

Illawarra Citizen Advocacy

Prospectus

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# INTRODUCTION

Citizen Advocacy programmes are focused on initiating and supporting a variety of relationships which encourage identification with and active representation of the interests of the person with an intellectual disability into social and community life.

J. O'Brien

Citizen Advocacy is important not only because it promotes the inclusion and acceptance of people with an intellectual disability, but also because it helps to build stronger and more caring communities. It recognises that ordinary people, who are not trained professionals, have the skills and the responsibility to assist people to lead more meaningful lives.

For this programme, it means that there is an opportunity for people in the coastal areas between Helensburgh to Gerroa to include a person in their life who is isolated and often discriminated against. These relationships enrich the lives of the two people involved and all those who they come into contact with.

## **HISTORY OF CITIZEN ADVOCACY**

Citizen Advocacy began in the USA and Canada in the 1960's. It grew from the concerns of a group of people who had family members with a disability and who felt that they might not be able to provide life-long support for them. The aim of the group was to ensure that adequate protection and advocacy would be maintained. The principles and philosophies of Citizen Advocacy have their basis in the writings of Wolf Wolfensberger, known internationally for his interest in the area of intellectual disability, who, during the 1960's, first began to outline guiding principles relating to the needs of people who are devalued (i.e. seen as less worthy than most people) by society.

There are now many Citizen Advocacy Programmes throughout the USA, Canada, England, New Zealand and Australia.

The first Citizen Advocacy Programme in Australia was established in Perth in 1980 and after that programmes commenced in Melbourne in 1981, Canberra and Sydney in 1982 and Adelaide in 1986. There are currently 17 programmes and 2 State Resource Centres Australia wide.

The first NSW Citizen Advocacy Office opened in July 1982. One and a half years later the NSW Citizen Advocacy Resource Centre evolved as a co-ordinating body from the first programme and over the next two years helped to establish three other Citizen Advocacy programmes in the State.

## **HISTORY OF ILLAWARRA CITIZEN ADVOCACY INC.**

In late 1986, a working party under the auspices of the Illawarra Disabled Person's Trust was formed to examine the need for a Citizen Advocacy Programme in the Illawarra area. As a result of the proven need and assisted by Citizen Advocacy NSW, a Development Committee of people was appointed to lay the ground work for the programme and to pursue funding options. In March 1989, the Department of Community Services and Health approved the Committee's application for funding under Section 10 of the Disability Services Act as a new and eligible programme.

Since June 1989, the Board of Management and Staff have worked hard to establish Illawarra Citizen Advocacy within the community and to match valued advocates to proteges who have an intellectual disability.

Illawarra Citizen Advocacy is Incorporated as an Independent body with the Corporate Affairs Commission.

Illawarra Citizen Advocacy is looking forward to a bright future that will involve a high degree of community acceptance and support, as well as enriching the lives of people who live within the boundaries of the programme.

# **ILLAWARRA CITIZEN ADVOCACY INC.**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To promote, protect and defend the personal well-being  
and interests of a growing number of people with  
intellectual disability

in order to enhance and defend their identity and role as  
human beings, growing and developing persons, and citizens,

by establishing and supporting a range of individualised,  
freely given, personal relationships between such persons and  
valued, competent citizens,

prepared to undertake committed and sustained relationships  
based upon the representation of each person's interests.

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POLICY AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE ILLAWARRA CITIZEN ADVOCACY INC.

Illawarra Citizen Advocacy is a non-profit, non-sectarian, non-political and charitable organisation.

1. Citizen Advocacy Definition

* Citizen Advocacy is a means to promote, protect, and defend the welfare and interests of, and justice for, persons who are intellectually disabled, through one-to-one freely given commitments made to them by people in the community.

* Citizen Advocates strive to represent the interests of a person as if they were the advocate's own.

* The advocates are recruited and supported by the Citizen Advocacy office that is independently funded and governed.

* In consultation with the Citizen Advocacy office, advocates choose from a wide range of functions and roles.

* Some of these commitments may last for life.

