymously or through written or online surveys or conversations with you. We want your feedback on the following:

- quality of care received
- consistency of services provided
- support worker performance
- supports that work for you
- changes you want made to assist you
- what you like and dislike about our services.

You always have the right to expect the best possible standard of service from us, and we will treat any concern or complaint you provide as a serious issue. No matter the situation, a Staff Worker will not react badly to your complaint; you should feel safe knowing they will not retaliate or hurt you.

You can make an anonymous complaint to our Complaint Manager using the Anonymous Complaints and Feedback form provided during the intake process. Remember not to identify yourself during this process if you wish us not to know who is making the complaint.

You can make a complaint regarding our services or a Staff Worker provided to work with you. If you do not feel comfortable making a complaint, someone else can do this on your behalf, including:

- an advocate
- a family member
- a close friend
- your care worker
- a person you know and trust.

Below is a flowchart that demonstrates our commitment to your complaint or feedback. We do not ignore your feedback but have a process to ensure that our management hears your voice. You can also be part of our feedback system by providing feedback and sharing ideas with our

management. Don't hesitate to contact us if you wish to express your thoughts, lived experience and ideas.

How we respond to your feedback

1. Tell us what happened and what you would like to change.
2. We acknowledge your concern and discuss the next steps.
3. We look into the concern and listen to the people involved.
4. We discuss the outcome and proposed response with you.
5. Tell us if the outcome does not address your concern. You can seek independent support or contact the NDIS Commission.
6. We use feedback to review and improve our services.

Feedback, complaints and compliments

Contact Cassie on 0406 943 133 or info@alignindependence.com.au.

Website: alignindependence.com.au

Ask for the Feedback, Complaints and Compliments Form. You can ask someone you trust to help you give feedback or make a complaint.

Once a complaint has been received, Align Independence 's Complaint Manager will investigate the complaint and find a resolution. The Complaint Manager will write a letter to confirm that your complaint has been received. This letter will provide you with the expected date Align Independence of the complaint resolution.

The complaint will then be investigated, and a plan to resolve it will be created. You will be informed of this plan, and we will ask you to provide your opinion on our recommended solution. You can advise if you are happy with the proposed solution or unhappy with the outcome and feel the matter is not resolved.

If you are not happy with the solution proposed by Align Independence regarding your complaint, you can speak to other organisations, such as:

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

For concerns about the quality or safety of NDIS providers or workers.

Phone: 1800 035 544

Website: ndiscommission.gov.au/complaints/report

National Disability Insurance Agency

For concerns about NDIA decisions, plans or funding.

Phone: 1800 800 110

Website: ndis.gov.au/contact/feedback-and-complaints



Your Voice

We want to hear about your lived experience and how we can make our services increasing beneficial to you. Your input into our services and practices is essential to ensure we meet your needs and that of your community. Please let us know if you want to influence our policies and practices. We want to hear from you so our management team can ensure that our business needs your needs.

Please let our Director know if you wish to participate. You are very welcome.



Networking

We will engage with your networks and community to ensure you are offered the opportunity to be involved in activities and areas of interest.

We will access networks like religious groups, local ethnic groups, community groups, or others you request. We believe that it is essential that you are part of your community, so we work with you to ensure that this happens.



Legislation and Standards

Align Independence complies with all current legislation and standards. Don't hesitate to contact us for a copy of the legislation that applies to our service. The primary legislation and standards that cover your service include the following:

- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
- Disability Act and Regulation
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021.



Risk-Taking

You have the right to participate in lawful activities that may involve risk. We will always allow you a dignity of risk, and our role is to look at the activity, not you. We will discuss this with you if you wish to undertake the activity. Any dangerous risk may require you to sign that you are willing to take the risk. We always assume that you can make your own choices.

We will work with you and advise the various options available regarding the activity to make an informed choice.

We will undertake an individual risk profile of you and a risk assessment of your environment. These assessments will include risk assessments when you leave your home environment.



