
Who Can Be Your Advocate?

Step 4 - Who Can Be Your Advocate?

While the NDIS aims to give you choice and control in your life, some people find it hard to speak up about what they need. Sometimes you may need help from a family member, friend or paid worker to support you with your NDIS access request, or to act on your behalf to promote, protect and defend your rights. They may be referred to as your 'advocate'. An advocate, like a supporter, can participate in phone calls and meetings with you, or may speak, write or act on your behalf.

This person should:

- Do what is right for you, not for someone else
- Be focused on your needs
- Be loyal to you whilst respecting the rights of others
- Be your voice when you need it.

It is important to understand that the NDIA do not provide advocacy support or representation for legal review of a decision. The NDIS Act (2013) does not allow this.

External advocacy programs

There are many external programs that provide advocacy support. Some state and territory programs are listed here: www.dss.gov.au

There is also the [National Disability Advocacy Program \(NDAP\)](#) that can help you or tell you about local programs or peer supports.

The National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP)

An advocate can be a great support when trying to access the NDIS, however, not everyone has a support person who can advocate for them. The National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) offers people living with a disability access to advocates who promote, protect and ensure equal enjoyment of human rights, specifically for people living with disabilities. The NDAP covers disability advocacy in six key areas:

- **Self-advocacy:** supports people with disability to advocate for themselves, or as a group
- **Family advocacy:** helps family members advocate on behalf of someone
- **Individual advocacy:** upholds the rights of individuals by working on discrimination, abuse and neglect
- **Legal advocacy:** upholds the rights and interests of individuals by addressing legal aspects of discrimination, abuse and neglect
- **Citizen advocacy:** matches people with volunteers
- **Systemic advocacy:** seeks to remove barriers and address discrimination to ensure people's rights. Use the [online advocacy finder](#) to search for advocacy support organisations in your area.

Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is where you have the confidence to act on your own to improve your quality of life. It is when you explain your own needs and make decisions about the supports you receive.

You can explore self-advocacy further in the following learning activity:

[Exploring self-advocacy for the NDIS and recovery](#)

You may also find this checklist useful:

- [Self-Advocacy Checklist](#)

Further develop your self-advocacy skills

The [National Disability Advocacy Program \(NDAP\)](#) can also help you to develop self-advocacy skills by:

- Helping you to grow and identify your needs and goals
- Ensuring 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 NDIA they can help you participate in the review. The NDAP can also put you in contact with a support person if you want to go through an external review of an NDIS decision in the [Administrative Appeals Tribunal \(AAT\)](#).

Check out www.advokit.org.au, a website developed by Disability Advocacy Network Australia Limited (DANA), to support advocacy for people with disabilities in connection with the NDIS.

Useful links:

[Looking after yourself](#)

[Assertive communication](#)

[Assertiveness](#)

[Resolving conflict](#)