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Sensory



CLIENT HANDBOOK



We believe in providing the highest quality of service possible to children and families. We respect the individuality of each child and each family; we value the gifts that each child has to offer. We look for beauty and strength, and we are never disappointed. We honour the child, not the challenge, and seek to support the child in showing and being all that he/she really is. We recognize the power that belief, hope and love hold in the therapeutic process. We believe in what is possible, in what can be.

Welcome to The Sensory Gym®

We have developed this booklet to provide information and assist you in understanding what it means to be a client of The Sensory Gym® as well as inform you of the services we provide. This manual has been prepared to assist both staff and clients in understanding The Sensory Gym's® policies, practices and ethics for service delivery. For more detailed copies of our working policies and procedures please see reception or contact service management and these will be provided.

The Sensory Gym® is a paediatric occupational therapy practice that was established in 2005 by Colleen Hacker, MS, OTR. The Sensory Gym® provides services for families with children who have individual differences in their abilities; these differences in abilities create challenges in daily life sufficient enough to interfere with the child's occupational performance and function. While our services are primarily specialized intervention for the child, we also work directly with the family as we believe in the concept of family-centred care. We recognize the impact of the child's differences on the entire family system and aim to educate, inform, empower, and uplift families as they seek to better understand and support their child.

The Sensory Gym®, while operating out of one clinic in the Hawkesbury District of Sydney, provides services to clients Australia-wide. Our services include individual occupational therapy sessions, offered in either weekly therapy sessions or in therapy intensives. We also provide peer sessions and specialized groups that are tailored to the individual needs of our clients.

The Sensory Gym® is also the founder of the Camp Jabiru programs. Currently, we run Camp Jabiru in the April school holidays each year, Beyond Jabiru in the October school holidays each year, and Family Jabiru over a 3-day weekend in the spring. These programs, with their intensive staffing and individual goal establishment, allow for tremendous achievement in a very short time.

The Sensory Gym®, while offering only occupational therapy services on its premises, does believe in a team approach that centres around cohesive and comprehensive care for the client. Families integrally involved in all aspects of goal setting, treatment planning, and intervention. As well, we collaborate with other members of the child's team, including other health, medical and educational professionals, to ensure consistency and completeness in the client's care.

For more information about our services, please visit our website (sensorygym.com.au) or contact a member of our staff.

Practice Standards:

Australia has a nation approach to quality and safety. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is an independent government body which registers and regulates providers. The Commission ensures services are provided to participants by providers that meet the NDIS Practice Standards. These standards improve the quality and safety of NDIS services and supports, ensure investigation and resolution of problems, and strengthen the skills and knowledge of providers and participants. These standards also promote effective management, appropriate access and service delivery, and service user/client rights and responsibilities.

Certification:

To ensure that we provide the highest quality of services and care, The Sensory Gym® complies with the practice standards set out by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. We adhere to current policies regarding certification for remaining qualified as a provider under NDIS.

CORE SUPPORTS

PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORTS

Each participant accesses supports that promote, uphold, and respect his/her legal and human rights. Each participant is enabled to exercise informed choice and control. The provision of supports promotes, upholds, and respects individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination, and decision-making.

The Sensory Gym® (is committed to delivering a person-centred approach across all stages of service delivery. Staff at The Sensory Gym® respect the right of each person accessing our service to be at the centre of all levels of decision making and are committed to empowering all individuals to be in control of their own decision making and choices.

Staff at The Sensory Gym® work with individuals to identify their needs, goals and aspirations, and implement plans which recognise and build on their strengths. Person-centred plans also demonstrate consideration of the broader family, cultural, social and community networks and communities in which the individual is involved. Similarly, planning will also promote meaningful participation in other communities and networks in which the individual would like to be included.

The Sensory Gym® acknowledges and values the experience, knowledge and contributions of parents, carers, advocates, and other circles of support (both informal and formal). The knowledge and wishes of parents/carers and professionals is respected and drawn on in the planning process and during service delivery, with the needs and preferences of the individual being paramount at all times.

INDIVIDUAL VALUES AND BELIEFS

Each participant accesses supports that respect his/her culture, diversity, values, and beliefs.