Risk Assessment

Your risk will be assessed when you first start working with us. After an initial assessment, we will review your risk annually. If we feel you need another review, we will work with you. Your review may happen due to changes in your:

- health
- living arrangements
 - additional person
 - person leaving
- physical environment

Your safety is at the centre of all we do, and we will consult you during the risk process.



Continuous Improvement

We aim to provide you with a high-quality service that meets your expectations and needs. To do this, we ask you to let us know how we can maintain and improve the services we provide to you. You can do this by giving feedback or making a complaint.

Our collaborative and person-centred approach means that Align Independence will positively respond to your information to improve our services.



Work Health and Safety

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, Align Independence has a duty, under the law, to make sure our Staff Worker can work with you in a healthy and safe environment. Some things you can do to assist in this matter include:

- notifying our Staff Worker of any unsafe conditions in your home
- participating in safety assessments of your home
- arranging repairs of any hazards identified during our safety assessment of your home
- ensuring your pets are controlled during service provision
- providing a smoke-free working environment
- providing a workplace for Staff Worker that is free of racial, sexual, physical or emotional abuse
- treating our Staff Worker with dignity and respect

- advising our Staff Worker if you are unwell or cannot do things the way you usually do them
- telling our Staff Worker if your doctor has diagnosed you with a short-term infectious illness
- providing cleaning equipment that is suitable and well maintained
- providing safe, non-toxic cleaning products
- ensuring your mobility equipment and other items required to live independently in your home are available and well-maintained.

During our first service, we will conduct a safety check and discuss any identified risks with you. The safety of the service will be reviewed with you on an ongoing basis, following state and federal work occupational health and safety legislation.

Section 3: NDIS Practice Standard and Quality Indicators (Abbreviated version)

The NDIS Practice Standards create an essential benchmark for us to assess our performance and to demonstrate how we provide high-quality and safe supports and services to you. Together with the NDIS Code of Conduct, the NDIS Practice Standards assist you in understanding what quality service provision you should expect from us.

This is a summary, not the full standards. Applicable modules depend on the supports delivered.
Current standards: [ndiscommission.gov.au](https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au).

1. Participant Rights and Responsibilities

The standards addressed in this division include:

- 1.1 Person-Centred Supports
- 1.2 Individual Values and Beliefs
- 1.3 Privacy and Dignity
- 1.4 Independence and Informed Choice
- 1.5 Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination

People with a disability have the right to respect, dignity and full participation in society. It is important to us that you know and understands your rights. We are here to support you and provide guidance and assistance in your choices.

We respect your right to privacy and the confidentiality of your personal information and records. Also, we will uphold your right to make your own decisions.

It is your right to try new activities and experiences, and we will assist you while ensuring that you are treated fairly and independently.

You have the right to talk freely and express your thoughts, opinions and choices. We will listen to you and support the choices you make. We will include your family, advocate and support workers in discussions when you want them involved.

We understand that everyone communicates differently; we have various communication methods that you can use to communicate with us safely and privately.

We will support you in participating in the community of your choice and working with you, your family, and support workers to make this happen.

Align Independence will respect your cultural background and endeavour always to meet the cultural needs and requirements you may have.

2. Provider Governance and Operational Management

The standards addressed in this division include:

- 2.1 Governance and Operational Management
- 2.2 Risk Management
- 2.3 Quality Management
- 2.4 Information Management
- 2.5 Feedback and Complaints Management
- 2.6 Incident Management
- 2.7 Human Resource Management
- 2.8 Continuity of Supports
- 2.9 Emergency and Disaster Management

It is essential that you feel free to tell us what you think about the services we provide to you. It is your right to share your opinions on anything related to the services we provide, whether they be good or bad. We welcome your input and want you to offer it without fear of reprisal, discrimination, or negative consequences.

You can ask for support from another person when making a complaint, such as a family member, support worker, advocate, or the Ombudsman.

Whatever the issue, we will do everything possible to solve your problem. We appreciate your opinion about our services and will introduce service improvements based on your feedback (when required).

