

Advocacy

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is when another person can help ensure that your views are heard, respected and acted upon.

An independent advocate can speak on your behalf to protect and promote your rights and interests. They are there to support you, provided they have no conflict of interest. Advocacy might help you when you feel you can't speak out on your own about something, or you want some support along the way.

An advocate is independent of all other people who might already be working with you, such as your family members, health care workers, service provider or your Service Planner.

What does an advocate do?

An advocate can help you sort out a problem, or do other things such as:

- help write letters
- help make phone calls
- go to meetings with you or act on your behalf.

Usually an advocate will work with you short term, for a particular issue or problem, and will stop when the issue is resolved. An advocate can't give legal help, but they may be able to tell you where to get legal help if you need it.

Does it cost me anything?

Advocacy is free. There is no limit on the number of times you can seek help from an advocate, but there has to be a particular issue or problem the advocate can help with. You can't just get them to help with day-to-day issues.

Why would I want an advocate?

An advocate might help if you feel you can't talk to the Lifetime Support Authority (LSA) or a service provider in the following types of situations:

- to change your Service Planner
- to change service providers or attendant care provider
- to change your living arrangements (for example, to move out of home)
- to lodge a dispute – an option when you don't agree with a decision the LSA has made (see Information Sheets which are all about resolving disputes)
- to make a complaint about the LSA or a service provider (see *Information Sheet DC3: Making a Complaint*).

Is an advocate different to a Service Planner and others I work with?

An advocate gives you a different kind of help from a Service Planner and other people involved in your treatment, care and support. An advocate is not involved in your ongoing treatment, care and support or in requesting services for you. They are an independent person who can help you deal with particular issues.

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Will I be treated differently if I have an advocate?

It's your right to have an advocate to support you. This will not affect your participation in the Lifetime Support Scheme or how the LSA or your service providers treat you.

The LSA will only know you have an advocate if you've given the advocate permission to speak on your behalf.

How do I find an advocate?

The LSA can help you find an advocate or you can contact the following services which provide advocacy, or may be able to help find advocates for people with a disability:

- Brain Injury SA
(08) 8217 7600
- Citizen Advocacy SA Inc.
(08) 8410 6644
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
www.dana.org.au
- Disability Advocacy Complaints Service of SA Inc.
(08) 8297 3500
- Disability Rights Advocacy Service Inc.
(08) 8351 9500
- Advocacy for Disability Access and Inclusion Inc.
(08) 8340 4450

- Independent Advocacy SA
(08) 8232 6200
- Office of the Public Advocate
(08) 8342 8200
- PARAQUAD SA
(08) 8355 3500
- People with Disability Australia
www.pwd.org.au
- Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
www.scia.org.au

There are other advocacy services not included on this list. The following government departments have further information:

- Department of Communities and Social Inclusion
www.dcsi.sa.gov.au
- Department for Health and Ageing
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

For more information contact the Lifetime Support Authority.