The Sensory Gym® recognises the importance of diversity and endeavours to ensure that all service provision and planning is respectful and inclusive of cultural identity, religious beliefs, disability, gender or sexuality. These needs are clarified on assessment and during planning. Feedback is sought throughout service delivery to ensure that individuals feel their needs are being respected and supported.

The Sensory Gym® recognises and respects that individuals and families from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds may have particular cultural needs. These individual needs are identified and discussed when assessment information is gathered and will be respected in service delivery. When community connections are researched and facilitated on behalf of individuals and their families, staff at The Sensory Gym® ensures these connections are also respectful of cultural needs, with priority given to seeking specialist services and organisations catering to those from that individual's cultural community.

PRIVACY AND DIGNITY

Each participant accesses supports that respect and protect his/her dignity and right to privacy.

At The Sensory Gym®, we value and respect the privacy, confidentiality and dignity of clients, families, and our employees. Our policies and processes are consistent with legislation and services standards to ensure that we maintain and respect participants' personal information. When information and/or images need to be shared with others, participant consent is obtained.

INDEPENDENCE AND INFORMED CHOICE

Each participant is supported by the provider to make informed choices, exercise control, and maximise his/her independence relating to the supports provided.

The Sensory Gym® utilizes innovative and flexible methods and strategies to empower all individuals to make informed decisions for themselves to the best of their ability. This includes making all communications about service provision and goal setting accessible (e.g. use of augmentative and alternative communication systems and technology, using plain English). The Sensory Gym® welcomes individuals taking any time needed to consider their service options and discussing them with other circles of support.

VIOLENCE, ABUSE, NEGLECT, EXPLOITATION, AND DISCRIMINATION

Each participant accesses supports free from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination.

Participants, families, employees, and volunteers have the right to be free from physical, sexual, verbal and other forms of abuse, harassment, and assault. Any allegation of abuse/assault or neglect is treated seriously and may be subject to both mandatory reporting and police involvement. If you have any concerns or are aware of a situation where this may be occurring, please discuss it with an employee of The Sensory Gym®.

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Each participant's support is overseen by robust governance and operational management systems relevant and proportionate to the size and scale of the provider and the scope and complexity of supports delivered.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risks to participants, workers, and the provider are identified and managed.

Both participant and employee safety is a priority for The Sensory Gym®. It is important that risks to safety are appropriately identified and addressed to ensure the health and well being of all. We have a legal responsibility to provide safe working environments to all participants, employees, and visitors.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Each participant benefits from a quality management system relevant and proportionate to the size and scale of the provider, which promotes continuous improvement of support delivery.

The Sensory Gym® aims to provide a quality service that meets our participants' needs and which is continually improved to ensure it maintains the highest quality of services available. We are continually seeking feedback and suggestions on how we can improve the services we provide.

If you have any suggestions or ideas, please discuss these with our employees so that we can use them to improve our services. On an annual basis, we also conduct client surveys to encourage feedback from our participants.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Management of each participant's information ensures that it is identifiable, accurately recorded, current, and confidential. Each participant's information is easily accessible to the participant and is appropriately utilized by relevant workers.

The Sensory Gym® is legally required to store information on the participant's behalf. The information stored includes your service arrangements, support plans, and support needs. The Sensory Gym® retains records in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements and observes National Privacy Principles.

When accessing services at The Sensory Gym®, the participant consents to information that is relevant to service being collected, used, and retained. This information is stored in lockable file cabinets that only employees can access. It may also be stored in The Sensory Gym's® password protected database.

Participants have the rights to access their records. If this is needed, please discuss with The Sensory Gym's® receptionist or office manager. In some cases, a small fee may be charged to offset any administration and/or copying costs to provide the information.

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Each participant has knowledge of and access to the provider's complaints management and resolution system. Complaints and other feedback made by all parties are welcomed, acknowledged, respected, and well-managed.

The Sensory Gym® staff continuously seek feedback from individuals and their families to ensure that service delivery continues to stay relevant to the individual's needs and goals, and that they are comfortable and satisfied with the direction of service in working towards their goals. Service delivery plans will also be adjusted to accommodate changes in needs, goals and individual circumstances as required.