Align Independence recruit quality, caring Staff Worker, who receive ongoing training. We provide continuous improvement of services, correct working processes, and effective and transparent communication, which are key to our services' success.

We will work closely with you to provide and maintain excellent service and support and strengthen our systems and processes to deliver positive results when resolving any problems. A systematic approach to emergencies and disasters assists us in supporting you in these circumstances.

Align Independence 's management possesses the skills and experience to implement and monitor the effectiveness of our policies and procedures and make necessary changes when required.

3. Provision of Supports

The standards addressed in this division include:

- 3.1 Access to Supports
- 3.2 Support Planning
- 3.3 Service Agreements with Participants
- 3.4 Responsive Support Provision
- 3.5 Transitions to or from the Provider

Align Independence will support your goals and decisions regarding your chosen services. We will offer you guidance and assist you in identifying your strengths and weaknesses to develop appropriate skills to help you achieve your goals.

We will never discriminate against you, irrespective of age, gender, disability, cultural background or sexuality.

Align Independence will assist anyone enquiring about our services. We will provide support and advice regarding the appropriateness of our services or give a referral to an alternative service that may be more suitable for you. You have the right to seek the service you need and access the support you require.

Align Independence will encourage and help you to participate actively and meaningfully within the community of your choice.

4. Provision of Supports Environment

The standards addressed in this division include:

- 4.1 Safe Environment
- 4.2 Participant Money and Property
- 4.3 Management of Medication
- 4.4 Mealtime Management
- 4.5 Management of Waste

Align Independence endeavours to ensure you are always safe, physically and emotionally. Our Staff Worker are trained in appropriate procedures designed to keep you safe, and they will report any risks, or potential risks, to the Director.

We will work with you and/or your advocate to ensure you understand our fees and payment methods of our fees. All information will be clear and accurate.

If you require medication, our Staff Worker are trained in managing your medication appropriately. We will also ensure that you take your medication safely.

Once we identify that you need mealtime assistance with your diet, dysphagia or similar, we will create a plan to support your mealtime and allow the choice of meals preference

Align Independence Staff Worker are trained to manage waste to protect you, or any other person, from harm resulting from exposure to waste, infectious or hazardous substances created during our service delivery. Our policies and procedures comply with relevant legislation and include incident management processes and emergency and disaster plans. Where possible, we manage waste in a sustainable manner, such as recycling paper, glass and plastic waste, where appropriate.

Align Independence has established procedures that identify, manage and resolve incidents which include:

- completing an incident report that identifies and records an incident
- the Staff Worker reporting all incidents to our Director
- reporting reportable incidents to the NDIS Commissioner and other appropriate authorities
- NDIS (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018

- supporting and assisting you if you have been affected by an incident
- reviewing the incident with you and the appropriate Staff Worker
- working with you to manage and resolve the incident effectively
- making amendments to systems and procedures to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Section 4: Additional Standards

National Principles of Child Safe Organisations

Principle 1. Child Safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

- Commitment to Safety (see Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy and Procedure).
- Staff are trained in the following:
 - child safety
 - codes of conduct
 - behavioural standards when interacting with children
 - reporting obligations and record keeping.
- Risk Management Plans are undertaken for each child.
- Comply with NDIS Code of Conduct and Align Independence 's Code of Conduct.

Principle 2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

- Children can express their views and are provided with opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives:
 - upon commencement with our organisation
 - on an ongoing basis – regularly asked for their thoughts and ideas
 - at the review of their plan.
- The importance of friendships is recognised, and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and less isolated:
 - work with the child and the family to determine how best to assist with these linkages.
- Children can access abuse prevention programs and information:
 - provide links to relevant organisations, e.g. Kids Helpline
 - age-appropriate information that describes how adults should behave is provided.
- Staff are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns:
 - staff trained to work with each child
 - knowledge and skills are assessed to determine training to ensure skills and knowledge are evident.

Principle 3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and well-being

- All levels of the organisation must encourage families to take an active role in keeping children safe.

- Families and community members are encouraged to provide feedback on how the organisation keeps children safe, and this information is acted upon where necessary:
 - complaint and feedback forms
 - meetings about children.

Principle 4. Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice

- The Director and our staff understand barriers that prevent children from disclosing abuse or adults.
- The Director and our staff identify and respect the diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds of children and understand the value of treating them fairly:
 - review each child's cultural needs at intake
 - provide relevant, culturally sensitive, age-appropriate activities
- All staff are given information about the factors that increase a child's vulnerability to harm:
 - staff are trained and provided with information.
- The Director ensures that our workforce reflects our participants' diversity, where possible.
- The Director and staff adapt activities and services to ensure all children feel included:
 - a Risk Management Plan completed for each child
 - strategy planning takes place with the child and their family.

Principle 5. People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and well-being values in practice

- Align Independence understands that recruitment does not rely solely on a WWCC, so we provide ongoing training opportunities for all staff:
 - induction
 - annual training.
- The Director or delegate responsible for staff recruitment is aware of child-safe recruitment practices.
- Staff recruitment includes job advertisements identifying that our organisation values child safety.
- Our recruitment processes involve a range of interview questions to establish staff suitability. Background and reference checks are carried out and recorded. (see Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure and NDIS Worker Screening and Risk-assessed Roles Policy and Procedure).
- Supervision includes regular reviews to check whether staff follow Codes of Conduct and other Align Independence child-safe policies.
- The Director is responsible for monitoring all aspects of supervision and undertaking, at a minimum, quarterly supervision.

Principle 6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child-focused

- The Director creates a culture where complaints are taken seriously. All adults take responsibility for children's safety through our induction process and training staff in our culture.
- Director clearly explains that breaches of Codes of Conduct will result in disciplinary action at induction and ongoing as part of our training requirements.
- Staff are provided support and information on what and how to report, including external bodies.
- Accessible processes enable children, staff and others to make complaints. Procedures describe likely timeframes, review processes and potential outcomes of complaints.
- Complaints are handled confidentially (see Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure)
- Processes are reviewed at regular intervals, and after complaints are made
- Documents are confidential, where required.

Principle 7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through continual education and training

- The Director provides ongoing education and training opportunities for all staff, including:
 - knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent and identify abuse
 - how to respond to complaints and escalate appropriately
 - if higher risks are identified, additional training is provided, e.g. behaviour management.
- The Director is our child safety officer responsible for training.
- Training is regularly reviewed in response to emerging best practices.

Principle 8. Physical and online environments promote safety and well-being while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

- The Director sets expectations about behavioural standards for staff interacting with children in physical and online environments.
- Risk assessments identify areas where staff can interact with children unsupervised, including one-off events and overnight accommodation.
- Physical environments are altered to increase natural sight lines while respecting a child's right to privacy.
- Higher-risk areas (e.g. cars, boarding facilities and offsite locations) are managed using specific safety measures (e.g. spot checks).
- Children are provided information about online safety and regularly encouraged to tell staff about negative experiences.
- Staff and parents are provided information about risks in the online environment (e.g. online grooming, cyberbullying and sexting).

Principle 9. Implementation of national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved

- The Director maintains a culture of continuous improvement to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented and routinely reviewed, even though staffing may change (see Continuous Improvement Policy).
- Director know the value of continuous monitoring, open conversations and exploring new ways to keep children safe.
- Child-safe policies and practices are reviewed annually.
- Staff refer to the Standards when creating, reviewing or evaluating child-safe policies and procedures.
- Critical incidents are used to identify the root cause of the problem, identify risks to children's safety, and make improvements (see Incident Investigation Form)
- Children are supported to provide feedback, which is acted upon as required.

Principle 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

- The Director will ensure that policies and procedures are reviewed and compliant.
- Align Independence acknowledges that we will be accountable for our policies and procedures.
- Staff are trained and knowledgeable about organisation procedures, especially regarding child safety and complaint policy and procedure.