

Who stands by me to make my voice heard?

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What is advocacy?

1. standing beside people with disability by assisting them to advocate their own interests
2. standing behind people with disability by supporting them to represent their own interests
3. standing before people with disability by representing their interests

Kevin Stone, author of the *'To Stand Beside: Advocacy for Inclusion Training Program'*.

Why is advocacy needed?

- Some people with disability are isolated and may not have support networks, and/ or have complex needs and situations.
- Many people with disability and families lack knowledge to make a complaint or seek change



Why is advocacy needed?

- People may lack confidence and the communication skills to assert their rights
- Many people with disability fear negative repercussions as a result of making a complaint
- People with disability are often seen as powerless and vulnerable and this becomes how we feel



Role of the advocate

- Advocacy is speaking, acting, and writing with minimal conflict of interest on behalf of a disadvantaged person or group to promote, protect and defend their welfare and justice
 - by being on their side and no-one else's
 - being primarily concerned with their fundamental needs
 - remaining loyal and accountable to them in a way which is emphatic and vigorous and which is, or is likely to be, costly to the advocate

Principles of advocacy

- Advocacy has a clear value base of social justice, equity and full inclusion of people with disabilities as contributing/ participating members of the community.
- Advocacy focuses on the fundamental human needs and/ or rights and interests of people with disabilities.



Principles of advocacy

- Advocacy is on the side of the person with disability and is loyal and accountable to the person.
- Advocacy strives to be independent, autonomous and to minimise conflict of interest; it is distinct and independent from service delivery.

Working together





Capacity building

- Learning about rights
- Development of self-advocacy skills – how to say no, ways to say what a person wants, tools and resources
- Develop a plan of action in partnership with the person with a disability that maps out clearly defined goals
- Work through the individual advocacy plan in partnership with the person with a disability
- Development of strategies for taking effective action to address own issues, and
- Provision of mentoring and coaching as a person goes through the process

Example

Martin, a client with intellectual and psychosocial disability received a termination notice from his disability service provider, due to complexity of his dual diagnosis. He contacted PWdWA for advocacy. Martin and the advocate developed an **action plan based on Martin's goal** to have a service provider that could understand phobias and the need for Martin to call during the weekend when under stress. The advocate researched suitable potential service providers and passed on the list to **Martin, who organised the meetings**. In preparation for the meetings Martin discussed a list of questions with the advocate. At meetings **Martin felt empowered to ask questions**, while the advocate stayed alongside and ensured that all concerns were raised. Once they met with all service providers Martin discussed his concerns with the advocate and short listed two service providers. They put together a list of pros and cons for those two service providers and **Martin made an informed decision**.

Activity

- Choose a case study
- Identify any conflict of interest
- Identify ways to build the advocacy skills and resources of the person with disability
- Discuss



Summary

- There is a place for independent individual advocacy
- Advocacy can be a tool for empowerment
- Advocates must support self advocacy
- Increased awareness of rights help us all

References and further information

- People With disabilities WA
<http://www.pwdwa.org>
- VALID <http://www.valid.org.au/>
- Disability Advocacy Resource Unit
<http://www.daru.org.au/what-is-advocacy>
- National Disability Advocacy Program (Australia)
<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/national-disability-advocacy-program-ndap>