

4. Advocacy Support Policy and Procedure

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Purpose

Australian Quality Care recognises the importance of ensuring the participant's right to use an advocate or representative of their choice is maintained. Both participants and potential participants have the right to select and involve an advocate, or a representative of their choice, to participate or act on their behalf at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to all participants, staff and stakeholders.

Definition

Advocacy is the active support for a cause or position, and, in this context, it is an expression of support for a person who may find it difficult to speak for him or herself. It may include matters such as achieving social justice, improving a person's wellbeing, prevention of abusive and/discriminatory treatment or stopping unjust and unfair treatment so that a person's fundamental needs and interests are met.

Policy

All participants have the right to use an advocate of their choice to represent their interests and speak on their behalf regarding any aspect of the supports or services they receive.

Staff will work cooperatively with the participant's nominated advocate and will show the same respect to the advocate as is shown to the participant. When a participant can't advocate for themselves, it's Australian Quality Care's policy to ensure that the participant's interests are represented and supported using a substitute decision-maker.

Advocacy principles

- Australian Quality Care will maintain printed material on advocacy and advocacy services.
- Australian Quality Care will maintain local advocacy resource/contact lists.
- Australian Quality Care will work cooperatively with any nominated advocate chosen by the participant and show the same respect to the advocate, as is shown to the participant.

- Australian Quality Care will utilise a governance system to identify where a participant may benefit from advocacy.

Procedure

Initial assessment (participant without an advocate)

- Discuss the participant's right to appoint an advocate at any time and to have an advocate present to speak on their behalf.
- Provide the participant with advocacy information.
- Explain to the participant their rights regarding advocacy as per the Australian Quality Care's Service Agreement and Charter of Rights and the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2018.
- Advise the participant that if they wish to utilise advocacy services Australian Quality Care can assist them in contacting any of these services.
- Provide the Authority to Act as an Advocate Form to the participant if they decide to utilise the services of an advocate. The completed and signed form is stored in the participant's file.
- Discuss and document any specific communication issues or protocols to be used between the service and the advocate (such as email, phone, or any other method).
- Inform the participant that they can withdraw approval for an advocate to act on their behalf at any time.

Initial assessment (participant with advocate/representative)

Before initial assessment

- During initial contact with the participant, ensure that they're informed of their right to an advocate and record the advocate's details if they have one.
- Advise the participant of the need to complete the Authority to Act as an Advocate Form and provide the appropriate form to the participant.
- Contact the nominated advocate to ensure they're aware that they are nominated and to confirm that they agree to be an advocate.
- Place the completed Authority to Act as an Advocate Form in the participant's file.
- Ensure the potential participant is aware of their advocacy rights, including the right to have an advocate present for all assessments, meetings and communication between themselves and Australian Quality Care.
- Schedule the participant's initial assessment at a time and date that will allow the advocate to be present.
- Ensure an identified advocate is present at the assessment.

At initial assessment

- Request the completion of the Authority to Act as an Advocate Form, if it has not already been completed for Australian Quality Care to formally recognise the nominated person as their advocate.
- Gather information about the advocate, such as contact details and methodology.
- Explain to the participant that they have the right to change their advocate at any time. Changes should be documented in writing by the participant using the Authority to Act as an Advocate Form.

Working with advocates

- Identify the existence of an advocate on the participant's file.
- Discuss and document any specific communication issues or protocols to be used between the service and the advocate.
- Communicate with a participant's advocate and involve them in the process of goal setting, planning service responses, and referrals for additional or alternative services.
- Provide the advocate with ongoing information regarding the health and well-being of the participant as agreed.
- Ensure that all on-call staff are aware of the participant's advocate.

Continuing to work with advocates

- Provide participants, during reassessments, visits, or meetings, with written and verbal information that reminds them of their right to have (or change) an advocate.
- Remind participants of their right to have (or change) an advocate during each annual review of services or via written communication.
- Communicate effectively and work cooperatively with advocates.
- Refer participants assessed as 'not able to manage their service' (and who have no other advocate) to the Department of Justice and Attorney General, Office of the Public Guardian, as appropriate.

Further information regarding disability advocacy services information is available [here](#).

Related documents

- Authority to Act as an Advocate Form
- Participant Handbook

References

- [Disability Services Act 2006 \(QLD\)](#)
- [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2020 – Version 3](#)
- [Privacy Act \(1988\)](#)

Advocacy information

An advocate is a person who will listen to you and help you to make decisions about what should happen in your life and help you to make those decisions work by speaking on your behalf. An advocate makes sure that people who provide support to you, respect your rights, and will speak out for you if your needs are not being met.

You can ask anyone you know well and trust to be your advocate.

- A member of your family or a friend you can trust.
- A person from a formal advocacy service.

A list of advocacy providers can be found on the Queensland Government's website [here](#), with some outlined in the table below.

<p>People with spinal injuries Spinal Life Australia Ltd 109 Logan Road WOOLLOONGABBA QLD 4102</p>	<p>1300 774 625</p>
<p>People with brain injuries Synapse Australia Ltd Level 1/262 Montague Road WEST END QLD 4101</p>	<p>1800 673 074</p>
<p>People with Down Syndrome Down Syndrome Association of Qld Inc. 282 Stafford Road STAFFORD QLD 4053</p>	<p>1300 881 935</p>