

Overview

ABi is committed to ensuring that all people with disability are treated with respect and are able to access the supports they need to participate fully in their community. ABi recognises your right to have an advocate support you when you are working with us or to speak on your behalf. If you would like someone to act as your advocate at any time when you are working with us, please let us know. We will work co-operatively with your nominated advocate and treat them with respect.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy for people with disability can be defined as speaking, acting or writing with minimal conflict of interest on behalf of the interests of a disadvantaged person or group, in order to promote, protect and defend the welfare of and justice for either the person or group. An advocate is someone who stands up for your rights and who on your side. An advocate can help you to sort out a problem yourself or sort out a problem by doing things for you. Advocacy can be provided by:

- Acting in a partisan manner (i.e. being on their side and no one else's)
- Being primarily concerned with their fundamental needs
- Remaining loyal and accountable to them in a way which is empathic and vigorous (whilst respecting the rights of others)
- Enduring duty of care at all times.

Do I need an advocate?

Most people with disability can successfully advocate for themselves most of the time, however there may be a time or a situation where you have difficulty speaking up for yourself and this is when an advocate can be helpful. Times when an advocate might be helpful may include:

- If your normal support network is not available.
- When you have to make complex decisions.
- If there are lots of things going on in your life at the same time.
- If you feel you are not being heard or treated fairly by a service provider.

Who can be my advocate?

You may like to have a trusted friend or family member be your advocate. We often get support from friends and family members when making decisions or when we have to go to important appointments. Having a friend or family member act as an advocate, is just making this support a little bit more formal. Service providers are not allowed to share your personal information with other people without your consent. If you would like a friend or family member to act as your advocate, you will need to provide formal consent so that we can talk to them about you.

Depending on the issues you would like help with, a professional you are already working with may be able to be your advocate. If your situation is more complicated or if you need help making a complaint about a service provider, it might be helpful to get support from an advocate who is independent from all your other services.

Finding an advocate

There are a range of different advocacy organisations who may be able to provide you with individual advocacy. Which organisation is right for you will depend on what type of support you would like and the types of issues you would like assistance with. If you are looking for an advocate, or some support to advocate more effectively on your own behalf, you could contact one of the following organisations:

People with Disability

Australia (PWDA)

Ph: (02) 9370 3100

W: www.pwd.org.au

Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA)

Ph: 1800 629 072

W: www.mdaa.org.au

Indigenous Disability Advocacy Service (IDAS)

Ph: (02) 4722 3524

W: www.idas.org.au

For more information about advocacy services available in your area you can go to: <http://finder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap> or email disabilityadvocacy@dss.gov.au

For more information and resources to assist in advocating for yourself, you can go to www.advokit.org.au

For more information, please contact us on (02) 9596 7700 or info@abinsw.org.au