

Advocating for your child



It's common for parents to advocate for their child in many situations, even though you might not think of it as advocacy.

What is an advocate?

An advocate is someone who speaks up for the needs and rights of others. This can include raising an issue on someone's behalf, finding information, writing a letter or making a complaint.

As a parent, you have already been advocating for your child since they were born because you have their best interests at heart. If you have a strong instinct about what could improve your child's situation, it's ok to be firm and persistent to make this happen. Remember that you know your child best, and you don't have to apologise for speaking up.

Advocating for your child isn't always easy. It may mean developing new skills, learning new words and asking lots of questions. But with persistence and the right support, advocating for your child can help you work towards positive outcomes for your child and family.

What is advocacy support?

Advocacy support is where someone helps you to advocate for the needs of your child and family, or takes up a matter on your behalf. You can get advocacy support from friends, family, other parents or professional advocates.

What types of advocacy does ACD provide?

ACD advocates for children with disability in a number of ways:

- **Self-advocacy:** We empower families with the knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate for their child
- **Individual advocacy:** We support families to advocate for their child
- **Systemic advocacy:** We raise issues that impact all children with disability and their families directly with key decision-makers

You can contact our Support Line if you need advocacy support:

ACD Support Line

Call 03 9880 7000 or 1800 654 013 (regional)

Text 0475 577 997 to request a call back

Email acdsupport@acd.org.au

Tips for advocating for your child

There can be many different situations where you may need to advocate for your child. Here are some tips from other families who have successfully advocated for their child and family:

Be prepared

- Be clear about what you want to achieve and what is an acceptable outcome
- Be aware of your child's rights
- Find out who is responsible for the outcome you are seeking
- Don't always expect conflict, as others may agree with you

Communicate clearly

- Be firm and persistent
- Think about what you want to say and how you will say it
- Write down the main points you want to cover
- Think about points that others may raise and how you might respond
- Agree on an appropriate time and place for any discussion
- Stay focused on getting the best outcome for your child
- Ask for a few minutes to gather your thoughts
- Try to stay calm and use respectful language

Get support

- Ask a friend, support person or advocate to help you
- Seek further information and advice from an advocacy organisation

Follow up actions

- Be open to other solutions that may be just as effective
- Negotiate and be open to compromise
- Keep notes about what was discussed
- Follow up on agreed actions

What other organisations provide advocacy support?

Disability Advocacy Finder

<https://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas>

Find an advocate (DARU)

<https://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas>

Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)

<https://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas>