

# Advocacy Fact Sheet

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## ***Advocacy is when someone acts or speaks on your behalf.***

Advocacy can be informal, like having a friend ask important questions at a doctor's appointment. Or it can be formal, to ensure you are treated respectfully and professionally, to resolve a complaint or improve services.

Anyone can be an advocate. A trusted family member or friend can be asked to advocate on your behalf. Some advocates may have lived experience which makes them knowledgeable and persuasive. Advocates may belong to a support group or organisation. A professional advocate may have legal qualifications, or be funded to deliver advocacy services.

A friend or professional advocate may:

- Explain your rights
- Help you to explore choices and options
- Act or speak on your behalf
- Help you to resolve a problem or conflict
- Ensure services are professionally delivered and your rights and wishes are respected
- Assist you to make a complaint if things don't go according to plan.

All government-funded advocacy services are free of charge, confidential and independent.

If we are assisting you or your family, and you wish to have someone speak on your behalf, we will include that person in discussions and any decision-making. If you need additional support, we may recommend an advocacy service to assist you.

**If you think you might need an advocate, speak with us on 1800 512 121, discuss your needs with our staff or contact a service listed here.**

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## Ageing:

<p><b>Older Person's Advocacy network (OPAN)</b> 1800 700 600 <a href="http://www.opan.org.au">www.opan.org.au</a></p>	<p>Offers free, independent and confidential support and information to older people seeking or already using Australian Government-funded aged care services across the nation, along with their families and carers.</p> <p>They can give you or an older person you know the advice to find the right aged care services for you, help you understand and exercise your rights and stay connected to the people you care about.</p>
<p><b>Council on the Ageing Victoria (COTA)</b> 1300 125 090 <a href="http://www.cota.vic.org.au">www.cota.vic.org.au</a></p> <p><b>COTA Wise Services</b> 1300 13 50 90 <a href="https://www.cotavic.org.au/information/wise-services/">https://www.cotavic.org.au/information/wise-services/</a></p>	<p>An independent consumer organisation, run by and for senior Australians, protecting and promoting the well-being of all seniors.</p> <p>A free telephone information service aimed at making older people feel WISE – Welcome, Included, Supported and Empowered.</p>
<p><b>Elder Rights Advocacy</b> 1800 700 600 (Free call) 9602 3066 <a href="http://www.era.asn.au">www.era.asn.au</a></p>	<p>Elder Rights Advocacy supports older people, their families and representatives in Victoria to address issues related to Commonwealth-funded aged care services. The service is free, independent and confidential.</p>
<p><b>Senior Rights Victoria</b> 1300 368 821 <a href="http://www.seniorsrights.org.au">www.seniorsrights.org.au</a></p>	<p>Seniors Rights Victoria has a team of experienced advocates, such as social workers, who provide free information, advice, referral and support to older people who are either at risk of or are experiencing elder abuse or to other people, such as family members and friends, who are concerned that someone else may be experiencing elder abuse.</p>

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## ***Mental Health:***

<p><b>Tandem</b> 1800 314 325 <a href="http://www.tandemcarers.org.au">www.tandemcarers.org.au</a></p>	<p>The Tandem Support and Referral Line provides support, information and referral to the family members, friends and carers of people living with mental health challenges.</p>
<p><b>Independent Mental Health Advocacy</b> 03 9093 3701 <a href="http://www.imha.vic.gov.au">www.imha.vic.gov.au</a></p>	<p>Provides support and advocacy on behalf of people receiving compulsory treatment in the public mental health system.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC)</b> 03 9380 3900 <a href="http://www.vmiac.org.au">www.vmiac.org.au</a></p>	<p>Is the peak Victorian non-government organisation supporting consumers/those with lived experience of mental health or emotional distress.</p> <p>Offers a consumer advocacy, NDIS advocacy and support service.</p>
<p><b>The Peninsula Carer Council</b> 1300 550 962 <a href="http://www.peninsulacarercouncil.org.au">www.peninsulacarercouncil.org.au</a></p>	<p>Provides support and information to carers of people with a mental illness on the Mornington Peninsula and advocates on their behalf regarding issues of concern to carers.</p>

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## Disability & NDIS:

