RESPECT IN ACTION: UPHOLDING CLIENT RIGHTS IN NONPROFIT SERVICE DELIVERY

Dignity, fairness, and respect — the foundation of ethical service.

At the heart of every nonprofit lies a simple truth: our work is about people. Upholding client rights ensures that those we serve are treated with respect, fairness, and dignity. Whether supporting families, advocating for change, or delivering programmes, protecting rights builds trust — the cornerstone of impact. Here's how to strengthen a culture of respect in your organisation.

1 RECOGNISE CLIENT RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS

Client rights are not abstract ideals — they are grounded in law and ethics.

- Under the Bermuda Human Rights Act 1981, no one can be discriminated against in access to services.
- Uphold equitable access regardless of age, race, ability, gender, or belief.
- Ensure policies and practices reflect both legal and ethical standards.
- Model respect in every interaction — from intake to follow-up.

✓ ***Protecting rights is not only compliance — it's care in action.***

2 DEFINE THE CLIENT RELATIONSHIP CLEARLY

The client relationship begins at first contact.

- Define who your clients are — individuals, families, community groups, or partner organisations.
- Ensure clients understand their rights and responsibilities from the outset.
- Promote informed consent: services should be understood, voluntary, and documented.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality in compliance with PIPA.

✓ ***Every interaction should reinforce fairness, transparency, and empowerment.***

3 EMBED THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF CLIENT RIGHTS

Strong client rights frameworks rest on five pillars.

- **Informed Consent** — clients understand services, risks, and alternatives.
- **Confidentiality & Privacy** — personal data is protected and shared only when appropriate.
- **Access to Services** — equitable, consistent, and culturally responsive delivery.
- **Participation & Self-Determination** — clients contribute to decisions about their care.
- **Grievance & Appeal** — clients can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

✓ ***The key is consistency — regular review and open dialogue.***

4 SAFEGUARD VULNERABLE PERSONS

Protection is a shared responsibility.

- Organisations serving children, seniors, or vulnerable adults must have a Vulnerable Persons Policy.
- Implement background checks, staff training, and incident reporting systems.
- Build awareness and vigilance to recognise signs of harm or neglect.
- Foster a culture of care, not suspicion — safeguarding is about prevention and protection.

✓ ***Safeguarding policies turn care into accountability.***

5 HANDLE COMPLAINTS WITH INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY

How an organisation manages complaints speaks volumes about its ethics.

- Display "Client Rights and Responsibilities" statements in all service locations and at intake.
- Establish and communicate a clear grievance procedure.
- Respond promptly, fairly, and without bias.
- Use complaints as opportunities to improve services and strengthen accountability.

✓ ***Listening and responding to feedback deepens trust and credibility.***

TAKEAWAY

Protecting client rights is not just about compliance — it's about living our values.

By embedding dignity, fairness, and respect into every aspect of service delivery, nonprofits build stronger relationships, more ethical workplaces, and greater impact.

Respect in action creates trust — and trust drives change.

Nonprofit Alliance OF BERMUDA

Learn more at nonprofitalliance.bm