

Advocacy

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is when another person is on your side to help you solve a problem. An advocate can speak on your behalf to protect and promote your rights and interests. Advocates might help you when you feel you can't speak out on your own about something, or you want some support along the way. Advocates are independent of all other people who might already be working with you, such as your family members, physiotherapist, attendant care worker or Case Manager.

What does an advocate do?

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

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

Usually, an advocate will work with you only 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 must 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 ACT Lifetime Care and Support Commissioner or our partner NSW LTSCA or a service provider in the following types of situations:

- to change your coordinator
- to change service providers, such as your case manager or attendant care provider
- to change your living arrangements (for example to move out of home)
- to lodge a dispute as you don't agree with a decision the Commissioner has made (see information sheet, "Resolving Disputes about Eligibility")
- To make a complaint about the Scheme or a service provider (see information sheet "Making a Complaint").

Is an advocate different to a Case Manager and others I work with?

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

How do I find an advocate?

The Scheme can help you find an advocate, or you can contact the following services, which provide advocacy for people with disabilities:

- ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Services (ADACAS) - (02) 6242 5060
- Advocacy for Inclusion – (02) 6257 4005
- Public Advocate - (02) 6205 2222 (Human Rights Commission; state you wish to speak to the Public Advocate, and they will connect you)
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia – 1800 643 787

Other advocacy services are not included on this list. The following Commonwealth Government department has further information:

- Department of Social Services, phone 1300 653 227, email enquiries@dss.gov.au.

For more information or to obtain copies of information sheets or the Lifetime Care and Support Guidelines, please contact the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme.