



Final grant report: Get to know your AVO

Grant recipient	Intellectual Disability Rights Service Inc (IDRS) as lead agency with Self Advocacy Sydney Inc (SAS) in partnership
Project manager	Mitch Mulqueen
Position	Project Officer
Law and Justice Foundation awarded amount	\$49,407.00
Date of this report	17 October 2017

1. Description of the project

Describe the project in just enough detail so that anyone can understand it. What was the aim of the project, who was the intended audience and what strategies did you implement to achieve the aim?

The project set out to fill a gap in the information available for people with low literacy, learning disability or intellectual disability who are potential or actual defendants either in AVO applications, or who have been charged or are at risk of being charged with a breach of an AVO. This aim was to be achieved by creating a resource which would assist this target audience to better understand AVOs and the sort of behaviour that might lead to an AVO. This would include information about the legal process of an AVO, options for finalisation, the practical implications and importance of complying with conditions, and the consequences of breaching an AVO.

The resource is a short film with a cautionary dual tale storyline, scripted and acted by professionals, that highlights the key issues. There is a complementary, easy read, 6 page pamphlet that accompanies it. The resources were uploaded to YouTube and other legal relevant websites and the pamphlet is available online from the IDRS website.

2. The project – what happened?

How did the project come about?

IDRS and SAS identified that being a defendant (or respondent) in an AVO is one of the most common legal problems experienced by people with intellectual disability. SAS had identified that many of their service recipients experience confusion about AVOs and the resources available to explain them are not aimed at people who may have low literacy or learning difficulties. IDRS had similar experiences with the large number of defendants they support at court and police stations. IDRS proposed creating a short film. We had successfully produced and promoted similar resources in the past which enhance understanding about what to do and not do in certain complex legal situations. One such example is the “Getting Arrested” video and accompanying training.

Briefly set out the project stages and what happened in each stage.

There were six project stages.

Set up

- A reference group was sought and commitment received from members across the criminal justice and disability sectors. The members came from ALS NSW/ACT, Legal Aid NSW, The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, NSW Police, the IDRS legal team, Self Advocacy Sydney (SAS) and user representatives from SAS.
- eegenda was selected as the successful production company. They developed the script, produced the film and commissioned the written resource that accompanies the video.
- The project manager was recruited.

Consultation

- Consultation happened at every stage of the project and many times at each stage.
- Forums were held at the SAS office with people who have cognitive impairment to check the key messages of the scripts as they were developed, to view (or hear) the first and final cuts of the film, and to workshop the key messages and format for the written resource.
- A forum was held at IDRS with participants who had experience with AVOs during script development.
- The staff (lawyers and non-lawyers) at IDRS were consulted at various stages of the project and encouraged to provide written feedback which many did.
- NSW Police were consulted on all aspects of the script and filming that involved their participation.
- Legal Aid NSW provided feedback on critical legal aspects of script and film.
- The Principal Solicitor of IDRS oversaw the legal aspects of script, pamphlet content and film messaging.
- User members were surveyed on the draft version of film to check messaging and usefulness of material.

Script development

- The first draft of the film was produced in June 2016. The last (6th version) was finalised just prior to filming on 18 October 2016.
- Script testing involved two read throughs with the user group at SAS.
- A further review by experts including the IDRS AVO project group, other IDRS staff, legal experts, NSW Police and the reference group took place.

Pre-production

- Under the direction and responsibility of eegenda the pre-production work commenced:
 - Location search – six in all.
 - Auditions for actors to fill roles and then second call backs.

- ❑ Negotiation with agents over perpetuity of actors images, given YouTube and website distribution of materials.
- ❑ Contract with NSW Police to use their police officers in materials.
- Final version approved by all parties with legal accuracy sign off by IDRS and NSW Police.

Filming and post production

- Filming at six locations took place over a week and half.

Post production

- First cut of film produced by production team and delivered.
- Film viewed by IDRS staff at a meeting including legal staff and staff with intellectual disability - feedback recorded.
- Viewed by two senior NSW police officers.
- Viewed by SAS user group and direct feedback recorded.
- Viewed by solicitor from Legal Aid NSW at IDRS.
- Viewed at the CLEW network and committee convenors meeting at the CLCNSW Quarterlies February 2017.
- Two IDRS user members agreed to watch the film and be asked targeted questions that arose from the IDRS feedback about the film.
- Feedback summarised and IDRS AVO team decided what direction to give eegenda about changes.
- Suggested changes discussed with eegenda on the first cut of the film, leading to the second cut of the film.
- Second cut viewed by SAS user group and final comments provided to eegenda.
- Final version with credits delivered.
- Final viewing at IDRS confirmed content clear and aim achieved.

