

# TYPES OF ADVOCACY

A number of different types of advocacy exist. The strength of each advocacy type depends on how well the individual, group or organization's advocacy efforts meet the key elements expressed in the definition of advocacy. The types of advocacy have been categorized in different ways. Here we will refer to five types of advocacy:

- Individual Advocacy
- Citizen Advocacy
- Systems Advocacy
- Parent Advocacy
- Self-Advocacy

Sometimes only two types of advocacy are talked about, individual and systems. Self-advocacy and citizen advocacy are often regarded as individual advocacy. Parent advocacy is often regarded as either individual or systems.

## **1. Individual Advocacy**

Here the advocate concentrates their efforts on one or two people only. There are two common forms of individual advocacy:

### **a. Informal Advocacy**

Parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, friends who take on advocacy roles are all examples of informal individual advocacy. Many different people, with a range of relationships to people with disability, have spoken out and persistently advocated for those who are vulnerable. What often goes unrecognized and unseen, are the efforts of individual people who may struggle with the injustices with little or no support. Such individual efforts have been termed informal advocacy.

These individual advocacy efforts can and do last many years, often in significant isolation. These solo efforts can isolate individual advocates from their communities by the very nature of their efforts, particularly where the issue is controversial or perceived as detrimental to the wider

system/environment in which the issue is placed. For example, a parent's efforts to seek enrolment of a child with disability in a regular school in a local community may stir enmities, conflicting interests and test established friendships. These advocacy efforts by individual people for valued lives need to be supported, nurtured and protected. Individual people may want to be connected to others doing advocacy; to share the effort, to seek support, or to develop a collective response. Individual advocates are encouraged to link with advocacy groups for information resources and further contacts.

### **b. Voluntary community-based organizations**

Another form of individual advocacy is voluntary community-based organizations that pay staff to advocate for individuals.

## **2. Citizen Advocacy**

Citizen advocacy is a community-based movement that aims to recognize, promote and defend the rights, well-being and interests of people with intellectual and/or multiple disabilities. It does so by finding and supporting caring, responsible citizens who make long-term voluntary commitment to make a positive difference in the life of a person who may be lonely, face difficult challenges, or be in —at risk situations. Each Citizen Advocacy relationship is unique. The citizen advocate may for example, offer his or her protégé friendship, new experiences and opportunities, spokesman ship and protection from abuse.

The Citizen Advocacy office carefully matches protégés and citizen advocates to ensure there is a good match between the interests and needs of the protégé and the abilities, resources and commitment of the citizen advocate. Citizen advocates are orientated, assisted to gain further knowledge and resources, supported and recruited by the Citizen Advocacy office.

## **3. Parent Advocacy**

Parent advocacy is concerned with advocating on issues that affect the person with a disability and their family. The focus is on the needs of the person with a disability, not the parents or family. However, some parent advocacy focuses on the needs of parents first. Whilst parents

have substantial needs for support and resources, when we talk about parent advocacy we mean advocacy by parent groups for people with a disability.

#### **4. Self-Advocacy**

Self-advocacy is undertaken by person or group who share the same characteristics or interests on behalf of the same person or group. The difficulty with this form of advocacy is that sometimes those undertaking advocacy and speaking up for themselves are likely to be further exposed and be more vulnerable to abuse, discrimination and ridicule as a result of speaking up for themselves.

#### **5. System Advocacy**

This form of advocacy is primarily concerned with influencing and changing the system (legislation, policy and practices) in ways that will benefit people with a disability as a group within society. Systems advocates will encourage changes to the law, government and service policies and community attitudes. Usually systems advocacy do not do individual advocacy. To do so can cause conflict around the use of resources, focus and purpose.