2. Statement of Philosophy of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy

a. All people, regardless of their disability, are entitled:

* to personal relationships and a variety of relationships;

* to live in the community and to participate in normal community life;

* to use community services and facilities and whatever services may be necessary to enable them to develop their abilities and independence;

* to have all the rights as citizens under law, to share in the benefits as well as the difficulties and responsibilities of life as Australian citizens;

* to make personal choices, to accept risks and challenges, to exercise their rights and to meet their own needs; and

* to training and development to prepare them to meet the risks and challenges that are part of life in the community.

b. The principle of Social Role Valorisation is accepted as basic to the concept of Citizen Advocacy. This principle may be expressed as:

“The ways people with disabilities are assisted and the lifestyles in which these people live

should be at least as good as those of average citizens and valued by society, and should be perceived as acceptable within a local community.

“As much as possible these methods and settings should respect privacy, promote dignity and independence and should be provided in the least restrictive environment possible for each individual.

“People should be encouraged and assisted to lead a life that is productive, interesting and satisfying, and to make their own decisions.

“They should be helped as much as possible to develop and/or maintain behaviour, appearances and experiences which are valued in the community, and which will enhance their status and reputation, and will provide them with valued social roles.” (CA NSW 1975)

3. Statement of Aims of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy

a. To help ensure that people with intellectual disabilities have the same opportunities and life conditions that are available to everyone else by recruiting an advocate who is free from conflict of interest.

b. To encourage freely given relationships which would provide continuity in the life of the person with intellectual disability.

c. To affirm the value of people with intellectual disability within the community by inclusion of people with intellectual disability in our community organisation and activities.

d. To help safeguard people with intellectual disability from abuse, neglect, ridicule and exploitation.

e. To change the attitudes of people in the community by increasing the opportunities for people with intellectual disability, to develop their talents and presence in the community and by helping us all to appreciate and understand each other.

4. Citizen Advocacy Principles

a. Advocate Independence

In order to effectively represent protege needs, citizen advocates must be free to:

* develop a primary loyalty to proteges; and

* to act as independently as possible in responding to protege needs and interests.

This means that:

* citizen advocates should see themselves as supported by, but independent of, the citizen advocacy office itself;

* advocates should see themselves as independent of the agencies and settings which provide services for partners; and advocates should be able to see themselves as independent from the families of proteges in those instances where family interests are different from those of individual partners.

Briefly, the citizen advocacy programme should be structured to support citizen advocates as unpaid and independent people who are involved in a freely given relationship to an individual person.

b. Loyalty to Proteges

* Most proteges will be at least somewhat more dependent on human services and on their families than will others of their age.

* the people on whom a protege depends will develop their own perspective on the protege's needs. Sometimes these perspectives are so strong as to distort the protege's own interests to conform to the needs of service providers or even families.

* It is essential to Citizen Advocacy that the advocate strive to define situations from the perspective of the protege and act to influence situations involving the protege in terms of the protege's perspective.

* While the principle can be simply stated - the advocate volunteers to and acts as the agent of an individual protege - defining a meaningful awareness of the protege's perspective is typically a process which will develop throughout the advocate/protege relationship.

* The more complex a protege's situation, the more this necessary task will challenge the advocate.

c. Programme Independence

In order to support the development of effective advocacy relationships, the citizen advocacy office itself must be independent. Independence implies the greatest possible freedom from conflict of interest in administrative structures and funding.

* **Independent administration and location.** The citizen advocacy office must be administratively and physically separated from agencies which operate direct service programmes involving actual or potential proteges.

* **Separation from direct service.** A citizen advocacy programme should share few or no aspects of governance or administration with an organisation providing services which are relevant to actual or potential proteges.

A citizen advocacy office should either have a governing board which does not govern any services, or at least it should be governed by a governance structure which has no responsibilities for the provision of direct services to actual or potential proteges.

Staff members should be independent of loyalties to agencies which would provide services to actual or potential proteges.

* **Independent citizen advocacy office location** - The physical location of the citizen advocacy office should enhance its independence.

Citizen Advocacy offices should not share space with, or in direct proximity to, direct service providers that might serve actual or potential proteges.

* **Independence of funding sources** - The funding of citizen advocacy offices, including indirect subsidies such as donated space, equipment, supplies, secretarial services, etc., should come from as distant a source as possible from funders who operate services which could serve actual or potential proteges

As well, a citizen advocacy office should have multiple, distinct funding sources to ensure that freedom of perspective and action are not compromised if one or even several funders disagree with the citizen advocacy office's actions, and thereby do remove support.