Launch, promotion and evaluation

- The film was uploaded to the IDRS website and YouTube. The pamphlet is also available on IDRS website in pdf version for printing.
- Details of the project uploaded to NACLIC CLEAR database.
- The film has been promoted through the IDRS public Facebook and IDRS member Facebook pages, including the Justice Support volunteer pages.
- Our Facebook promoter shared the film with every NSW Police Facebook page.
- The resource link has been shared throughout NSW Justice Health to those who work with people who have an intellectual disability and criminal matters.
- The resource link has been shared throughout the Community of Practice groups which arose from the Disability Justice Project lead by the CCWT.



- The film has been screened at IDRS to the Sydney volunteers of Justice Support (formerly CJSN) a volunteer group that works with people with intellectual disability involved in AVO and criminal matters.
- The pamphlet has been uploaded to the NSW Prisoners Portal.
- Future use – the film has become part of the IDRS educational resources we use in volunteer training, training with police and training with participants who have intellectual disability.

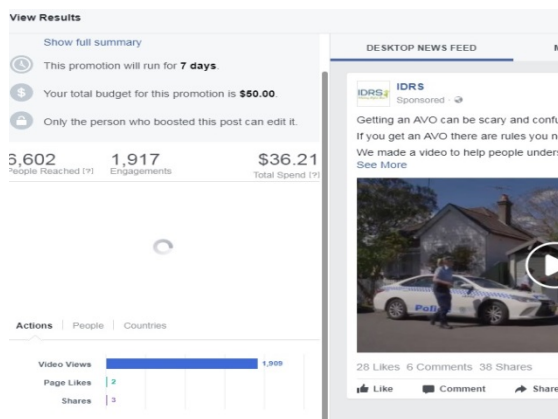
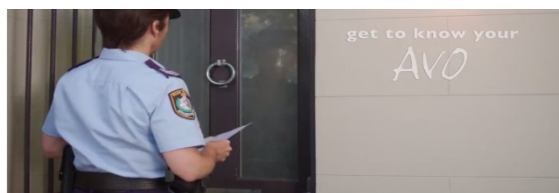
If grant materials were produced as part of the project:

How were they distributed?

The film distribution has occurred through IDRS Facebook and associated shares from that source, as well as the IDRS website and IDRS YouTube channel. The pamphlet is available in pdf format on the IDRS website.

What was the extent of the distribution?

At the time of writing this report, the post has been viewed on Facebook by 6.6K people, and the video has been viewed by 1.9k through our own Facebook page.



YouTube – 91 views to date. The IDRS website upload links to YouTube.

Email groups – 30 known direct contacts; Disability Justice Network Community of Practice groups and other disability user groups have been asked to distribute the film to their email groups.

Now that the project has concluded, how did the implementation and/or the outcome differ from what was originally intended? Did anything surprise you? Were there any unintended outcomes?

The outcome was, happily, what we intended but the implementation was the surprise. In the end the key messages of the project were achieved with a “less is more” approach to the information. This approach was based on the extensive collaboration with our SAS partners and their associated self-advocates, police and legal input, and people with intellectual disability who volunteered their time to view the film.

The one aspect that we quickly realised we couldn’t incorporate into the script and film was explanation of various legal options. The reason for this was the complexity of legal options. We

opted instead for a simple message of “it’s a good idea to get legal advice about your AVO”, and provide sources for getting that advice at the end of the film.

The written document guidelines had always been intended to follow the suggestions from the user group at SAS. The original project inspiration for a written resource was influenced by the SAS group who wanted a resource they could use to explain AVOs to people who approach their service. In conjunction with advice and guidance from the designer, the six page booklet became the resource of choice. The square and bold format is not like other pamphlets IDRS use so may not have been what we would have thought was needed. By having open ended guidelines the users were able to select the format they felt best met their needs.

3. Evaluation

What questions did you ask to evaluate whether you had achieved your aim?

First screening questions for professional viewers:

1. Do you think this resource is appropriate for the target audience?
2. Is the information accurate from your perspective?
3. What if any changes would you suggest to the content of the resource?

