



STATEMENT

**Family
Involvement**

Policy # BD 15

Community Living Kingston
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SECTION Board of Directors January 2008¹

Preamble

Recognizing that intellectual disability is often associated with diminished powers of judgment, it is the usual practice to treat parents or next-of-kin *as if they were the guardian of the person*. While the family member may have no legal standing as a substitute decision-maker, that practice assures all concerned that someone with first loyalty to the person will be able to counter-balance any agency bias in all significant decisions. An adult with intellectual disability who is regarded under law to be a competent citizen may, and typically does benefit from the involvement of a competent family member or independent advocate.

Community Living Kingston neither seeks nor accepts any powers as substitute decision-maker. Participation in programs and services is voluntary and offered by Community Living Kingston on a permissive basis. Therefore, family involvement is essential to many important decisions such as consent to medical treatment.

Family involvement is the norm in this organization which began as a parents association. We support, we do not supplant, the family. Parents and family members originally formed Community Living Kingston and have always comprised at least half the Directors on the Board. Family involvement is a feature of organizational culture and a condition of work for staff.

Policy

Family involvement in the lives of service users shall be supported and respected unless otherwise determined in a court of law, and particularly:

1. The staff shall consult with parents or next-of-kin in all significant decisions affecting the lives of people supported by Community Living Kingston unless the family has formally directed otherwise.
2. Agency employees shall deliver supports in ways that encourage and facilitate the involvement of the service user's family.
3. In the event of a difference of opinion between members of the staff and the parents or next-of-kin of a person served, the family's will shall not be arbitrarily set aside and the Association shall encourage mediation until the dispute is resolved. In addition, Persons served have recourse under Board Policy # 16, Rights of Participants, and families have recourse under Operations Policy # 3.08 – Dispute Resolution.

¹ This Statement is revised from an earlier one enacted May 26, 2003.