



Australian Government

Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs



Disability Advocacy Standards

Easy Read version



a strong and fair society for *all* Australians



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This document must be attributed as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Disability Advocacy Standards Easy Read version.

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How to use this booklet



This information is written in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



Some words are written in **blue**. We explain what these words mean. There is a list of these words on page 41.



This booklet is a summary of another booklet about the Disability Advocacy Standards.



You can find out more about the Disability Advocacy Standards on our website at **www.fahcsia.gov.au**.



A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you read this booklet.

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What is this booklet about?



This booklet is about **disability advocacy agencies** and the rules that they must follow.

Disability advocacy agencies are groups of people that help people with disability.



The people who work for disability advocacy agencies are called **advocates**.

They provide information and advice so you know what choices you have.



They can help you make your own decisions.

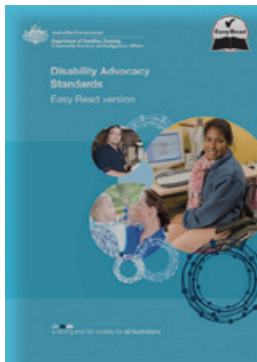


And they can help you speak up for your **rights**. Having rights means you can expect to be treated fairly.



In Australia, there is a set of rules that disability advocacy agencies must follow to make sure they are doing a good job.

These rules are called the **Disability Advocacy Standards**.



This booklet is about the Disability Advocacy Standards. It explains:

- what the standards are
- what you can expect from a disability advocacy agency.



We've also used some stories to explain the Disability Advocacy Standards.



These stories are just examples.

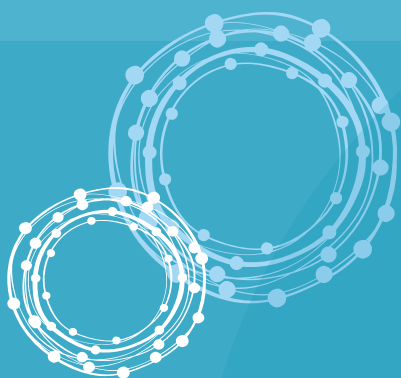


They are not about real people.

Standard 1:

Getting advocacy help

You should be able to find and get help from a disability advocacy agency if you need it.



Standard 1: What can I expect from my agency?



Different disability advocacy agencies provide different types of help.



Finding and using the right agency for you will depend on whether or not they provide the kind of help you need.



Some agencies are very busy. This means you might have to wait until you can get help.



Each agency should have ways to work out who needs their help the most.

Everyone should understand:

- how the agency works out who needs help
- how long you have to wait to get help.



Disability advocacy agencies must treat everyone well.

Agencies should never treat people differently because of their:



- age



- gender – whether they are male or female



- race or cultural background



- religion



- disability



- where they live or who they live with.

Standard 1: Stacy's Story



Stacy recently found out that she has to move out of her home next month.

This was really upsetting.

She didn't know what to do and she needed to get some help.



She called a disability advocacy agency that her friend told her about.



They said that she would need to wait 6 weeks until she could get some help.

This was too long to wait.



Stacy told the agency that she needed help straight away.

Because Stacy had an urgent problem, they said they could help her next week.

Stacy was happy. She felt less worried.

Standard 2:

Getting help that suits your needs

**The help you receive
should be right for you.
It should suit your needs
and interests.**



Standard 2: What can I expect from my agency?



Disability advocacy agencies must write down the things that are important to you, including your goals.



The agency should help you to meet your needs and achieve your goals.



You can have someone you trust with you when you tell the agency about your needs and interests.



Agencies must also help people to speak up for themselves or, in some cases, to help their friends and family speak up for them.



To do this, agencies can provide things like:

- training
- information that you can understand
- mentors – people who have experience that can help you
- support.



Most agencies will have their own goals and things they want to achieve.

They may also have worked with other people you know who have different goals to you.



It is important that these goals don't cause problems for you, or stop you from achieving your goals. If this happens, it's called a **conflict of interest**.

The agency must know if there is a conflict of interest. And they must have things they can do to stop a conflict of interest from happening.

Standard 2: Helen and Andrew's Story



Helen runs a disability advocacy agency in the city.
She would like to live and work in the country one day.
This is her goal.



Andrew needed support to find a job that was right for him. He asked Helen for help.



Helen had recently met 3 new employers in the country.
She suggested that Andrew get a job in the country with one of these employers.



This was upsetting for Andrew because he didn't want to move.
He wanted to live and work in the city.

Helen was letting her goal get in the way of Andrew's goal.
This was a conflict of interest. It broke the rules of Standard 2.



Helen and Andrew talked about the problem.
Helen helped Andrew find a job close to where he lives.

Standard 3:

Making choices and decisions

You have the right to make decisions and choices about your life.



Standard 3: What can I expect from my agency?



Disability advocacy agencies must include you in decisions about the way they will help you.



Agencies must also explain what is right and wrong to their advocates. They should explain how advocates can make good choices.

