



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Disability advocacy

What it is and how to use it

An Easy Read guide



How to use this guide



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means DSS.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

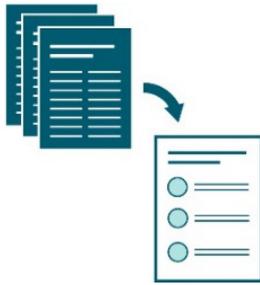
Not bold

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 32.



This is an Easy Read summary of a fact sheet.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find more information on our website.

www.dss.gov.au/national-disability-advocacy-program



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

What's in this guide?

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What is disability advocacy?



This guide is about **disability advocacy**.



Disability advocacy is when someone supports you to speak up for your **rights**.



Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.

Disability advocacy supports people with disability to take part in:



- decisions that affect them



- the community.



Governments pay for disability advocacy.

This includes:



- the Australian Government



- some state and territory governments.



But disability advocates don't work for the government.



Advocates are from community organisations.

Who is disability advocacy for?



Disability advocacy is for people with disability.



It can support you if you have a problem you can't fix by yourself.



It can also support you if you feel you:

- don't have anyone you can share your problem with
- can't tell anyone about your problem.



Disability advocacy can also support people who make decisions for a person with disability.



This includes:

- family members
- carers.



But disability advocacy can't always support a family member or carer.



For example, if a person with disability:

- has a problem with that family member or carer

and



- gets support from disability advocacy for that problem.

How can disability advocacy help?

Disability advocacy can support you to:



- understand and use your rights



- find and use services and supports that can help you.

They can also help fix your problems:



- before something bad happens



- after something bad happens.

What kind of people work in disability advocacy?



A person who works in disability advocacy is an **advocate**.

An advocate is someone who can:



- support you



- help you have your say



- give you information and advice.



An advocate is on your side.



They have **lived experience of disability**.

If you have lived experience of disability, you:



- have a disability
- know what life can be like for people with disability
- can tell your story to help others.

An advocate might have worked as a:



- social worker



- health care worker



- carer.

Advocates want to support people with disability to:



- get what they need



- live their best life.

Will an advocate keep your information private?



Advocates will keep your information private and safe.

This includes things like your name and address.

It also includes anything you tell them about your problem.



They'll only share your information with others if you say it's okay.



But if someone is hurting you, they might need to report it.



They will always act to support:

- you
- what you need.



And they'll always check with you before making a decision for you.

What problems can disability advocacy help with?

Using government services



Disability advocacy can support you to find and use government services.

For example, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

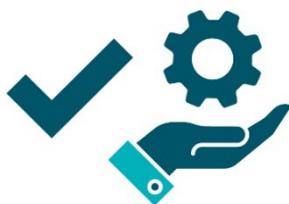
Disability advocacy can help you by:



- filling out forms



- going to meetings with you



- finding support services that are right for you.

School and work

Disability advocacy can support you by:



- school and learning



- working.

This includes helping you get **reasonable adjustments**.



When your job or school makes reasonable adjustments, they change things so that people with disability can:

- get what they need
- learn or work.



Disability advocacy can also help you prepare documents to get what you need.

Housing



Disability advocacy can support you with housing.

This includes:



- applying for housing



- going to meetings.



They can support you to change things about your home so you can keep living there.



They can also help you prepare documents to get what you need.

Understanding and using your rights

Disability advocacy can support you to:



- understand and talk about your rights



- speak up for yourself



- make a **complaint**.



When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.

When someone treats you badly



Disability advocacy can support you when other people treat you badly.

This can include:



- violence – when someone hurts you



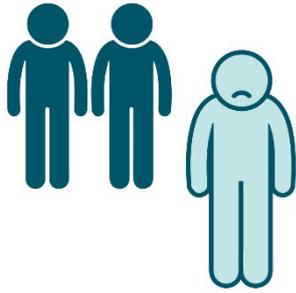
- abuse – when someone treats you badly



- neglect – when someone isn't helping you the way they should



- exploitation – when someone takes advantage of you.



Disability advocacy can support you if you experience **discrimination**.

Discrimination is when someone treats you unfairly because of a part of who you are.