Other types of Advocacy include:

- People centered Advocacy
- *Policy Advocacy*- may be targeted towards the executive or the legislative arms of the government, works towards changing the existing programme of actions or set of principles and policies or enacting a new one for the benefit of all especially the common man.
- *Legislative advocacy*-sometimes used interchangeably with policy advocacy which may emanate from the executive arm of the government, focuses on working with and using only the parliament to effect change in policy or enact a new one.
- *Gender Advocacy*: believes in equity of resources between male and female, young or old
- *Feminist Advocacy*- focuses campaigning solely on women's identity and ideology
- *Confrontational Advocacy*- this deals more with strategy of achieving a change at all costs by all means without necessarily promoting dialogue
- *Legitimacy Advocacy*-this is advocating for a change through compliance with recognized

rules, standards or traditions

- *Egocentric Advocacy*- suggests pressing for a change for a selfish reason
- *Demonstrative Advocacy*- this is a type of advocacy in which the advocates themselves take up the responsibility of the target of advocacy so as to show deficiency of the latter or to challenge the latter to take a cue.
- *Media advocacy*- deals with strategy of achieving advocacy goal through the use of media both print and electronic
- *Sectoral Advocacy*- while focusing on campaigning for a reform and a change in policies it targets the specific sector of the economy such as health, water, agriculture, education, land and housing etc. both in public and private sectors
- *Economic Advocacy*- focuses attention on economic issues affecting the nation such as debt cancellation, reform, due process, pro-poor budgeting, extractive industries etc.
- *Social Service Advocacy*- this is related to both economic advocacy and Sectoral advocacy as the main focus being campaigning for social welfare of the people in which donors, for example, should provide funds directly to the government who will factor this into the national budget e.g. the Direct Budget System (DBS).
- *Issue-based Advocacy* - Others; consumer Advocacy, Self Advocacy, Customer Advocacy, Child Advocacy, Cyclic Advocacy, trails Advocacy, prison Advocacy, patient V Advocacy.

### **Key Elements of Advocacy**

There are a number of key elements of advocacy. To briefly explain the elements of advocacy we have identified the following 6 as the predominant key elements.

#### **1. Functioning by speaking out, acting or writing**

Advocacy is active. It involves doing something. It may be writing letters to politicians, raising issues of concern to organizations or services, being with a person when they are confronted with situations they find difficult, being with a person where they could be taken advantage of or fighting for a person's right to live a more fulfilling life.

#### **2. Minimal conflict of interest**

This issue lies at the core of advocacy and is one of the hardest, most important issues to come to grips with. In any situation there will be more than one person or groups' interests that will be in conflict or competition with the interest of a person with a disability.

When you are in an advocacy role, you need to be clear as to how your interest and needs may be in conflict with the person for whom you are advocating. As an advocate you must identify and attempt to reduce conflicts of interest or, at least, be prepared to acknowledge your limitations as an advocate.

### **3. Sincerely perceived interests**

This issue is one of the most complex and difficult issues for advocates to address. The advocate does not just speak up for what a person may want or what a person may be interested in.

Advocates will be faced with making decisions about a person with disability's life and well-being and may be the only individual in that person's life who has a positive vision for that person's future in the long term. When what a person says they want is different from what seems to be in their best interests, advocates are faced with a difficult dilemma. Identifying what is in a person's interests, what they need versus what they want is a difficult process.

### **4. Promotion of person's welfare, well-being and justice**

As an advocate you do this precisely because the well-being of, and justice for, disadvantaged, devalued people is often risk. Things we take for granted are often not available for people with disabilities. Devalued people are apt to be treated as sub-human with all the degrading, inhumane treatment that accompanies such notions of devalued people and people with disability in particular. For example, people with disabilities have been placed in cages, left unattended on toilets for long periods of time, bathrooms and toilets often do not have doors fitted. Little attempt is made to ensure privacy and dignity for the person.

One must be convinced that the dynamics of oppression are a constant reality in these people's lives, so that our advocacy efforts are aimed at enhancing and protecting the value, the competencies and the image of the person for whom we are advocating, as opposed to promoting devalued social roles and images. Unless we are highly conscious and convinced of the devaluing structures and processes that operate within the lives of devalued persons, we can actually assist and tacitly engage in, those destructive processes.