The Sensory Gym® has a clear and accessible complaints procedure and welcomes feedback in evaluating and improving service delivery. The Sensory Gym® also maintains a continuous improvement system to ensure ongoing evaluation of service delivery and improvement which incorporates feedback from those using the service.

If The Sensory Gym's action toward complaint resolution is found unsatisfactory, further support for lodging complaints can be made through:

- The Office of the Ombudsman NSW (ombo.nsw.gov.au; 9286-1000)
- OT Australia (info@otaus.com.au)
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Agency (ahpra.gov.au)
- NDIS Commission (ndiscommission.gov.au)

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Each participant is safeguarded by the provider's incident management system, ensuring that incidents are acknowledged, responded to and well-managed. Incident management also ensures that learning transpires from incidents that occur, so that continual improvement is possible.

The Sensory Gym® makes use of an incident management plan and incident report form to identify, register, treat, control, and report incidents. Management on the outcomes of incidents is passed on to the persons involved, in the form of feedback.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Each participant's support needs are met by workers who are competent in relation to their role, who hold relevant qualifications, and who have relevant expertise and experience to provide person-centred care.

The Sensory Gym® employs people who are appropriately trained and qualified to meet client needs and requirements. The practice provides ongoing supervision for its employees as well as many opportunities for continued professional development. This is to ensure that the employees at The Sensory Gym® are practicing at the highest level and quality of service with respect to current knowledge in the fields of child development, neuroscience, and mental health. The Sensory Gym® provides services that are evidence-informed.

CONTINUITY OF SUPPORTS

Each participant has access to timely and appropriate support without interruption.

The Sensory Gym® is currently operating at full capacity, and recruitment is an ongoing process due to the extremely high demand for services in the Nepean/Blue Mountains area. There is a large wait list for services, which The Sensory Gym® endeavours to reduce as much as possible.

Where scheduled services need to change, all effort is made to find a mutually convenient time for the participant, the family and the therapist. When this cannot be arranged, or when a therapist is taking leave or moving on from the service, all effort is made to provide a transfer to another therapist with a transition plan to reduce disruption to the participant. In a service which operates at capacity, it may not be possible for alternative arrangements to be made. In these cases, the participant may be offered a place at the top of wait list or may be referred on to another suitable service provider to ensure continuity of service.

Each participant's service is individualised with thorough information gathered regarding the individual's support needs, strengths, challenges and preferences. Our therapists use evidence-based interventions and practice in a person-centred framework. Informal feedback is given and received at each session to ensure that the service is meeting the needs and expectations of the individual. Case notes are made after each session in order to monitor and support ongoing progress.

The Sensory Gym® follows the cancellation policy as prescribed in the NDIS Price Guide; however, when there are complexities relating to the participant's health, disability or family situation The Sensory Gym® staff does its best to offer flexibility and to work with families to overcome barriers to attending service regularly. During periods of crisis, The Sensory Gym® staff may be called on to assist more frequently than the participant's regular sessions.

ACCESS TO SUPPORTS

Each participant accesses the most appropriate supports to meet his/her needs.

Administrative staff at The Sensory Gym® manages the wait list and are knowledgeable about other service options in the local area and will make recommendations for other providers so families are aware of their options.

All new clients to The Sensory Gym® are provided with a welcome pack containing information about services offered at the clinic, including details of our responsibilities as a provider, costs and funding options of services, information regarding complaints and accountability and some information about what they can expect when they commence service. The responsibilities of participants are also detailed, and any breaches of those responsibilities are addressed with the goal of resolving any issues without disruption to the participant's service. When supports need to be withdrawn, efforts are made to refer the individual to another suitable service.

Before commencement of services, all participants are provided with their service agreement which they are supported to understand in the mode of communication that they prefer. Participants have the right to negotiate the provisions of their service agreement, which are renewed annually or upon request by the participant.

The clinic has two floors of therapy rooms to ensure accessibility for all participants. There is also a lift for access for all participants to the second floor of the space. Clinical spaces are designed and set up to be safe, private, designed for all abilities and enjoyable to attend. Parents are encouraged to be present in their child's session so that they too can increase their capacity; however when the participant chooses not to have his/her parent/carer present, there is a waiting room on each floor with amenities and activities for siblings.

