

Advocacy Policy

Advocacy is acting, speaking or writing to promote and protect the human rights and welfare of a vulnerable person or group of people. Examples of vulnerable people include Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, children and their families, refugees, the elderly, the LGBTQIA+ community, the homeless, and people with disability.

Advocacy services for people with disability in Australia are funded by the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) which ensures there is no cost for participants or service providers to access advocacy services.

Types of advocacy include:

- Individual advocacy – a one-on-one advocacy aimed to prevent or address instances of discrimination or abuse to a person with disability
- Systemic advocacy – advocacy to influence or secure long-term changes to ensure the collective rights and interests of people with disability
- Family advocacy – when a parent or family member advocates with and on behalf of a family member with disability
- Group advocacy – advocacy for a group of people with disability, such as a group of people living in shared accommodation
- Citizen advocacy – where community volunteers advocate for a person with a disability over the long-term, supported by a citizen advocacy organisation
- Legal advocacy – where a lawyer provides legal representation, pursues positive changes to legislation, or gives legal advice to people with disability about discrimination and human rights.

Individual advocates can:

- Provide direct advocacy on behalf of a person
- Provide information and advice so a person can advocate for themselves (e.g. deal with a landlord, go to court, deal with police, get legal advice, negotiate deals, deal with problems at work or education, deal with guardianship or financial matters)
- Connect a participant to relevant services (e.g. a solicitor)
- Help a participant work through problems
- Help a participant make formal actions on matters (e.g. assist to make a complaint with the anti-discrimination board).

Advocates do not:

- Provide counselling
- Make decisions for another person
- Provide mediation
- Provide case management

Who this policy applies to:

This policy applies to all services provided by Off to Great Places, at any location.

This policy applies to all representatives of Off to Great Places, including key management personnel, full-time, part-time and casual staff, as well as contractors and volunteers.

Advocacy commitment

- Upon commencing services, new participants are informed of the role of advocates, their right to use advocates and advocacy services, and how to contact and involve advocacy agencies.
- Participants are supported if they choose to self-advocate, change advocates, or withdraw their authority for an advocate.
- If a participant needs an advocate and a family member or carer cannot provide it, we will attempt to introduce an advocate chosen by the participant.
- We acknowledge that a funded support cannot act as an advocate. Whilst participants can request, we act as advocates, the worker needs to be aware that this is not a funded support.
- We will work with the advocate chosen by the participant and involve the advocate in all areas of the participant's service planning and decision making.
- Whenever a participant is assisted by an advocate, we will keep appropriate documentation.
- Participants scheduled for plan reviews or who are lodging change of circumstance requests will be encouraged to contact an advocacy service. Workers must respond with advocacy information within two weeks; however, the waitlist and process for advocacy may take up to 3-6 months to be completed.