



Disability advocacy for individuals

What is disability advocacy?

The Australian Government, and some state and territory governments, fund independent advocacy 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 face complex challenges.

If 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.

Is a disability advocate independent?

A Government funded disability advocate must be independent and act solely in the interests of the person they are supporting. An advocate is not independent if they, or the organisation they work for benefits from influencing the outcome of the advocacy – this would be a conflict of interest.

How is a disability advocate different to a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Local Area Coordinator or NDIS Support Coordinator?

Disability advocates provide advocacy support and focus on upholding the rights of people with disability.

NDIS Local Area Coordinators assist with accessing NDIS supports and connecting people to information and support in their local area.

NDIS Support Coordinators help participants implement and manage their NDIS plans and supports.

What kinds of issues can a disability advocate help with?

Access to 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 UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disability (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.

How do I find an independent advocate?

To find an advocate in your area:

- Visit [Ask Izzy](https://askizzy.org.au/disability-advocacy-finder) 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.

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 555 677 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.