

# Who can be your advocate?

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The NDIS is about giving you back power in your life by ensuring you have choice and control. Some people, even those who are not living with a mental health condition, may find it hard to speak up about what they want or need. Sometimes you may need help from a family member, friend or paid worker with your NDIS access request. Other times you may need a person to do this for you, someone to fight for things on your behalf and make sure your rights are protected. This person, a family member, a friend, a carer, worker or someone who has been engaged to act on your behalf, may be referred to as an individual advocate. An advocate, like a supporter, can participate in phone calls and meetings with you. An advocate is someone who will speak, write or act on your behalf in order to promote, protect and defend your rights. The person should:

- Not have a bias
- Be on your side and no one else's
- Be focused on your wants and needs
- Be loyal to you whilst respecting the rights of others
- Be able to be your voice when you need it.

It is important to understand the National Disability Insurance Agency do not provide advocacy support. The National Disability Insurance does not directly provide advocacy services for people living with a disability for representation and legal review of a decision. This is because the NDIS Act does not let the National Disability Insurance fund legal assistance for prospective participants or participants in relation to a review of a decision made under that Act.

## External advocacy programs

There are many external programs that do provide advocacy support. One of these programs is the [National Disability Advocacy Program](#). NDAP can also tell you about any local programs or peer support that can help with advocacy. Some state and territory programs are listed here: [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au)"]

An advocate can be a great support when trying to access the NDIS, however, not everyone has a support person who could be an advocate for them. The National Disability Advocacy Program provides people living with a disability access to effective disability advocacy that promote, protect and ensure their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights enabling community participation. The NDAP describe the approaches to disability advocacy in six key areas:

- **Self-advocacy:** supports people with disability to advocate for themselves, or as a group
- **Family advocacy:** helps parents and family members advocate on behalf of the person with disability for a particular issue
- **Individual advocacy:** upholds the rights of individual people with disability by working on discrimination, abuse and neglect
- **Legal advocacy:** upholds the rights and interests of individual people with disability by addressing the legal aspects of discrimination, abuse and neglect
- **Citizen advocacy:** matches people with disability with volunteers
- **Systemic advocacy:** seeks to remove barriers and address discrimination to ensure the rights of people with disability

To help people living with a disability find advocacy support they have created an [online advocacy finder where you can search for organisations](#) in your area for support. For more information about the [National Disability Advocacy Program](#) check out the [NDIS website](#)

## Self Advocacy

Self-advocacy is where you have the confidence to speak or act on your own behalf to improve your quality of life. It is where you can explain your own needs and wants and make informed decisions about the supports you need. The [National Disability Advocacy Program](#) can also help you to develop self-advocacy skills by:

- Helping you to grow and to identify your needs and goals
- Ensuring that you understand your rights and responsibilities
- Making sure that you understand your decisions and how they will affect your life
- Providing support with reviews. For example, if you decide to request an internal review with the National Disability Insurance Agency they can help you participate in the review process. The NDAP can also put you in contact with a support person if you are want to go through an external review of an NDIS decision in the [Administrative Appeals Tribunal](#) .

You can also check out [www.advokit.org.au](http://www.advokit.org.au) which is a website that has been developed by Disability Advocacy Network Australia Limited , to support advocacy for people with disabilities in connection with the National Disability Insurance Scheme

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