This includes how services treat you.



Disability advocacy can connect you to services that can help.



Disability advocacy can support you to make a complaint.

For example, to the Human Rights Commission.



Disability advocacy can also help you talk to the police.



Disability advocacy can also help if you're not sure if someone's treating you badly.

They can support you to understand your rights.

Legal issues



Disability advocacy can support you with legal issues.

This includes:



- connecting you to a legal service



- supporting you to get the information you need



- helping you to communicate with your lawyer



- going to court and any other meetings with you.

Mental health



Disability advocacy can support you with your mental health.

This includes:



- connecting you to mental health services



- supporting you to explain what you need



- helping you understand the supports you receive



- supporting you with meetings with the **Mental Health Review Tribunal**.

The Mental Health Review Tribunal decides if people need mental health support.

Translation services



Disability advocacy can connect you to services that can help you communicate:

- in a different language
- if it's hard for you to talk over the phone.

We call these 'translation services'.



This includes the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National).

They can help if you need information in a language other than English.



This includes the National Relay Service.



They support people who:

- are deaf
- have a hearing or speech impairment.



This also includes support for people who use Auslan.

What happens when you contact an advocate?



When you contact an advocate, they'll ask you some questions.

This is so they can understand:



- your problem



- how they can help.

If they can help, you'll get an advocate who will:



- support you



- work with you to fix your problem.



You might need to sign a form saying you agree to work with the advocate.



Most advocates will work with you to create a plan.

We call this an 'advocacy plan'.

Your advocacy plan will include what:



- problem you're having

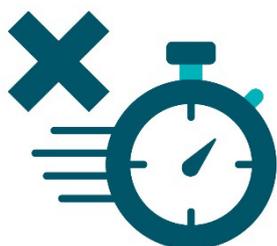


- you want to happen



- you and your advocate will do.

What if an advocate can't help you?



Sometimes an advocate might not be able to help you straight away.



So they might ask if they can put you on a waiting list.



Or they might give your information to a different organisation who can help.

They'll ask you if this is okay first.

How can you find a disability advocate?

Ask Izzy



You can find a local advocate on the Ask Izzy website.

askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder



Type 'disability advocacy' into the search bar.



Then you can type in your:

- suburb
- postcode.



The website will show you a list of advocates in your area.

The Disability Gateway



You can find an advocate through the Disability Gateway.



You can also ask the Disability Gateway:

- for more information about advocates
- to connect you to services in your area.



You can call them:

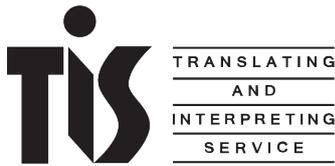
- Monday to Friday
- 8 am to 8 pm.

1800 643 787



You can also type 'advocates' into the search bar on their website.

www.disabilitygateway.gov.au



If you need something in a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

131 450



You can call the National Relay Service if you:

- are deaf or hard of hearing
- find it hard to speak using the phone.

1800 555 677



You can ask these services to connect you to the Disability Gateway.

More information



You can call the Disability Gateway for more information.

1800 643 787



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- find it hard to speak using the phone.



TTY

133 677



Speak and listen

1800 555 727



Ask these services to connect you to the Disability Gateway.

1800 643 787



You can email us.

disabilityadvocacy@dss.gov.au



You can visit our website.

www.dss.gov.au/national-disability-advocacy-program

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words mean.



Advocate

An advocate is someone who can:

- support you
- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.



Complaint

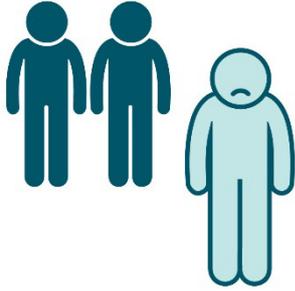
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Discrimination is when someone treats you unfairly because of a part of who you are.

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Lived experience of disability



If you have lived experience of disability, you:

- have a disability
- know what life can be like for people with disability
- can tell your story to help others.



Mental Health Review Tribunal

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Reasonable adjustments



When your job or school makes reasonable adjustments, they change things so that people with disability can:

- get what they need
- learn or work.



Rights

Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



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