Each funding source should be analysed individually to identify actual and potential restrictions on the independence of the citizen advocacy office.

The pattern of funding should be tested to ensure that funding sources are, in fact, independent of each other, and that the pattern of funding safeguards independence.

The potential for increasing programme independence through by the office's funding strategy over the next year (or three to five years or more) should be analysed.

Multiple and varied funding sources can be costly in terms of imposing a variety of criteria and reporting requirements.

d. Clarity of staff function

In order to develop the full range of its potential a citizen advocacy office needs:

- * staff who understand the nature and possibilities of Citizen Advocacy;
- * staff who communicate this understanding by supporting, not supplanting, advocate/protege relationships; and
- * staff who direct their energies toward building and maintaining the citizen advocacy programme as a whole.

Clear and effective staff functioning requires:

- * the distinction of a well-defined staff role from the role of the citizen advocate,
- * non-competition with other advocacy roles, and

* staff involvement with others involved in developing citizen advocacy concepts and programmes.

To ensure that adequate energy is available to develop the citizen advocacy program as a whole, staff roles should be structured and supported so as to ensure that staff do not confuse their roles with citizen advocate roles.

Citizen advocacy staff need the back-up and support of governing board and advisory committee members who are themselves involved in increasing their identification with an understanding of the Citizen Advocacy movement.

e. Balanced orientation to protege needs

People with disability have a wide variety of needs for representation and relationships which can be met by citizen advocates.

One of the greatest potential strengths of Citizen Advocacy is the flexibility to define and support those relationships which can, if the participants choose, fit the changing individual circumstances of a protege.

Realising this potential requires that citizen advocacy office staff should be capable of developing and implementing complex, multi path plans for recruiting and supporting many different types of relationships.

Many citizen advocacy offices have developed in the absence of such a multi-path strategy, and have greatly narrowed both the types of protege needs they perceive, the kinds of advocates they recruit, and the kinds of support they offer.

This narrowing can easily define the pattern of growth of a citizen advocacy office over time such that potential flexibility becomes fixed in one or a few categories of response.

Narrowing the range of possible citizen advocacy roles can result either in provision of overly restrictive relationships, or an inability to meet a substantial need for protection.

Protege characteristics to consider include age, capacity for relationship reciprocity, need for spokesman ship to defend human and legal rights, and need for long term relationships.

A diversity of advocacy roles should be developed while considering the balance of current and planned advocacy relationships, the availability of crisis advocates, the involvement of youth advocates, and avoiding social overprotection.

f. Positive interpretations

A citizen advocacy office should be a model in the interpretation of people who are devalued.

This implies both a systematic, highly conscious orientation to avoiding various types of deviancy-image juxtaposition and actively seeking the most positive possible and yet honest interpretation

This does not mean that the citizen advocacy office will deny the existence of people's disability, or the nature of their social situation.

Interpretations which suggest these negative roles or images, even very subtly, contribute to the devaluation of people with disability.

Specifically, the programme should avoid places, actions, or images which connect disabled people with images or practices which connote:

- death and decay
- triviality, worthlessness
- sub-humanity
- sickness
- animality
- pity or charity
- menace
- eternal childhood

Instead, the citizen advocacy office should seek the most highly positive, value-conferring and yet valid possible associations which support the developmental growth potential, citizenship role, and individual human person hood of people at risk of social devaluation.

All aspects of the citizen advocacy office should be considered, including the potential interpretive impact of:

- office location
- the content of training sessions
- logos
- recruitment materials
- written materials
- funding sources, including methods
- media of fund-raising used by contributing organisations.

5. Seven Key Office Activities

a. Protege recruitment

The impact of a Citizen Advocacy office depends on the availability of sufficient staff time to effectively perform a balance of seven key activities, which include: protege recruitment, advocate recruitment, advocate orientation, matching, follow-along and support, ongoing training, and involvement of advocate associates. These activities will back up and coordinate citizen advocates so as to maximise the probability that their proteges will experience continuity over time despite changing needs.

Protege recruitment practices have a strong influence on the direction of the citizen advocacy office's development.

