

What is Advocacy?



Advocacy means working with individuals or groups, using the least intrusive approach, to uphold rights, access needed supports and/or services, and resolve issues. Advocacy is essential to maintaining and improving quality of life for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Our advocates help individuals and families navigate complex systems such as Community-Based Services, Medicaid, and Special Education, by providing knowledge, guidance, and practical support. Advocacy services empower people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to exercise their rights, express their preferences, and access community support(s). These services are informational and supportive and do not replace legal, medical, or clinical services.

We aim to work collaboratively with clients, families, service providers, school districts, and agencies to help achieve desired outcomes. While our advocates are knowledgeable and experienced, they are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice. If legal assistance is needed, clients must seek support from a qualified attorney.

Advocacy services are provided in alignment with the following values:

- Self-determination: Respecting and promoting the Client's right to make informed choices
- Dignity and Respect: Honoring the inherent worth of every individual
- Inclusion and Equity: Promoting full participation in community life
- Empowerment: Building the Client's skills and confidence to advocate for themselves
- Least intrusive support: Providing only the level of support necessary to achieve the Client's goals

Examples of How an Advocate Can Help

An advocate may assist by:

- Helping you understand application and appeal processes for community resources and benefit programs such as Medicaid
- Discussing community service options and resources
- Explaining the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process and your rights under federal laws, including IDEA and Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Attending meetings (such as IEP, 504, or Service Plan meetings) to:
 - Ask questions you may not know to ask
 - Support problem-solving and explore creative, "outside-the-box" solutions
 - Explain what is being discussed in plain language

Examples of What an Advocate Cannot Do

An advocate will not and cannot:

- Provide legal advice
- Complete applications, file appeals, or act as an authorized representative for benefit programs
- Provide crisis services or last-minute support
- Offer case management services
- Recommend or prescribe specific medical, therapeutic, or treatment services for you or your child

The goal of advocacy is to equip you with tools, information, and confidence so you can advocate for your own needs and rights and fully access your community and environment.

Connect with Advocacy Services

For Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



Submit A Service Request

Start by completing our online Service Request form to tell us more about your concern. Once we receive your request, an intake specialist will contact you to schedule your intake meeting.

1

Schedule Your Intake Meeting

Work with our intake specialist to choose a day and time that works best for you.

2

Attend Your Intake Meeting

During this meeting, we will:

- Learn more about your concern
- Identify the outcome you are seeking
- Gather important information
- Explore how we can best support you

3

Team Review & Next Steps

Our team will review your intake information and decide on the best path forward:

Assign an advocate, or Refer you to appropriate community resources.

4

Work with Your Advocate

If an advocate is assigned, they will reach out to you to:

- Set up a meeting
- Discuss strategies
- Establish goals to help resolve your concern

5

Scan to Get Started

