

Awesome work



In a previous life, my job involved regular contact with many community organisations including NDIS providers. Some good, some not so good. It quickly became clear to me that FOCAS was one of the best. Nothing I have seen since I started here as Manager has caused me to change that opinion. I would like to congratulate all the FOCAS team on their committed, creative and thoughtful work supporting participants and their families. Great stuff! I'm confident that we can keep up this high level of service and continue to improve on it.

History Notes

Since starting in the role of Manager I have been reviewing participant history notes. While much of what I have read is 'spot on' there are some areas requiring improvement. I have attached 2 resources that provide guidance on how to write history notes. 'Writing history notes' provides an effective overview of the how to write history notes along with the, do's and don'ts, while 'Sample history notes' provides specific examples. Some of these examples are lengthy and this level of detail is often not required, however I feel the examples do provide you with a good guideline for structure, language and the areas that should be covered in your history notes. Many of you will have received some parts of these resources at staff training in Feb this year, however I ask that you please review them. If they are new to you, please ensure you read them thoroughly.

Here are a few key points that are particularly important...

- Ensure you complete each of the 3 sections of the History Notes with each support. If there are no 'areas of concern' then it is fine to write 'none', 'nil' or 'n/a' however the first 2 sections must be completed with sufficient information to cover all the points specified in the template. Ensure you support what you write with actions/examples.
- Always remain objective (factual) in your writing. Stick to writing behaviours (what you can see, hear, touch, and smell). Avoid writing opinions or unsupported statements.
- Make an effort to avoid typo's and pay attention to spelling and grammar.
- Confidential disclosures should not be recorded in detail in history. Write in general terms avoiding content which may cause distress for the participant. Confidential disclosures should not be recorded in detail in history notes. Make reference to the disclosure in general terms only and contact me to discuss further action.

Please keep in mind that participants, participant family members (and, with permission, auditors) have access to the history notes that you write. I have always encouraged participants and their significant others to read their history notes and will continue to do so.

Individual staff supervision

In January 2021, I will commence a program of regular, individual staff supervision. Once every 6 months we will have what is often referred to as 'professional conversation' in person, over the phone or by zoom – your choice. You will receive an emailed invite with a date and time that you will need to accept and indicate by what method you would like the session to take place. If you need to change the date or time that is fine, but please ensure you contact me with some notice so we can work out a suitable alternative. You will also receive an outline of what will be discussed.

Not only is this a NDIS compliance requirement but best practice for an organisation. It presents an opportunity to highlight and discuss good practice and identify areas for improvement. It's also a good time for you to tell me how I can support you more effectively, discuss future training and development, and make suggestions for improving our service provision.

New support staff

Pip Edgcombe joins us this month in the role community facilitator. A warm welcome to Pip, and it's wonderful to have you on the FOCAS team. I hope you find your experience with FOCAS fulfilling. If you have contact with Pip be sure to give her a cheery welcome and share the information she needs to settle into her role smoothly.



Shoalhaven Disability IDPWD Expo

On Thurs 3 Dec FOCAS participated in the 2020 Shoalhaven Disability IDPWD Expo at the Nowra Aquatic Centre. The weather stayed on our side (although a little on the chilly side for swimming) and I spoke with a number of people interested in finding out more about what FOCAS does. Some FOCAS participants and support workers also dropped by and shared their wisdom and experiences with these people. Thank you! Extra big thanks to Kelly Wrightson (FOCAS participant and Vice President of the FOCAS Management Committee) and Lana Holman (President of the FOCAS Management Committee) who played an active role on the FOCAS stall.

Emails/Texts

As you are all aware email, phone and text are the main methods the office-based staff use to communicate with you. Of these, email would be the primary method. As you are also aware, we have to use these methods to communicate all sorts of information including that which is urgent or requiring a prompt response and so on. Therefore, please ensure you check and, where necessary respond, to your emails daily. Let us know to update our contacts if your email address changes.

Christmas

I would like to wish everyone a very happy and safe festive period. Take time out, do the things you enjoy and be with those who are important to you. The FOCAS office will be closed from Wed 23.12.20 and re-opening Mon 4.1.21. Support that has been arranged with participants between 24.12.20 and 3.1.21 will of course go ahead but there will be no access to the FOCAS office. For urgent matters during this period please contact Kath on 0434145358. If you need to cancel a support in this period, please follow the cancellation of supports procedure recently emailed to you and also copied below for your reference. However, in this period it won't be possible to organise an alternative worker so please inform the participant and family/carer of this when you contact them.



Cancellation of supports procedure

- 1. Contact the participant/family member/grp home to let them know you are unable to provide the support (text, call, email - whatever works best). While most of the time we can assume that the participant would still like the support/s to go ahead with a replacement worker, please confirm that this is in fact the case. If it is the case, please let the person know that FOCAS will do their best to organise a replacement with another suitable worker and will be in touch where necessary.*
- 2. Contact Marg and Kath with the above information (Marg is still taking primary responsibility for staff replacements at this stage but it's important that I am in the loop so I can take on this role in the future). As much notice as possible is appreciated especially when it comes to planned time off or a commitment/appointment that has been organised in advance. If you are unwell, ideally let us know the day before your support. we understand these sorts of things can develop quickly or just happen on the spot, but if you can let us know between 7-7.30am on the day of your support we are in a much better position to organise a suitable replacement.*

A BIG THANK YOU TO YOU ALL