<p><b>Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)</b> 9880 7000 <a href="https://www.acd.org.au/">https://www.acd.org.au/</a></p>	<p>ACD is the leading advocacy and information service for families of children with any type of disability living in Victoria. The organisation is run by and for families of children with disability.</p> <p>They can also provide phone-based advice regarding NDIS internal reviews, can review evidence, advise on review options.</p> <p>Not funded for advocacy at AAT.</p>
<p><b>Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)</b> 9480 7000 1800 626 078 <a href="http://www.adec.org.au">www.adec.org.au</a></p>	<p>Seeks to empower people from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds living with disability including those with psychosocial disability, or who are frail, their families and carers.</p> <p>Can support with NDIS Appeals.</p>
<p><b>Disability Advocacy Finder</b> <a href="https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/">https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/</a></p>	<p>The Disability Advocacy Finder is a tool made available by the Department of Social Services (DSS) for the purposes of listing the contact details and locations of disability advocacy agencies. Organisations included on the Disability Advocacy Finder are ones that receive funding from the Commonwealth or a state or territory government to provide advocacy under individual or systemic models of advocacy.</p>
<p><b>Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU)</b> 9639 5807 <a href="https://www.daru.org.au/find-an-advocate">https://www.daru.org.au/find-an-advocate</a></p>	<p>DARU is a state-wide service established to resource the disability advocacy sector in Victoria. This organisation can assist in identifying relevant advocacy organisations within any area that could provide individual advocacy for people with disabilities.</p>
<p><b>Disability Resources Centre (DRC)</b> 9671 3000 <a href="http://www.drc.org.au">www.drc.org.au</a></p>	<p>Provides individual advocacy to adults with physical, sensory, intellectual, neurological, psychosocial and/or multiple disabilities.</p>

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## ***Disability & NDIS continued:***

<p><b>Deaf Victoria Inc.</b>  <a href="mailto:info@deafvictoria.org.au">info@deafvictoria.org.au</a>  <a href="http://www.deafvictoria.org.au/contact-us/">www.deafvictoria.org.au/contact-us/</a></p>	<p>Provides advocacy for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities in Victoria.</p> <p>Does not provide support or advice via the telephone.</p>
<p><b>Leadership Plus</b>            9489 2999  <a href="http://www.leadershipplus.com">www.leadershipplus.com</a></p>	<p>Provides individual advocacy state-wide on behalf of adults with physical, intellectual and multiple disabilities.</p> <p>Can support with NDIS Appeals.</p>
<p><b>Southern Disability Advocacy</b>            9533 5977 (Bentleigh)            5973 6320 (Morningside)  <a href="http://www.southernda.org.au">www.southernda.org.au</a></p>	<p>Provides advocacy services for people with disabilities representing and protecting their rights and interests, including psychosocial disabilities.</p> <p>Can support with internal NDIS reviews. Not funded for advocacy at AAT.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID)</b>            9114 9415 (ask to speak to the intake duty officer)  <a href="http://www.valid.org.au">www.valid.org.au</a></p>	<p>VALID works with adults with intellectual disabilities and their families who live in Victoria and who have a current advocacy issue.</p>

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## Legal – Disability & NDIS:

<p><b>AED Legal Centre</b> 9639 4333 <a href="http://www.aed.org.au">www.aed.org.au</a></p>	<p>Legal advocacy including legal representation in the state/federal justice system for individuals who have been discriminated against in education or employment on account of their disability.</p> <p>Assistance and support with 'whole life issues' that have an impact on education and employment.</p> <p>NDIS Appeals Program – legal advocacy for NDIS participants who want a review of an NDIA decision by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).</p> <p>The Night of Justice Program, a legal advisory service every Wednesday night from 6:30pm. The service is staffed by volunteering law students and private lawyers working under the supervision of our Senior Legal Practitioner.</p>
<p><b>Disability Justice Advocacy Inc.</b> 9474 0077 1800 808 126 <a href="http://www.justadvocacy.com/">www.justadvocacy.com/</a></p>	<p>Individual, legal and systemic advocacy for all people with disability.</p> <p>Specialise in legal advocacy for people with all types of disability; but particularly those with communication, learning and/or sensory disabilities.</p>
<p><b>Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc.</b> 1800 014 111 <a href="http://www.villamanta.org.au">www.villamanta.org.au</a></p>	<p>Provide a free telephone information, advice and referral service; legal assistance about disability related legal problems; assistance with NDIS matters and appeals.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Legal Aid</b> 1300 792 387 <a href="https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/national-disability-insurance-scheme/get-help">https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/national-disability-insurance-scheme/get-help</a></p>	<p>Free information about the law and support with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).</p> <p>Can assist with some NDIS appeals, including external reviews in the AAT.</p>