Standard 3: Stephanie's Story



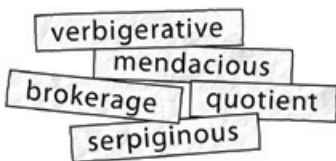
Stephanie was having some problems with her landlord.



She started working with an advocate named Angela.



Stephanie asked Angela to help her understand a letter from the landlord.



The letter had lots of big words in it.

Angela decided that the letter was too hard for Stephanie to understand, so she called the landlord herself.



Angela and the landlord made a decision on Stephanie's behalf.
This was wrong.



Stephanie was very upset that Angela and the landlord did not include her in an important decision about her life.



Stephanie complained to the disability advocacy agency.
The agency said that Angela and the landlord had broken the rules of Standard 3.



They gave her a new advocate, who helped Stephanie to make the decision that was right for her.

Standard 4:

Your privacy

Disability advocacy agencies should keep your personal details private.



Standard 4: What can I expect from my agency?



In Australia, the law about personal information is called the *Privacy Act 1988*.

All disability advocacy agencies must follow the rules in the *Privacy Act*.



This means that advocacy agencies must keep your information in a safe place.



They must not share your information with other people unless you say that is OK.

Standard 4: Lauren's story



Recently, Lauren had a big argument with her boss at work.



She went to a disability advocacy agency to see if they could help her work out what to do.



Lauren's boss phoned the advocacy agency. He wanted to find out if Lauren was planning to look for another job.



The advocacy agency said that they could not share Lauren's personal information unless she said it was ok.



The advocacy agency talked to Lauren.

She asked them not to share her information with her boss.

Standard 5:

Taking part in the community

Disability advocacy agencies should encourage you to take part in the community.



Standard 5: What can I expect from my agency?



Disability advocacy agencies help people with disability find ways to take part in the **community**.



This might include things like:

- going out and seeing friends
- getting a job
- studying or training
- doing things you enjoy.



Agencies can also find ways to make sure that people with disability are included in the community.

Standard 5: Malika and Nita's story



Malika is 5 years old.

Her Mum is called Nita.

Nita receives advice and support from a disability advocacy agency in her local area.



Next year, Malika is starting school.

Nita asked the agency to help Malika attend a local school.

The agency is helping Nita ask for extra help for Malika to get to class.



In this way, the agency helped Malika and her family take part in the community.

Standard 6:

Being valued

Disability advocacy agencies should help you to be treated well and feel valued in the community.



Standard 6: What can I expect from my agency?



Disability advocacy agencies must work with you to find out what your strengths are.

They must also help others to get to know these strengths.



Everything agencies do should help make sure that people with disability are valued in the community.

Standard 6: Lee's story



Lee has been working for a graphic design business for a couple of years.



He recently heard that a better job was becoming available within the business.

Lee really wanted to apply for the job.

He sent his boss an email asking for an interview. But his boss said no.

Lee was disappointed. He knew he had the skills and experience to do the job well.



Lee contacted a disability advocacy agency. He started working with an advocate named Janelle.



Janelle encouraged Lee to speak up and make sure that his boss knew about his previous experience.



Lee's boss agreed to talk to Lee about the job.

Lee did really well in the interview and he got the promotion.

The agency helped make sure that Lee's previous experience was valued.

Standard 7:

Making a complaint

Disability advocacy agencies should let you know that it is OK to make a complaint.

You shouldn't feel like you will get in trouble if you make a complaint.



Standard 7: What can I expect from my agency?



The disability advocacy agency must tell you how to make a complaint.



They must have ways of dealing with complaints and solving problems.



They must also have a way for you to complain to someone who is not part of the agency if that is what you want to do.



And they must not make you feel bad about telling them that something is wrong.

Standard 7: Robert's story



Robert started using a disability advocacy agency.

His advocate's name is Louise.

Louise told Robert what he could do if he ever had a problem.

She said that he would not get in trouble if he made a complaint.

And she gave him a booklet that he could keep, just in case something went wrong.



