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# Disability advocacy for individuals fact sheet

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## What is disability advocacy?

The Australian Government, and some state and territory governments, fund individual disability advocacy support to help promote, protect and defend the human rights of people with disability.

## Who is disability advocacy for?

Advocacy support is for people with disability who are facing complex challenges.

If you feel that you are unable to act, speak or write about a difficult situation on your own, or don't have the support network to help you do so, then disability advocacy might be an option.

Family members or carers acting on behalf of people with disability may also be able to seek disability advocacy support, as long as there is no conflict of interest.

## What is a disability advocate?

A disability advocate can support you in a range of ways including:

- to help you understand what your rights are and how to assert them
- to help you access services and support to improve your ability and confidence in all areas of life
- by acting on your behalf to solve issues before they become a crisis or harm you further.

An advocate is in your corner. They are your champion. They are there to support you and speak on your behalf when you don't feel confident to do so. They can also provide support and information so you feel more confident advocating for yourself.

## Is disability advocacy confidential?

An advocate listens and keeps your issues and information private and confidential. They will only release information with your permission. However, if you are being harmed by someone, they may need to report it.

Disability advocates are from community organisations that provide advocacy services. They receive funding from government but are independent of government.

Your advocate will act for you and your interests. Your advocate will always talk to you before doing something on your behalf.

## What happens if I contact a disability advocate?

You will be asked a series of questions so that the organisation can understand what issue you are experiencing and if they are able to help. If they cannot help, the organisation may provide information for a different organisation to assist or provide information and resources to help you advocate for yourself.

If the organisation is able to help, they will allocate an advocate to you to help resolve your issue. Usually, you will need to sign some forms such as a consent form.

Most advocacy organisations will also develop an advocacy plan with you. An advocacy plan will set out the issues you are experiencing, the steps you and your advocate will take, and what changes you are working towards.

## What kind of issues can my disability advocate help me with?

### **Access government benefits, payments, pensions and support services by:**

- assisting you to fill out forms and/or submit evidence
- attending meetings with you as your support person
- helping you find support services that meet your needs.

### **Access education, housing and employment by:**

- helping you to get reasonable and necessary adjustments at work, school or university
- assisting you with applications and meetings for housing, transfers or home modifications
- helping to prepare documents and evidence to make a strong case based on your needs.

### **Help you to understand and exercise your human rights by:**

- talking about freedom, respect, equality and dignity and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- helping you to understand how these relate to you
- supporting you to speak up for yourself
- assisting you to make a complaint.

### **Address discrimination, abuse, neglect and exploitation by:**

- helping you to talk to or apply for victim/survivor support services, including domestic violence services
- engaging with the police
- assisting you to make a complaint to the Human Rights Commission.

### **Get support for a legal issue by:**

- referring you to a legal service or applying for legal assistance on your behalf
- assisting you to gather evidence and communicate with your lawyer
- attending court, mediation and tribunal hearings as a support person.

### **Get mental health supports by:**

- referring you to mental health services
- helping you to communicate your needs to your mental health practitioner
- supporting you to understand the care, medications or therapies you are receiving and having them reviewed if you feel they are not fair
- acting as your support person at the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

### **Get translation services such as:**

- The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)
- Auslan translation services
- The National Relay Service.

## **What kind of person is a disability advocate?**

Disability advocates understand disability. Some advocates have their own lived experience of disability. Some advocates have past experiences as health professionals, social or disability workers, therapy assistants or carers.

All advocates want to help people with disability meet their everyday needs and feel empowered to live with respect, dignity and independence.

## **How do I find a disability advocate?**

To find an advocate in your area:

- Visit [Ask Izzy](https://askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder) (Opens external website) online at <https://askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder>
- Type 'Disability advocacy' into the search bar
- You will be asked to provide your suburb or postcode.
- The Finder will then provide a contact list of the advocacy services in your area.

When you first contact a disability advocacy service, you can provide information about your situation and ask for help. The service may then provide you with an advocate, place you on their waiting list or refer you to another service for support.

You can also find an advocate near you by contacting the Disability Gateway on 1800 643 787, Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm AEST/AEDT or by searching 'advocates' at [www.disabilitygateway.gov.au](http://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au).

If you need information in a language other than English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask to be connected to the Disability Gateway.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing and/or find it hard speaking with people who use a phone, call the National Relay Service on 1800 020 103 and ask to be connected to the Disability Gateway.

## Where can I find more information?

The Disability Gateway is a free, Australia-wide service that helps all Australians with disability, their families and carers to find trusted information and connect to services in their local area. You can find out more by visiting [www.disabilitygateway.gov.au](http://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au).

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**Tags:**

Disability and carers