

## Entry, Referral and Exit Policy

Independent Advocacy SA Inc advocates for vulnerable individuals with an intellectual disability and those labelled or treated as having an intellectual disability.

Independent Advocacy aims to respond to those individuals most at risk while also striving to ensure that the work that we do remains proactive. We respond to situations of extreme vulnerability and complexity including where individuals are denied participation in their community in major and significant ways, for example in relation to their education or accommodation.

What initially presents as a single, isolated issue frequently extends into a complexity of issues due to the on going vulnerability that people with an intellectual disability often experience in their lives. Thus, rarely do we respond with single solutions to single issues. We aim to respond with an approach, which is considered, comprehensive, addresses the complex issues in the individual's life and encompasses the broader context.

### Entry Criteria

**Independent Advocacy has clear criteria for access based on need.**

Access for vulnerable people with intellectual disability is based on those who may have some of the following issues:

- a second or multiple disability eg mental illness
- are homeless or at risk of being made homeless, or being moved into inadequate and/or inappropriate accommodation which places them at risk
- regular and/or ongoing contact with powerful systems such as legal, health, welfare and education
- at risk of or subject to abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, financial), exploitation, neglect, isolation, imprisonment
- a life characterised by restriction

Other factors considered in deciding access to advocacy include:

- whether Independent Advocacy is the most appropriate agency to respond
- the capacity of Independent Advocacy to respond

**Independent Advocacy has explicit entry procedures that ensure we are consistent in our response in terms of eligibility, priority and process.**

Independent Advocacy's entry process is:

- we will take referrals from anyone
- if it is clear that intellectual disability is not a feature of the referral story then an explanation will be given as to why the referral is not appropriate and the referrer will be directed elsewhere
- all further entry processes to be undertaken by the co-ordinator
- information will be taken to determine whether the individual concerned meets our entry criteria and this will be recorded on an Entry Contact sheet

- with permission from the referrer the co-ordinator may engage in a process of exploration to be better informed as to the appropriateness and capacity of Independent Advocacy to respond which may include the co-ordinator or delegate attending meetings and making telephone calls
- then the co-ordinator will bring appropriate referrals to staff meeting to discuss the responsibility and capacity of Independent Advocacy to respond
- if it is appropriate for Independent Advocacy to respond and it has the capacity to respond contact will be made with the person referring and/or the individual needing advocacy to outline how advocacy might proceed
- if Independent Advocacy believes it should respond but is not currently able to allocate an advocate then the person concerned will be offered the option of having their referral held on file. The referral file is reviewed at the staff meeting as part of the consideration of every new referral to Independent Advocacy.
- if Independent Advocacy is not prepared to respond contact will be made with the person referring, outlining the reasons for our decision and wherever possible offering alternative options for referral. This decision will be recorded on the Entry Contact sheet.

Regardless of our capacity to respond information about the referral will be kept in a locked file with other confidential material. This information will be useful in gaining a clear picture of both the need/demand for advocacy and the activities of Independent Advocacy, and to fulfil our reporting obligations.

All correspondence relating to the initial contact will be kept in the entry file. If Independent Advocacy takes up an advocacy role the advocate will develop a separate file that s/he will keep. This file will be kept, as with all files, in a locked cabinet.

The co-ordinator may as necessary and appropriate delegate referral responsibilities to another staff member.

## **Referral To Other Agencies**

**Where Independent Advocacy is unable to allocate an advocate all reasonable steps will be taken to offer a suitable referral to an appropriate agency.**

Independent Advocacy develops and maintains comprehensive knowledge of other relevant resources by:

- maintaining contact with a wide range of organisations and networks
- gathering and updating information about other relevant resources.

Where appropriate, contact is maintained with the source of the initial request for advocacy.

## **Exit**

**Independent Advocacy will typically advocate for individuals for as long as it takes to achieve the advocacy goals and/or until the individual has a solid foundation of resources, allies and supports in their life.**

Our participation in the individual's life may naturally decrease, as positive change increases. Advocacy will be withdrawn completely when advocacy goals have been achieved or when there is a strong ally to provide for the person's advocacy needs.

Where advocacy is still appropriate and necessary but not achievable within the context of our values and the person's vision then Independent Advocacy will maintain the person's file and

respond as able if the situation allows. In dire circumstances Independent Advocacy may refer the person to the Public Advocate and/or Ombudsman.


Factors may include:

- resistance by families to advocacy, or Independent Advocacy's style of advocacy;
- agencies not allowing advocacy involvement;
- policy constraints.

Independent Advocacy SA Inc. acknowledges that at times the person for whom we advocate may express their desire to terminate advocacy, even though advocacy is still appropriate and necessary. It is recognised that an estrangement may result from a particular advocacy action but that the estrangement may be temporary. Where it is determined that the termination of advocacy by the person is a temporary estrangement every effort will be made to reconcile the matter so as not to disadvantage the vulnerable person. This may include advocacy efforts through the co-ordinator or proxy advocate.

*We, at Independent Advocacy SA Inc, recognise that people with intellectual disability are vulnerable to loss of services when an emotional response to a specific issue results in the withdrawal of an entire effort. We believe that appropriate space needs to be made for the individual to express their frustration or dissatisfaction of isolated issues without being exposed to further vulnerability. It is our commitment to the person to remain available and proactive in meeting their advocacy needs in the face of rejection of a particular effort.*

Signed   
Chairperson

Reviewed 

To be reviewed 18/10/2014

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Associated Documents:

- Our Values
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Social Advocacy Policy

Relevant Standards:

- Standard 1 – Service Access