



Individual Advocacy

What is Individual Advocacy?

If you have been discriminated against because of your disability or the disability of someone you care for, you may want to use an advocate to assist you in accessing your rights.

There may be a waiting period. If your issue is very urgent and is having a serious impact on your day to day life, your case may be dealt with faster. This doesn't mean you should wait until your situation is desperate before contacting an advocate. Often, if a problem is dealt with, it will prevent it becoming serious.

Individual Advocacy happens when an advocate is allocated to work with you. Your advocate will hear about the issues you're experiencing, help you to plan a way forward and support you to make sure your voice is heard in order to fix your problem. *You* will decide what course of action to take, based on advice from your advocate. Usually the least aggressive action will be taken and may escalate if the first approach doesn't succeed. This might mean that our advocate may make a phone call to the organisation you are complaining about before trying anything else more serious.

Disability Advocacy Agencies are governed by the National Standards for Disability Services. They must also follow legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1992) and the Standards that are legislated under the DDA, such as Education, Transport and Access to Premises. Individual advocates also work with the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act (2013).

Common things people ask for an advocate to help them with include:

- Accommodation
- Children's Needs
- Consumer Affairs
- Discrimination
- Education & Training
- Health
- Government Services
- Centrelink
- Equipment Needs
- Guardianship Board
- Public Trustee
- NDIS access

You can find easy read information about Disability Advocacy [here](#)

There is a great video explaining Individual Advocacy [here](#)

Where does the Advocacy take place?

You could meet your advocate at the advocacy agency's office.

You can work with your advocate over the phone.

You can work with your advocate using email.

You can meet your advocate in a public place where you feel comfortable - such as a local library

You should let your advocate know if you would like them to organise an Auslan or other language interpreter or any other access requirements. Your advocate will be happy to organise this for you at no cost to you.

When will the Advocacy start?

The advocacy service you contact may have a waiting list for Individual Advocacy services. They will tell you when they expect to be able to support you. This may be phone, email or by mail. You should also be provided with a client information pack which outlines your rights, responsibilities and other information so you know what to expect.

Who do I call if I have new information or my issues change?

If you are waiting for your case to start and get new information that changes your circumstances, or if you want to talk to your advocate, you should ring the disability advocacy agency you have registered with. In the case of Disability Rights Advocacy Service, the contact details are on our website at www.dras.com.au

If you have an open file, contact your advocate or Appeals Officer.

Useful links:

Easy read information about disability advocacy:

<https://www.family-advocacy.com/assets/Uploads/PDFs/6eef26d053/disability-advocacy-standards-easy-read.pdf>

Individual Advocacy video (4min, 30 sec):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKUSS7i8PFs>

The process:

Contact DRAS on 8351 9500.
You will be assessed for eligibility for DRAS services

Your case will be allocated and an advocate will call you.
They *may* tell you they can't meet with you immediately.
If they can't give you a definite date straight away, they will call you when they are able to make an appointment with you.

Your first meeting.
Your advocate will explain the process, gather information to open a case file and you may need to sign consent forms.
Your advocate will also explain how to make a complaint.

Working on it: You and your advocate will work together to resolve your issue.
Your advocate will advise you, but you will make the decisions.

Closure of the case file.
If your issue is resolved – or DRAS can't resolve it for you, your case file will be closed.
We will invite you to give feedback on our service and become a member of DRAS.