If protege recruitment is confined to a narrow group of people, it will make the development

of an adequate range of advocate role options either impossible or reliant on significantly over or under serving some partners.

If protege recruitment is essentially a passive process which relies on human service agencies for protege referrals, it is possible that many people most in need of citizen advocacy will be screened out as “unsuitable for a volunteer” or even as a person for whom service providers are uninterested in active spokesman ship.

If protege recruitment does not result in valid information which clearly defines protege needs, preferences and characteristics, advocate recruitment cannot be targeted precisely.

b. Advocate recruitment

Effectiveness in advocate recruitment results in a growing number of people becoming involved in citizen advocacy roles.

Ensuring effectiveness requires a written plan which is updated at least annually; and which:

- * specifies target groups for recruitment, recruitment objectives, time lines, and a variety of options for recruitment activities;
- * is coordinated with the protege recruitment plan; and
- * is intended to track performance.

Advocate recruitment strategies which rely on direct, person-to-person efforts which are specific to the defined needs of a particular protege have proved most effective.

Second in effectiveness appears to be presentations which are planned to interpret specific protege needs to a target audience selected to ensure a high likelihood of producing people who would accept a particular advocacy role.

Generalised public appeals, or generalised presentations to unselected groups, have shown only minimal return compared to more specific tactics.

c. Advocate orientation

The orientation required by advocates who are beginning a citizen advocacy relationship provides them with a necessary framework of understanding.

Orientation can be productively divided into pre-match and post-match time blocks.

In whatever minimum time is allocated to orientation, there should be adequate coverage of at least:

- * The social situation of devalued people;
- * Description of the basic principles of citizen advocacy, with special reference to advocate

responsibilities to proteges, and to the full range of necessary citizen advocacy roles;

- * Clear description of the role and function of the citizen advocacy office from the perspective of what advocates can and should expect from staff and advocate associates;

- * Information on a range of effective means of meeting the advocacy needs of people with disability

- * Information on other available resources to assist advocates and proteges; and

- * Specific information necessary to an initial sense of understanding and competence in undertaking a chosen advocacy role.

d. Advocate-protege matching

Matching involves the selection of an advocate and protege who are likely to begin a successful relationship, and providing an initial structure for introducing each to the relationship. In terms of citizen advocacy office staff activity, the quality of the match depends on:

- * The quality of information available on the specific needs, personal characteristics, and preference of individual proteges.

- * The quality of information available on the advocate's initial expectations, the type of advocacy role he/she is interested in, the level of advocate commitment and advocate skills, personal characteristics and preferences. What becomes apparent here is the utility of advocate recruitment methods which are specifically targeted to well-defined protege needs.

- * The ability of the staff performing the match to select advocate partner pairings which provide a best fit between advocate expectations and characteristics, and protege needs and characteristics.

- * The ability of the staff devising the match to:

- a. predict areas of the relationship which are apt to lead to confusion, initial disappointment, or conflict; and

- b. to structure initial contacts so as to minimise potentially negative experiences.

- * The ability of the staff devising the match to sensitively and positively interpret the needs of each person to the other.

e. Follow-along and support to relationships

Follow-along and support activities are distinct, but closely related. Follow-along includes regular, systematic, low profile checks on the status of each relationship; provides the Citizen advocacy office with a measure of its effectiveness in meeting the needs of proteges; and identifies an advocate's needs for support.

Support activities provide practical and, when necessary, emotional support to advocate/protege relationships. Support may be directed at:

- * devising strategies for dealing with problem situations which face a protege;
- * helping to redefine the focus of a relationship by assisting an advocate or a protege to clarify mutual problems;
- * assisting advocates who choose to respond to a protege's need for a legally formalised relationship.

The Citizen Advocacy office may offer support in response to requests from advocates or proteges, and conceivably even in response to information from a third party to a relationship.

The Citizen Advocacy office needs to balance follow-along and support and the ability of the office to balance responsiveness to advocates' and proteges' needs with avoiding intrusion on developing relationships.

f. Ongoing training

As advocates become involved in their relationships, some will desire additional training in some aspect of concern to the relationship.

While orientation and follow-along are necessary for each advocate, ongoing training should be available according to the choice of individual advocates.

For efficiency, the citizen advocacy office itself should only provide training when no other suitable sources of training are available.