SUPPORT PLANNING

Each participant is actively involved in the development of his/her support plan. Support plans reflect participant needs, requirements, preferences, strengths, and goals. Support plans are regularly reviewed.

At The Sensory Gym®, participants and their families are involved in the development of their service plan. The service plan is prepared at commencement of the service when assessment and information gathering is used to assess relevant approaches and strategies to support the individual to progress towards his/her goals. During this process, information gathered is also used to identify risks that may need to be addressed and planned for during the service. Feedback is given and obtained informally within each session, and the support plan is reviewed with the participant and his/her family at the recommencement of each service agreement to ensure that the participant is satisfied with his/her service and working towards his/her desired outcomes.

As most participants are young children, communication and collaboration with families is generally involved, particularly to ensure that the family is also learning and improving in its capacity to support its child/young person at home and in the community. With the participant's permission, this may also include working with schools, other services or community groups to improve outcomes outside of the service also.

When progress is different from the goals and outcomes identified at the beginning of the service plan, The Sensory Gym® staff collaborates with the participant and his/her family to amend the service plan to be more suitable.

SERVICE AGREEMENTS WITH PARTICIPANTS

Each participant has a clear understanding of the supports he/she has chosen and how they will be provided.

All participants have a Service Agreement which must be agreed to and signed before services commence. The Sensory Gym® renews service agreements annually. All participants and their representatives are supported to understand their service agreement's provisions, including the rights and responsibilities of all parties, complaints procedures, and the financial details of service provision. The service agreement may be terminated at any time by the participant, and any remaining funding will be promptly released.

RESPONSIVE SUPPORT PROVISION

Each participant accesses responsive, timely, competent, and appropriate supports to meet their needs, desired outcomes, and goals.

The Sensory Gym® staff strives to provide service that is responsive, timely, competent and appropriate so that all participants are supported to meet their needs, goals and desired outcomes.

The Sensory Gym® staff use evidence-based practices which are directed by individual needs, strengths, abilities and goals. Participants are empowered to direct their own service as much as is possible. Staff strives to be flexible and responsive to the needs of those they are supporting, particularly given that many clients face large challenges in their everyday lives which impact how they present to their sessions on any given day. Staff ask questions about school, home and family life, etc. to gain an understanding of how an individual might be feeling on that day and ascertains that the participant is comfortable with what they have planned for the session (and throughout the session also).

Where appropriate and where consent is given, The Sensory Gym® collaborates with families, schools, services and other stakeholders to ensure that outcomes across all of daily life are also being addressed, rather than simply focusing on what is happening for the individual in a clinical setting.

The Sensory Gym® strives to ensure that individual needs and preferences are taken into account when allocating therapists (e.g. gender, cultural background, specialised training/experience/skills of the therapist) to promote a good therapeutic rapport, and to support more successful outcomes. When a therapist is not the right “fit” for a participant, he/she is able to request another clinician and all efforts will be made to support this.

TRANSITIONS TO AND FROM THE PROVIDER

Each participant experiences a planned and coordinated transition to or from the provider.

When participants move on from our service, a transition plan is planned and implemented with the consent and involvement of the participant. To ensure a smooth transition, therapists at The Sensory Gym® strive to hand over the same information they would like to receive on beginning service with a new participant. Consent is checked with the participant before any information is shared.

Intake to the service involves assessment and information gathering by the therapist as to needs, goals, preferences, strengths, any reports the participant might have, a full history, discussion of what has and hasn't been helpful in the past, and risk assessment. This is undertaken by the participant's therapist within the context of their discipline.

Staff at The Sensory Gym® is aware that new participants to the service may have had difficult experiences elsewhere, or have not undertaken the type of service they are commencing before. Full information is provided via the welcome pack, and the therapist will communicate clearly with the participant and his/her family as to what they are doing in therapy, as well as the reasons why. This involves discussing any risks and also ascertaining if there are any difficulties for the individual with this approach.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Each participant accesses supports in a safe environment that is appropriate to his/her needs.

PARTICIPANT MONEY AND PROPERTY

Participant money and property is secure, and each participant uses his/her own money and property as he/she determines.

