

9.4 PROMOTING FRIENDSHIPS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

This policy outlines BACI's approach to promoting friendships for the people we support. Employees, volunteers and support persons will assist all of the people BACI supports to develop friendships in the most appropriate way for each person, while ensuring the well-being of the individual. This approach affirms BACI's belief that genuine friendships are fundamental human rights and essential to social inclusion. Our goal is to help create environments, opportunities, and supports that encourage people with disabilities to form authentic and lasting connections with others.

Friendships will develop with the knowledge of the present support network, depending upon the person's ability to give informed consent. The support network includes the people who play a meaningful role in the person's life (family and existing friends).

If employees, volunteers and support persons have concerns that a relationship is not in the best interest of the person, they will raise their concerns to the person or the support network if the person is not able to give informed consent.

Guidelines

- BACI honours each person's preferences, choices, and cultural background when supporting their social goals.
- Avoid overreliance on paid relationships as a substitute for genuine social connection.
- BACI believes friendships thrive in inclusive environments and will support access to community activities and social networks.
- People served will be empowered to express their interests, make social choices, and develop confidence in building relationships.
- BACI recognizes that forming relationships involves risk, and we will support people in navigating social experiences while respecting their autonomy.

Wherever a person requires support in maintaining ongoing friendships, support guidelines will be put in place. Support guidelines will include:

- The name, address and phone number of each friend;
- A support plan.

The amount of information included in the support plan is up to the person and their support staff, but shall include:

- The history of the relationship;
- Strategies to support the person in building on the relationship if they are unable to independently initiate (e.g., sending cards or gifts on special occasions);
- Favorite shared activities;
- Personal care and medical considerations.

All efforts to promote friendships will be guided by the informed consent of the person. Staff will respect personal boundaries, privacy, and the person's right to make their own social decisions.

Linking Policies

- 1.1 Vision & Mission Statements
- 1.2 Guiding Principles
- 1.8 Code of Ethics
- 1.12 Corporate Responsibility
- 9.1 Rights & Responsibilities of People with Disabilities
- 9.2 Family Involvement
- 9.3 Advocate & Friend Involvement
- 9.5 Involvement in Decision Making