
Communication Style Guide

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Sets the best manner of speaking, writing about and presenting the organisation, the people it supports and its employees

1.0 Communication Style Guide

Purpose

- Sets out the best manner of speaking, writing about and presenting the organisation, the people it supports, and its employees
- Sets a professional standard for all material being sent outside NWSS
- Models the standards of communication expected between employees

When does it apply?

This guide applies at all times in all locations.

Who does it apply to?

It applies to all personnel including the Board of management and volunteers.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but, words can never hurt me”

Never has a saying got it so wrong as pointed out by author, Ruby Redfort:

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can also hurt me.

Stones and sticks break only skin, while words are ghosts that haunt me.

Slant and curved the word-swords fall, it pierces and sticks inside me.

Bats and bricks may ache through bones, but words can mortify me.

Pain from words has left its scar, on mind and hear that's tender.

Cuts and bruises have not healed, it's words that I remember.”

We need to carefully consider the messages our words, text, tone of voice and pictures sent to the public.

Our style guide helps us present people in a positive and valued way and, at the very least, a non harmful way.

Empathic reflection is a very good guide. How do I like to be written about, talked about and portrayed to others?

We would like the people we support to agree to let us tell their stories and introduce them through videos and photos. Their consent will depend on our style guide; how we portray them.

The NWSS Service Provision Agreement requests the following sign off: "I am happy for photos and videos to be taken of me by staff who have permission from the management team and, in accordance with the Style guide, Decision and consent and The use of videos and photos policies."

Portrayal

- Words and descriptions should be positive and add value to a person's identity. If clinical words and terms are called for, they must be accurate, the least harmful and only used for clinical purposes, never for social presentation to others
- Tone of voice should be age appropriate, dignified and respectful
- Imagery and audio (photos, videos and recordings) should be positive and add value to a person's identity

Internal communication within NWSS

No style guide is needed except for the dignity, respect and consideration of how it will be received.

The Service and Operations Managers are copied into all internal communication. They will monitor and feedback on style issues where necessary.

Draft documents can be checked by the Operations Manager before going out to shared homes etc.

All communication must be dignified, respectful and considered for how it will be received.

Important communication courtesies

- Avoid sending texts outside of business hours (8:30 - 5:30)
- Texts should be limited to things that require a quick response.
- avoid too many emojis, abbreviations common in casual text speak (lmao, omg, "k", etc.).
- Before you send a text, ask yourself why you are sending the message. What is the goal of the text? For example, if you want a RC to confirm an upcoming shift, clearly state what you are asking. It might seem like common sense, but it's important to be as clear as possible every time

Direct service agreements, pro formas, templates etc.

The Operations Manager will add to, correct or alter all direct service documents and keep a folder of master copies in Google Drive.

The management team will direct any updating or need for new documents to the Operations Manager who will confer with the General Manager.

Outgoing reports, professional documents and imagery

The Service and Operations Managers are to be copied into all documents leaving the organisation for external destinations such as families, other services, allied health professionals, support coordinators, behaviour practitioners, doctors, specialists, NDIS etc.

The Operations Manager will edit these documents prior to them being sent.

Website and public exposure documents and imagery

Editor - Neal Rodwell

Style guide considerations are to minimise harm and create consistency and professionalism