The Sensory Gym® is not involved in any aspect of managing participants' money or property, other than invoicing and collecting for services received.

MANAGEMENT OF MEDICATION

Each participant requiring medication is confident that his/her provider administers, stores, and monitors the effects of his/her medication and works to prevent errors or incidents.

The Sensory Gym® is not responsible for administering or storing medication. The staff at The Sensory Gym® may report to parents should they notice any differences in a participant's behaviour that could potentially be due to medication.

MANAGEMENT OF WASTE

Each participant, each worker, and any other person in the home is protected from harm as a result of exposure to waste, infectious, or hazardous substances generated during the delivery of supports.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS

THE CHILD

Each child participant accesses supports that promote and respect his/her legal and human rights, support his/her development of functional skills, and enable him/her to participate meaningfully and be included in everyday activities with his/her peers.

THE FAMILY

Each family receives family-centred supports that are culturally inclusive, responsive, and focus on the family's strengths.

The aim of The Sensory Gym® is to assist the family and the child to achieve any goals that the family and child have identified. Staff at The Sensory Gym® will discuss goals, needs, and requirements with the family and child to determine how we can best work together to help goals be accomplished.

The Sensory Gym® actively supports children in attaining their potential. We respect the importance of individual in making informed choices, taking risks, and learning from new experiences. We endeavour to foresee risks, prepare for them and promote safety, while also supporting freedom of choice.

Children and their families participate as fully as possible in making decisions about the support and services they receive. They may choose to involve an advocate to assist in making any decisions or supporting them in understanding what is happening. The Sensory Gym® supports participants in this respect by offering facilitation of advocacy services where needed, to the ability the practice can supply. This service offered by the National Disability Advocacy Program on the DSS website; it lists the agencies throughout the country that are funded by the National Disability Advocacy Program.

INCLUSION

Each participant accesses supports that engage his/her natural environments and enable inclusive and meaningful participation in his/her family and community life.

All individuals have the right to feel valued. All individuals also have the right to contribute and develop abilities that enable them to participate and engage in activities of interest. The Sensory Gym® encourages each participant to discuss, participate in planning, and enable us to assist in achieving any goals or ambitions relevant to the participant and his/her family.

At The Sensory Gym®, we encourage each participant to be involved in any community groups, networks, or other agencies that are of interest to the participant, support the needs of the participant or the participant's family, and have significant meaning to the participant.

COLLABORATION

Each participant receives coordinated supports from a collaborative team comprising his/her family, the provider and other relevant providers, to facilitate his/her development and address the family's needs and priorities.

The Sensory Gym® fosters relationships and works closely with other service providers, schools, early childhood settings and community based social, cultural and religious organisations. Staff at The Sensory Gym® work collaboratively with other organisations and professionals involved in an individual's life to ensure consistency and a person-centred approach. Staff at The Sensory Gym® also uses these professional relationships and knowledge to make recommendations and referrals when external supports would be beneficial to individuals.

When individuals and their circles of support disagree, staff at The Sensory Gym® will make every effort to support all parties to reach an agreement while ensuring the individual's wishes are heard and respected. When external bodies (e.g. foster care agencies, FACS, Guardianship) have decision making authority for an individual, staff at The Sensory Gym® will support the individual and his/her parents/carers in advocating for the wishes of the individual in decision making. Individuals and their families will also be supported in assessing any potential risks and benefits of options they are considering, with The Sensory Gym® endeavouring to safely support individual choice.

Staff at The Sensory Gym® will ensure that individuals and their circles of support understand what is involved in service delivery, how tasks and activities during service activity will contribute towards the achievement of their goals, what strategies will be used to overcome barriers, and the rationale behind different practices in working towards individual outcomes. Goals and service delivery arrangements will be clearly documented and made available to individuals and their families via their Service Agreement. Goals and service delivery arrangements will be consistent with the individual's identified person-centred goals as specified in his/her NDIS plan. Reporting will address individual outcomes and evaluate progress towards the individual's goals.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Each participant receives supports that build the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the family and other collaborating providers in order to support the participant's learning and development.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE

Each participant receives evidence-informed supports from providers with quality standards and validated practice.

OUTCOME BASED APPROACH

Each participant receives supports that are outcome-based and goal-focused.