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## Youth:

<p><b>Little Dreamers</b> 1800 717 515 <a href="https://www.littledreamers.org.au/contact/">https://www.littledreamers.org.au/contact/</a></p>	<p>Work with Young Carer Ambassadors to advocate for change and raise awareness.</p>
<p><b>Youth Disability Advocacy Service</b> 0438 638 734 (text or call) <a href="https://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas/advocacy/get-advocacy-support/">https://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas/advocacy/get-advocacy-support/</a></p>	<p>Works with disabled young people in Victoria to make sure they can speak up and are being treated fairly.</p> <p>The free individual advocacy service is for disabled young people, aged 12 to 25.</p>
<p><b>Youthlaw</b> 9113 9500 <a href="https://youthlaw.asn.au/">https://youthlaw.asn.au/</a></p>	<p>A state-wide service that provides free and confidential legal information and advice to young people up to the age of 25.</p>

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## General:

<p><b>Department of Veterans Affairs, RSL Veteran Central (DVA Clients)</b> 1300 645 838 <a href="https://rslvic.com.au/veteran-support/veteran-central/">https://rslvic.com.au/veteran-support/veteran-central/</a></p>	<p>Veteran Central is a place for Victorian veterans to interact with Ex-Service Organisations and get the support they need to maintain their wellbeing. Staffed by Case Navigators who work to find and link you to supports that are available.</p>
<p><b>Financial Counselling Victoria Inc.</b> 9663 2000 <a href="http://www.fcrc.org.au">www.fcrc.org.au</a></p>	<p>Financial counsellors assist Victorians in financial difficulty by providing information, support and advocacy.</p>
<p><b>Office of the Public Advocate</b> 1300 309 337 <a href="https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/">https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/</a></p>	<p>Advice Service providing information and assistance to people with disability and mental illness, and their family, carers and friends.</p> <p>Can provide advice on a diverse range of matters that affect people with disability and mental illness, including guardianship and administration, enduring powers of attorney, medical treatment decision-making, matters affecting people with disability, referral to OPA's Community Visitors Program.</p>
<p><b>Rainbow Door</b> 1800 729 367 <a href="https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au">https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au</a></p>	<p>Available for all Victorian LGBTQIA+ people and those who support them. Can assist to access LGBTQIA+ friendly services and connection to advocacy or advice in relation to mental health, disability, relationship or support for older people.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Aboriginal Health Service</b> (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients) 9419 3000 (Fitzroy) 8592 3920 (Epping) 9403 3300 (Preston) <a href="http://www.vaahs.org.au">www.vaahs.org.au</a></p>	<p>The Family Counselling Service provides culturally safe social emotional wellbeing and mental health counselling, cultural healing and recovery programs, care coordination and outreach support. Including financial counselling, advocacy, problem gambling counselling, access to housing services, and social support including emergency relief.</p>

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## Legal - General:

<p><b>Djirra Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service</b>          1800 105 303 (free call)          9244 3333  <a href="https://djirra.org.au/what-we-do/legal-services/">https://djirra.org.au/what-we-do/legal-services/</a></p>	<p>Works with Aboriginal people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence, including non-Aboriginal people experiencing family violence who are parents of Aboriginal children.</p> <p>Provides one-off legal advice and ongoing representation, in the following areas:          intervention orders; family law; child protection; victims of crime compensation.</p>
<p><b>Law and Advocacy Centre for Women</b>          9448 8930  <a href="https://lacw.com.au/">https://lacw.com.au/</a></p>	<p>Specifically for women who are in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Provides specialised representation for women in greater Melbourne in areas of criminal law, infringements and victims of crime assistance tribunal applications.</p> <p>They also provide in-house case management, to ensure the reasons for offending are addressed, and the risk of re-offending minimised.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Legal Aid</b>          1300 792 387  <a href="http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au">www.legalaid.vic.gov.au</a></p>	<p>Free legal advice, information, library, publications, workshops and duty lawyers at many courts and tribunals.</p>
<p><b>Women's Legal Service Victoria</b>          1800 133 302  <a href="https://www.womenslegal.org.au/">https://www.womenslegal.org.au/</a></p>	<p>Provides legal advice and representation to women experiencing disadvantage.</p> <p>Can support with intervention orders, child protection cases, family law.</p>