In particular, the citizen advocacy office should carefully weigh any decision to provide technologically oriented training on disabilities, available resources, etc. or training that would be better presented by people who practise another advocacy form. Highest priority for citizen advocacy office-sponsored training should be exploration of the values necessary for provision of moral services, and the handling of Citizen Advocacy challenges and dilemmas.

The citizen advocacy office should systematically identify areas of potential training need based on support requests, advocate/protege surveys, and the availability of relevant new knowledge.

As much as possible, advocates should be linked with training.

g. Advocate associates

Advocate associates are volunteers to the citizen advocacy office who possess skills and knowledge useful to advocates and proteges.

From time to time, and advocate associate can offer advice and perspective on such matters as:

- * the technical dimensions of the services which a protege receives or seeks to receive,
- * strategy development for management of a demanding situation,
- * or advice on technical matters that have relevance to the relationship (e.g., advice on managing an issue related to guardianship of property).

A sufficient number of active advocate associates provides a safeguard against staff being drawn into individual advocacy activities, and provides and major support to advocates and their proteges who choose to avail themselves of their counsel.

Advocate associates should be respectful of the advocate's role in the relationship, and should avoid supplanting efforts the advocate is willing to make.

The citizen advocacy office should recruit, orient and actively utilise a number of advocate associates who represent a variety of technical skills.

Further, staff should actively link advocates to advocate associates, as necessary.

Advocates should be informed of the availability of advocate associates, the skills they possess, and how to gain access to them.

Balance of Citizen Advocacy Office Activities

A citizen advocacy office which has an effective balance of activities will do enough of the right thing at the right time to ensure that it will achieve its mission. Some examples of an ineffective balance of activities follow:

- * A citizen advocacy office may have an ineffective balance of activities in consequence of doing the right thing at the wrong time.
- * A citizen advocacy office may overinvest its time in one activity at the expense of another needed activity.
- * A citizen advocacy office may do too much of a needed activity.

6. The Board of Management

- * the Board is made up of local people and its membership should always aim to be representative of the local Illawarra community.
- * the Board will consist of 8-12 voting members including at least two people with an intellectual disability who shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting.
- * every endeavour will be made to recruit Board members with appropriate influence. skills.

competency and passion for injustice.

- * the Board as a whole shall be independent, and not owe any allegiance to any funding body, human services, agencies, etc.

- * direct service providers who are associated with other community programmes for people with intellectual disability are not encouraged to join the Board due to potential conflicts of interest.

- * the Board will monitor and evaluate the activities of the program in order to ensure that the Citizen Advocacy principles are upheld in every aspect of the program, and that the Illawarra Citizen Advocacy program Guidelines are the basis of the program's structure and organisation.

7. The Core Group

- * The Core Group is defined as an informal structure that shares values and learning over time in order to do five closely related tasks with increasing effectiveness and efficiency.

- * to develop and deepen their own understanding and personal commitment to Citizen Advocacy by considering the capacities within their fellow citizens and their community associations; learning to communicate their understanding to others in a way that inspires committed action; assessing each decision they make in terms of their shared principles; sharing ideas and exchanging resources with core groups who are implementing Citizen Advocacy in other places; evaluating their program's performance periodically, with the help of an outside team experienced in Citizen Advocacy celebrating successes and supporting one another from shortcomings and failures.

- * The Core Group will be made up of committed people including advocates, community members and program staff. Some core group members will function as the program's board (though not every board member may be a core group member.)

- * Core Group members may shift among roles.

- * Core Group members will provide broad support to the co-ordinator and assist in practical ways to help them manage their time and balance their efforts among key Citizen Advocacy activities.

CITIZEN ADVOCACY PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Why is Evaluation of Citizen Advocacy Important?

The aim of evaluating a Citizen Advocacy program is to assist the program to develop more efficient and effective ways of practising Citizen Advocacy. It is not about evaluating individual relationships.

The process of evaluation offers opportunities for:

- * People generally involved in Citizen Advocacy to learn in detail about the program - about strengths and weaknesses;
- * People in other Citizen Advocacy programmes to have the opportunity to learn from participating in the evaluation of another program;
- * People involved in Citizen Advocacy relationships to have the opportunity to learn about other aspects of the program and contribute to the functioning of the program;
- * Funding bodies to have an opportunity to learn about the program in detail, although annual financial accounting shows where the monies are spent;
- * People involved in the Board of Management to plan for the future direction of the program. A final report is presented to the Board of Management with recommendations for future planning.