## **5. Vigor of action**

Advocacy requires:

- Fervor and depth of feeling in advancing the cause or interest of another
- Taking a lead, initiating
- Sense of urgency
- Doing more than what is done routinely
- Challenging the community

As an advocate you need to be prepared to bend over backwards to pursue and achieve even small, ordinary gains. Instead of only writing a letter to the editor, it may require you to also ring your local politician; instead of complaining once about an unacceptable situation, it may require you to complain weekly.

## **6. Costs**

Advocacy can involve costs to the advocate and to the person needing advocacy and these costs must be considered. To say that advocacy costs, is not to say that people with disability are costly to be with. The cost element of advocacy reflects the demands of all strong advocacies, whether for people with disability or advocacy for another purpose, for example, environmental causes. Recognizing that advocacy costs, helps advocates preparing and understanding what may happen to them when they do advocacy. People with disability need advocates who are prepared and able to be there for the long haul.

### **Costs to the advocate**

The potential costs to the advocate include one or many of the following at various times:

- Time or other resources that the advocate may rather spend on something or someone else such as time with your family, going to the movies.
- Emotional wear and tear that arise from the highs and lows of advocacy.
- Not being able to adequately meet bodily demands such as having time to sleep, rest, eat a leisurely dinner.
- Social rejection and ridicule that you may experience. Often by being an advocate you may suffer some of the same things devalued person or group experiences – exclusion, ridicule,

rejection by your peers, work colleagues, friends.

- Self-esteem and self-certainty may be attached. Often people who rock the boat are labeled troublemaker, eccentric, do gooder and are treated accordingly. This may cause you to lose faith in yourself and your actions.
- Financial security and livelihood may be lessened. Your actions as an advocate may lead to the loss of promotional or job opportunities, the loss of existing job, or the cost of litigation.
- Physical health, safety and in some countries your life can be threatened as a result of strong advocacy efforts.

### **Costs to person needing advocacy**

When you make decisions or take actions that affect the person with the disability you need to be aware of the implications of your actions. You can achieve this by asking yourself the following questions.

- Will my advocacy efforts have the potential to cause more harm than good?
- If I do not take action how serious will be the potential outcome be?

If there is a potential cost to the person with a disability you must also warn them as to what that might be. For example, you may be advocating for a person to have visitors when they wish.

Firstly, you must consider how your actions could negatively affect the person. If it is likely the person could be penalized in small ways, such as being served last at dinner, you may decide to go ahead in this situation. If the consequence could be the person being singled out by staff and made fun of in front of everyone you might decide the cost is too great. However, if you were making complaints to a service because of suspected physical and sexual abuse, the potential costs of being made fun of will almost certainly be worth stopping the abuse.

### **Other elements of Advocacy**

There are other key elements of advocacy that are implied by the definition, they are:

#### **1. Being on the side of the disadvantaged party**

Advocacy is biased; it does not claim to be neutral. It is not about mediating, facilitating or

negotiating on behalf of someone. It means placing yourself fundamentally on the side of the person with a disability. If you are advocating for – then you will be advocating against as well. There is no middle road. It does not mean you will have to be aggressive or confrontational although some situations may warrant that. It simply means clearly, consistently, and firmly acting and speaking on behalf of one person or group of people.

## **2. Fidelity / Stick-to-it-ness**

Advocacy involves being there over the long run. This may involve making commitment to be in someone's life for a long time or making a commitment to see a particular situation through to its end. Some people with a disability, particularly those who are dependent on services, have little continuous contact with people. Residential care officers, mental health workers, social workers, case managers often come and go. Hence it is important to make a realistic commitment to be there.

## **3. Emphasis on major needs**

As an advocate you need to concentrate on a person's fundamental needs first. A person's need for a home of their own, enduring relationships, to be free from abuse, to be healthy and safe may take priority over encouraging a person to attend personal development courses or even having work.

## **4. Mindful of parties even more needy than the person you are advocating for**

There may be other parties whose needs must be considered. For example, the child of parents who lack competence is more vulnerable than those parents. Advocates for the parents must bear in mind the needs of the vulnerable child and at least arrange independent advocacy for the child.