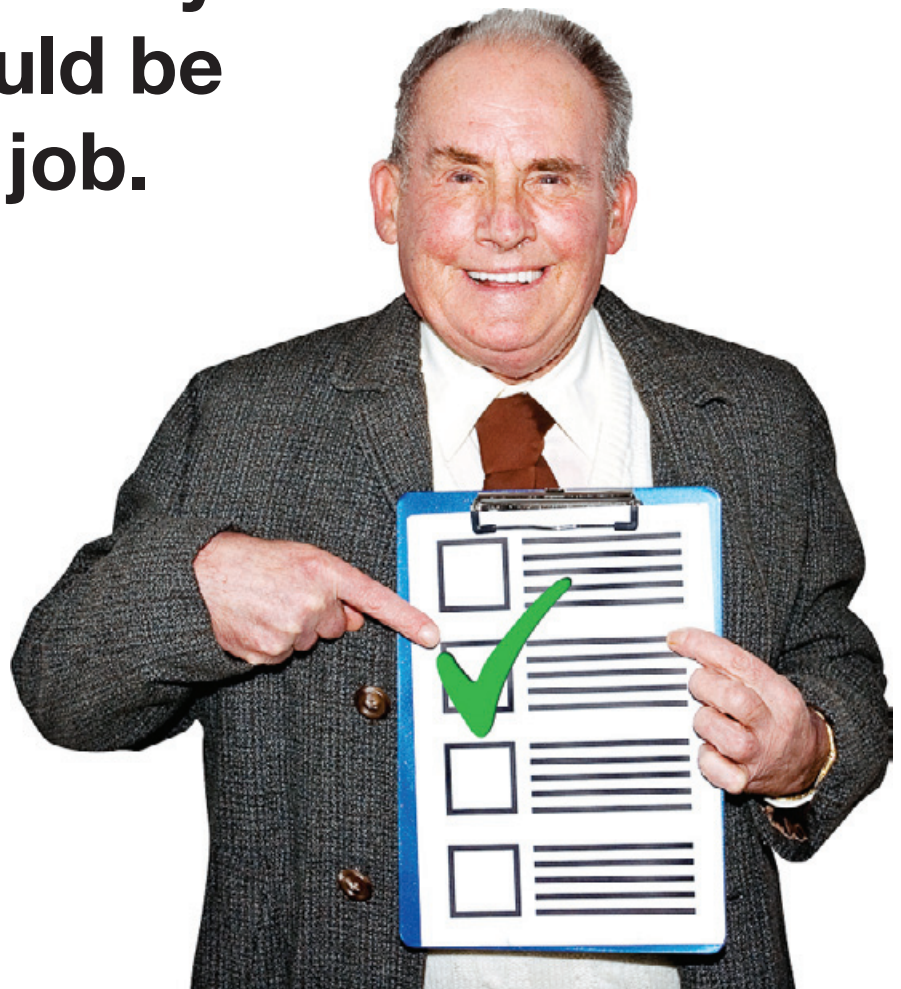
So far, Robert has been happy with the way Louise is helping him.

But he knows what to do if there is a problem in the future.

Standard 8:

Running advocacy agencies

Disability advocacy agencies should be doing a good job.



Standard 8: What can I expect from my agency?



Each disability advocacy agency must have systems in place to make sure they are doing a good job.



All agencies must try to do a good job, and to work on making things better in the future.



Each agency must have their own goals.

All the people who work with the agency, or get help from the agency, should know what these goals are.



There should also be systems in place to prevent conflicts of interest.

We explain conflicts of interest in more detail on page 13.

Standard 8: Janet's story



Janet was really pleased with the help she'd received from a disability advocacy agency.

She filled out a feedback form to tell them what she was happy with.

She also had a few good ideas about the things they could do to improve the way they help people.



The people who worked at the agency talked about Janet's ideas at a meeting.



They decided that, if they used some of Janet's good ideas, their agency could do a better job.

Standard 9:

Working with good staff and volunteers

Disability advocacy agencies should have good staff and volunteers.



Standard 9: What can I expect from my agency?



Disability advocacy agencies must make sure that their staff and **volunteers** are friendly and that they treat everyone well.

Volunteers are people who work without getting paid. They might do this to gain work experience, or to help in the community.



Staff and volunteers should have regular training to make sure that they are good at their job. They should also get support to do their job if they need it.

Standard 9: Sue's story



Sue volunteers at a disability advocacy agency.



She helped to create a training program for new staff and volunteers.



This program teaches people about advocacy work with people with disability.



This is a great way for new people to learn how to offer good support.

Standard 10:

Treating people well

Disability advocacy agencies should treat you well.



Standard 10: What can I expect from my agency?



Disability advocacy agencies should work to protect the rights of people with disability.



They must do all that they can to make sure that people with disability are treated well.



And they must let others know that all people with disability should be treated well.

Standard 10: Trudy's story



Trudy was being bullied by some people that she used to go to school with.



She told her advocate, Aaron, what was happening.



Aaron encouraged Trudy to tell the police about the bullying.

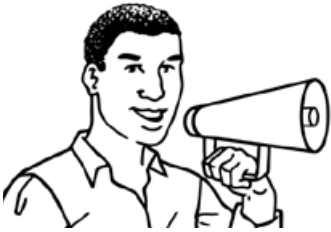


The police made sure the bullying stopped.



Aaron and other people at the agency are working hard to make sure that bullying is stopped in the local community.

Word List



Advocate

A person who works for a disability advocacy agency. An advocate helps people to speak up for their rights and achieve their goals.



Community

The community is the place where you live. It is not just your home. It is outside your home as well. It includes the people who live in your area.



Conflict of interest

Problems can occur when different people want different things. A conflict of interest occurs when people's goals clash.



Disability advocacy agencies

Groups of people that support people with disability.



Disability Advocacy Standards

The set of rules that describes the way that advocacy agencies must work.



Rights

Having rights means you can expect to be treated fairly.



Volunteers

People who work without getting paid. They might do this to gain work experience, or to help in the community.



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