Evaluation Process

At this time there are two standardised methods of evaluation:

1. Citizen Advocacy Program Evaluation (CAPE) by Wolfensberger and O'Brien, in 1978.
2. Learning from Citizen Advocacy Programs (LFCAP) by O'Brien, in 1987.

Both of these evaluation methods define the founding principles of Citizen Advocacy. The process involves:

- * Talking and learning from people in Citizen Advocacy relationships;
- * Talking and learning from Co-ordinators and Board Members;
- * Examining and learning about the foundations and structures of the program in the office.

It is common practice for a program to take part in an evaluation every two to three years.

FINANCE/FUND RAISING

Current Funding

Citizen Advocacy is a community based organisation that currently receives its funding from the Federal Government through the Department of Community Services and Health. Funding is reviewed on a yearly basis by the Department when a funding application is lodged.

Funding Principles

One of the principles of Citizen Advocacy is that funding should be sought from sources that are not directly involved with funding or service delivery to people with an intellectual disability. These sources would preferably be local community bodies and businesses. Further, to maintain continuity and stability of the program this funding should be from multiple and guaranteed sources.

Advocates must be able to independently represent the interests of people with an intellectual disability. If Citizen Advocacy is to support them in their endeavours, we will inevitably find ourselves in a situation of conflict of interest if we receive the majority of our funding from the same source as funds for organisations that provide services to people with an intellectual disability. Equally important, if Citizen Advocacy is asking people to make a long term commitment to a person with an intellectual disability, and offering support to these relationships, then the organisation must be able to plan in the long term. This necessitates long term stable funding.

Finance Management

All finances are overseen by the Board of Management through the Treasurer. The daily tasks and responsibilities are carried out by the Administration Assistant. All records are audited yearly.

Donations In kind

Registration under the Charitable Purposes Act and Income Tax Act have been granted. Therefore all donations of \$2-00 and over will be tax deductible. Currently we receive no other subsidies.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As with all organisations and people when looking to the future there is a dream, a vision that you work towards. You may or may not reach it in a lifetime, but you are committed to work towards the dream and you know that it will become a reality some day.

For Citizen Advocacy our dream lies in the concepts covered in our philosophy, including equality, the worth of every individual, whole communities caring about each other, in fact a world in which an organisation such as Citizen Advocacy would be redundant.

On the path to this dream many things will happen, one of the best being that more people will be more involved in the lives of people with an intellectual disability. This involvement will occur in many ways. Some people will:

- * Simply share time and activities;
- * Be allies, actively working to pursue a goal of importance to the person with a disability;
- * Help the person with a disability define and develop his/her gifts and interests, perhaps by sharing a skill;
- * Offer a home and share in their family life;
- * Join the Board of Management;
- * Use their skills to pass on the dream to others;
- * Donate money or goods in kind.

A major step towards the dream will be reached when Citizen Advocacy is fully supported by the community and when local people are running the organisation, providing the funds and becoming advocates.

EXAMPLES OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CITIZEN ADVOCATES

Long Term Advocate

Long term advocates undertake to continue their Citizen Advocacy relationship for a long (and indefinite) time.

A substantial number of people with an intellectual disability need a relationship which will endure over a long time. Many people will have experienced what has been called a "relationship circus" in which "helping" person after "helping" person has come into their lives and then, just as quickly, left.

Short Term Advocate

Short term advocates take on an advocacy relationship for a specified period, or until a problem is solved or a goal achieved, e.g. teaching how to fill out a taxation form, exploring a situation of potential exploitation or helping find new accommodation.

Crisis Advocate

Crisis Advocates are on call to assist with problems or crises which need to be urgently addressed, e.g. stopping physical or other abuse occurring; assisting a person who has become, or is in danger of becoming homeless; stopping intrusive or unfair treatment of a person; or helping to meet an emergency until a long-term advocate can be appointed.

