



1. Summary

This open disclosure policy provides Lighthouse Disability staff with a structured way of ensuring open and honest communication with clients, their families/guardians, who have been, or may potentially be, harmed by an adverse event or incident. Open disclosure is a client’s right and a core professional requirement and service obligation as part of risk management and quality improvement.

Effective open disclosure and incident management processes are attributes of high-quality service provision and important parts of quality improvement and a person-centred approach. Lighthouse Disability recognises the importance of supporting employees through open disclosure.

Lighthouse Disability adopts a “no-blame” approach to adverse event investigation.

Lighthouse Disability carries out suitable recommendations to improve practice, services and systems

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all communication with clients and families/guardians following actual or potential harm from an incident or adverse event. Open disclosure applies to all client experiences of actual and potential harm suffered and does not have to be permanent or serious for open disclosure principles to apply.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- a. enable Lighthouse Disability to provide open and timely information and have open dialogue with clients and their families/guardians when an incident or adverse event occurs that results in a person receiving supports and services from Lighthouse Disability being harmed or potentially harmed.
- b. provide a framework for open disclosure that supports client’s, their families and guardians, and employees and ensures that practice aligns with the principle of the framework; and
- c. ensure that Lighthouse Disability’s approach to open disclosure adheres to the principles of the Australian Open Disclosure Framework.

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This document is to be reviewed:	Every two years	
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4. Policy Statement

Open disclosure is:

- a. a client's right to clear information and support in a way that meets their needs
- b. an acknowledgement or expression of regret that an adverse event or incident has occurred
- c. a core professional requirement and obligation
- d. a normal part of support should an incident or adverse event occur
- e. a critical element of open and honest communication
- f. an important part of risk management and quality improvement
- g. not a legal process
- h. not acceptance of blame.

Lighthouse Disability recognises the importance of supporting employees through the open disclosure process.

Lighthouse Disability adopts a "no blame" approach to incident investigation.

Lighthouse Disability will consider and implement appropriate recommendations to improve practice, services and systems.

Lighthouse Disability is guided by the following eight principles that underpin its open disclosure:

Principle 1: Open and timely communication

If an adverse event or incident resulting in actual or potential harm occurs, the client, their family/guardian will be provided with timely, open and honest information about what happened in a way that meets their needs. The process will often involve the provision of ongoing information. Consideration will be given to the needs of the client, their family/guardian in providing appropriate support e.g. referral to an external advocate.

Principle 2: Acknowledgement

All adverse events and incidents resulting in actual or potential harm will be acknowledged to the client, their family/guardian as soon as practicable. Lighthouse Disability will acknowledge when an incident has occurred and initiate open disclosure.

Principle 3: Apology or expression of regret

As early as possible, the client, their family/guardian will receive an apology or expression of regret for any potential or actual harm that has resulted from the adverse event or incident. This apology or statement of regret is a sincere expression of regret but is not admission of liability or apportioning of blame.

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Principle 4: Supporting and meeting the needs and expectations of clients, their family/guardian(s)

The client, their family/guardian can expect to be fully informed of the facts surrounding an adverse event or incident and its consequences. They will be treated with empathy, respect and consideration, and supported in a manner appropriate to their needs.

Principle 5: Supporting and meeting the needs and expectations of employees

Through education and training, Lighthouse Disability creates an environment in which all employees are encouraged and able to recognise and report adverse events and incidents, resulting in actual or potential harm, participate in open disclosure and supported through the open disclosure process.

Principle 6: Integrated risk management and systems improvement

Adverse events and incident review and investigation processes will focus on the risk management and quality improvement, with outcomes focussing on improving - systems effectiveness. The information obtained about adverse events and incidents from the open disclosure process will be incorporated into quality improvement.

Principle 7: Good Governance

Open disclosure is underpinned by good governance frameworks, incident and risk management and quality improvement processes. These systems allow for investigation and analysis of adverse events and incidents to prevent recurrence. Good governance involves a system of accountability through Lighthouse Disability's Senior Leadership Team, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Board to ensure appropriate changes are implemented and their effectiveness evaluated. Good governance will include the organisation's performance monitoring and reporting.

Principle 8: Confidentiality

Lighthouse Disability's policies and procedures are developed with full consideration of the privacy and confidentiality of clients, their family/guardian's and employees, in compliance with relevant legislation.

Legal and Insurer Advice

All written correspondence containing an acknowledgement of an adverse event or incident resulting in actual or potential harm will be approved by Lighthouse Disability's CEO. Advice will be sought from Lighthouse Disability's insurer if necessary.

Legal advice about the wording of an apology will be sought by the CEO where appropriate.

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In some circumstance Lighthouse Disability’s CEO or insurer may advise that a letter not be sent. In this case an alternative process for communication will be determined.

Where there is evidence or concern that a client has suffered harm as a direct result of Lighthouse Disability’s negligent acts or omissions, prior to engaging in open disclosure, advice will be sought from the CEO and Lighthouse Disability’s insurer will be notified about the incident.

5. Responsibilities

The following persons are responsible for implementation and compliance monitoring of the open disclosure policy:

- a. Chief Executive Officer
- b. Senior Leadership
- c. All Managers

6. Employee training and development

Incident Reporting and Case Noting at Lighthouse Disability
NDIS Worker Orientation Module “Quality, Safety and You”
Organisation Induction and Orientation

7. Related policies and procedures

Care Concerns & Incident Management System (including Reportable Incidents)
Client Privacy Policy
Clinical Governance Approach
Compliments and Complaints Policy
Risk Management Policy

8. Standards and Conventions

Australian Open Disclosure Framework
NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators
NDIS Code of Conduct
National Standards for Disability Services

9. Legislation

Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)
Information Privacy Principles (SA)
National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (Cth)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

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10. Glossary – refer to the Global Glossary for common definitions

Adverse event – An incident in which unintended harm resulted to a person receiving Lighthouse Disability’s services.

Apology – An expression of regret (that the person had a poor experience).

Confidentiality – An expectation that the information will not be distributed to other people. Distribution of information occurs with consent and only on a “need to know” basis.

Expression of regret – An expression of sorrow for the person’s experience or the harm experienced by the person. Expressing regret is not the same as admitting liability.

Harm (actual or potential) – Actual or potential impairment of structure or function of the body and/or any deleterious effect arising there from, including disease, injury, suffering, disability and death. Actual or potential harm may be physical, social or psychological. Examples of social and psychological harm include not having dignity, autonomy or beliefs respected, or a person being demeaned or insulted.

Governance – the system that guides how we manage the organisation.

Incident – An act, omission, event or circumstance that occurred in connection with providing supports or services to a person with disability and caused harm to the person, or had the potential to cause harm.

Open Disclosure – a structured way of ensuring open and honest communication with clients, their families/guardians, who have been, or may potentially be, harmed by an adverse event or incident. Open disclosure is a client’s right and a core professional requirement and service obligation as part of risk management and quality improvement.

Person centred approach – where the person is placed at the centre of the service and treated as a person first. The focus is on the person and what they can do, not their condition or disability. Support should focus on achieving the person's aspirations and be tailored to their needs and unique circumstances.

Privacy – the right to be left alone and have freedom from interference or intrusion.

Quality Improvement – a systematic, formal approach to the analysis of practice performance and efforts to improve performance.

Risk Management – process of identifying, assessing and controlling risks.

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