User testing first cut:

1. What did you think about this film?
2. Tell me in your own words what you think the film is about?
3. In more detail now, do you think there are some messages people might get from the film? What do you think those message are?
 - a. Message 1
 - b. Message 2
 - c. Message 3
4. Can you tell me anything about the words the characters say in the film?
5. Can you tell me anything about the pictures of writing you see in the film?
6. Can you tell me anything about the pictures, such as cartoon figures in the film?
7. Now that you have watched this film, what would you do if the police came to your door and gave you an AVO?
8. Can you remember any of the information at the end of the film? What do you remember?
9. Would you watch this film again if you had the chance to?
10. Would you tell a friend or family member to watch it?

Further evaluation after film completed:

Pre- viewing of the film

1. Have you ever heard of the expression AVO?
2. Do you know what it means?
3. Tell me what you know about Apprehended Violence Orders or AVOs.
4. Do you ever look things up on YouTube to help you out?
5. Do you know what a community legal centre is?

Post viewing of the film

1. Tell me in your own words what you think the film is about?
2. In more detail now, do you think there are some messages people might get from the film? What do you think those message are?
 - a. Message 1
 - b. Message 2
 - c. Message 3
3. What would you do if the police came to your door with paperwork that says you have an AVO?
4. If someone told you that they were going to get an AVO against you, what would you do? Who could you ask for expert help?
5. If you were told you have to go to Court about an AVO, how could you get help with this? Who would you ask? (if the person gives a name ask them to describe the relationship they have with this person – are they a personal contact or a professional person?)
6. Do you have any questions about AVOs now that you have seen the video?

DEBRIEF: Does the person need to debrief? Are they OK?

Did you achieve your aim? What did you find out?

Yes, we achieved our aim. In general, there were indications from SAS clients (who represented the target audience) that the message of the film was effective. For example one SAS group member said “The girl in the film should have got a support person to explain to her what her rules were so she didn’t break them”.

There was overwhelming support for the additional speech bubbles and visual tags and also the voice over to recap the story. This seemed to make the story much clearer and members reported an understanding of the key messages. Another example is, one viewer mentioned the “Back Off” visual. They said this was better than all the words about what you can and can’t do. Back off means all of them – stay away and leave the person alone.

Guidance about the information at the end of the film was followed and the film closing information was updated in line with SAS suggestions.

The individual feedback also highlighted the effectiveness of the “Back Off” message and how Alex’s behaviour was “harassing and like bullying someone at school”. The individual feedback also highlighted an understanding of seeking legal help.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

What is your conclusion?

The project aim was to provide accessible information resources to enhance understanding of AVOs amongst people with intellectual disabilities – in particular those who are defendants in AVO applications.

From our user testing it seems clear that the message is understandable. The final cut even more so due to the amendments made by eegenda. The style of film, being more soap opera than documentary, makes the film watchable and the additional tags, speech bubbles and simple recapping of messages makes the information more accessible for our target audience.

In terms of distribution, the film and written resource are available via the internet which allows a far greater spread of materials than could have been achieved using the traditional DVD supplied method of film distribution and hard copy pamphlets.

What are your recommendations for improvements both for the intended audience of your project, and for the strategy you used to achieve your aim? What would you do differently next time?

One of the challenges of consultation is to know when there has been sufficient consultation. Every time there was a change to script or to the written resource or to the film itself there were new and varied opinions and feedback. One of the biggest challenges collecting feedback from user groups was being able to navigate through that feedback and figure out what feedback was of a more personal nature and what was representative of the user group as a whole. The most important part of this process was the consultation and collection of feedback and analysis from our target group.

Surprisingly the reference group impression of what the user group would find hard to follow did not turn out in many times to be the case. This highlighted how very important it was to constantly check in with the user group at every step. As an example the complexity of the story line was thought to be far too hard for the target audience to follow. The target audience themselves did not find the storyline hard to follow and in fact had lots to suggest how things could be made better but they still understood the key messages.

One thing that was very beneficial was seeking assistance from our marketing professional about how to distribute the film. That advice made the process straightforward and was done in far less time than our previous approach of email groups and single Facebook postings.

Another challenge was the style of the film for a film about a topic that has a legal aspect. The producers created drama and attractiveness to the story so it reached the target audience and held their attention by using a soap opera style drama format. The legal reference group members found some of the story devices conflicted with their professional best practice and wanted very clear “this is not legal advice” messaging (for example, when the support person asks the defendant to “tell me your story”).

We realised early on that we needed a “less is more” approach to legal information and this meant there was no “small print” messaging in the film where every legal possibility was discussed or warned against. Instead this was overcome with the messaging “it’s a good idea to get legal advice”. There is a fine balance that has to be struck between legal best practice and an interesting story line and this seemed to be the best approach.