

Social Advocacy Policy

Individuals with an intellectual disability, and those labeled or treated as having an intellectual disability, are among the most vulnerable in our society, and are likely to need support to achieve quality of life. Social advocacy is an important means of generating positive change in the lives of people with an intellectual disability, and of helping to promote, protect and defend the welfare of, and justice for, individuals.

Social Advocacy

Independent Advocacy SA Inc. will advocate for vulnerable individuals with an intellectual disability, and those labeled or treated as having an intellectual disability. Social advocacy will be primarily concerned with the fundamental needs of those individuals who are perceived to be most at risk.

Independent Advocacy SA Inc. will advocate in ways that are inclusive, non-discriminatory and sensitive to diversity. Through advocacy, Independent Advocacy SA Inc. will promote the abilities, contributions and competence of people with a disability.

Independent Advocacy SA Inc. will advocate in the medium to long term, dependent upon the needs of and the potential to effectively advocate for, the individual. The intention of Independent Advocacy SA Inc. is to ensure longevity and consistency of advocacy through the allocation of a specific advocate for each individual.

Each advocate is employed on the basis of making a commitment to the individuals they will advocate for and a commitment to work within the organisation's values and social advocacy framework.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest may take many forms but does arise when an advocate takes up a service provision type role in the life of the person for whom they advocate. This may include; transport to appointments, support at essential/necessary activities.

Independent Advocacy SA Inc. acknowledges that there will be times and situations where an advocate takes up an action(s) that is not purely advocacy. The nature of the work, in building relationships with the individual, dictates that minor, one-off non-advocacy actions will occur (and are indeed crucial) to best understand the advocacy needs of the individual.

Where the non-advocacy action is significant and sustained it will only be undertaken where it is clearly in the best interests of the person for whom we advocate and where without such action the person for whom we advocate is likely to be further harmed. An advocate will follow the appropriate process before committing to undertake any action outside of social advocacy

Principles of Advocacy

Strong, independent, individual advocacy functions effectively within a clear values base guided by social justice principles, an understanding of the heightened vulnerability and oppression of people with a disability and an expressed commitment to strive for the inclusion of people with a disability in all aspects of life and society.

Independent Advocacy SA Inc. believes that advocacy;

- is partisan to the interests of the individual with an intellectual disability.
- is concerned with promoting, protecting and defending the fundamental needs, rights and welfare of the individual for whom we are advocating.
- is independent and strives for minimum conflict of interest so that the interests of the individual remain central.
- is, or may be, costly to the advocate in terms of time, resources, emotional stress, self-certainty and/or physical safety.
- will be directed by what is sincerely perceived to be in the best interests of the individual.
- initiates and takes the lead, and is persistent and passionate, vigorous and emphatic.
- is loyal and accountable to the individual for whom we are advocating.
- must not increase the vulnerability of the individual, and will be mindful of other parties who may be as vulnerable or more vulnerable.
- upholds the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of the individual for whom we are advocating at all times.

The Role of the Advocate

Where possible and appropriate the advocate will strive to actively involve the individual with intellectual disability and/or their allies in identifying and responding to the individual needs of that person. The goal of all advocacy strategies will be to generate positive change in the life of the individual with an intellectual disability based on knowledge and understanding developed over time.

The advocate will strive to develop a strong relationship with the individual. It will be on the basis of this relationship, and the understanding of and information gained about the individual concerned, that the advocacy goals and strategies will be planned, developed and reviewed.

Advocates will work with a proxy advocate, where necessary, who will support the advocacy for an individual by being cognisant of the ongoing issues, available for informal discussion of advocacy strategies and available to undertake the advocacy role if the assigned advocate is not available.

In planning and implementing advocacy goals and strategies for the vulnerable individual the advocate will;

- establish an advocacy relationship
- get to know the person's life
- identifying the person's advocacy needs
- develop a vision
- write and prioritise advocacy goals
- review efforts

Signed S. Gray
Chairperson

Reviewed 38/10/14

To be reviewed. 18/10/2014.

Associated documents:

- Entry, Referral and Exit Policy
- Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Policy

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- Our Values
 - Personal Safety Policy (Offsite or Isolated)
 - Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
 - Rights of Individuals for Whom We Advocate Policy
 - Social Advocacy Guidelines

Relevant National Disability Standards

- Standard 1 – Service Access
- Standard 2 – Individual Needs
- Standard 3 – Decision Making and Choice
- Standard 4 – Privacy Dignity and Confidentiality
- Standard 5 - Participation and Integration
- Standard 6 – Valued Status
- Standard 8 – Service Management
- Supporting Standard A – Staff Recruitment, Employment and Training
- Supporting Standard B – Protection of Human Rights and Freedom From Abuse