Advocate Associates

Advocate Associates are professionals, agency personnel and other individuals, often in influential positions, who have embraced the advocacy concept without actually playing an individual advocacy role. They assist advocates by being available to provide specialist advice and support within their area of expertise. Advocate Associates provide a source of expert advice to Citizen Advocacy Office Staff and Advocates in areas such as legal, financial, medical, counselling and government agency processes.

Youth Advocate

Citizen Advocacy offers young people a unique and powerful opportunity to serve people with a disability in a personal, essentially nontechnical way. Some youth advocates become a second advocate for a person or in some situations they may serve alone as a citizen advocate, where they might assume a socialising or friendship function with a young person with an intellectual disability.

EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE ROLES CITIZEN ADVOCATES TAKE

Monitor - An Advocate willing to review services being provided to a person with intellectual disability and to hold the service provider accountable for the quality and availability of the needed services. For example, the advocate might visit a nursing home periodically to see if an individual is properly fed, dressed and has adequate medical care.

Spokesperson - An Advocate willing to be vigorous in representing the interests of a person who has intellectual disability, in situations in which his/her rights are at risk of being compromised.

Guide - An Advocate who can assist a person with intellectual disability in practical problem solving such as bus travel, child care, laundry, grocery shopping, budgeting, housing etc.

Guardian - An Advocate who is officially and legally appointed to assume responsibility for making, and assisting in making, important decisions with and for a person with intellectual disability.

Representative Payee - An Advocate who handles the finances of a disabled person, who receives the fortnightly pension from Social Security, on that person's behalf, and writes necessary cheques.

Adoptive Parent - An Advocate who assumes the legal parental responsibility for a child who has intellectual disability.

Companion - An Advocate willing to "be with" a person who gives little positive feedback or seems to have little awareness. The advocate spends time on a regular basis to be with this person and to be a concerned presence. Probably also acts as a monitor (see above).

Friend - An Advocate willing to provide integrated social opportunities on a regular on-going basis.

Advocacy roles may change (and often do) as the relationship between two people develops, and perceptions change of the life of the protege.

WHAT DO ADVOCATES DO?.....

There are many different ways in which an ordinary citizen can change the life of a person who has an intellectual disability for the better. Sometimes a lot of time, energy and perseverance. In other instances a Citizen Advocacy role may involve very little disruption to the advocate's existing routines and interests. All Citizen Advocacy matches should be considered a genuine commitment of the Advocate to their Protege. Advocates get support from the Citizen Advocacy office staff, Management Group members and Advocate Associates.

An Advocate may choose to:

- * Assist the person to grow and develop; in their skills and abilities, experiences, relationships with other people, image and status by challenging the low expectations that characterise the person's relationship with service and other people.
- * Provide the person with a stable, supportive and continuing relationship upon genuine friendship which may liberate the person's spirit from insecurity, uncertainty and fear.
- * Act as a guide, mentor or assistant to the person to work through difficulties and problems which may confront them.
- * Introduce the person to new experiences, resources and networks of people and connections with the community.
- * Stand by the person to ensure that they are treated justly.
- * Make sure the person's life is taken seriously by the people and services have a responsibility to the person.
- * Act as a monitor of the quality of services and treatments upon which the person may rely.
- * Ensure that the person's abilities to make choices and decisions are encouraged, developed and recognised.
- * Ensure that the person's uniqueness is encouraged, developed and recognised.
- * Act to protect the person from abuse and exploitation.

HOW PEOPLE CAN ASSIST

There are lots of ways people can become involved with Citizen Advocacy.

You can:

Become a Board of Management Member

There is one meeting every month. Members are a part of the local community and share a commitment to the philosophies of Citizen Advocacy.

*** Become an Advocate**

Advocates come from all walks of life and are willing to share some of their time and experience with a person who has an intellectual disability.

*** Talk to friends about Citizen Advocacy**

Think of all the people you talk to each day - they might be interested too. Pamphlets and videos are available if you need additional information.

*** Become a member of a Sub-committee**

There are several subcommittees dealing with particular issues such as funding and policy. Meetings are organised to suit members' convenience.

*** Make a financial contribution**

Contributions will help cover: printing the monthly newsletter; catering for social occasions; providing petrol for the car; plus many more.

*** Become an ordinary financial member**

Members help to financially support Citizen Advocacy and will receive our newsletter to keep them informed about the Programme. If they wish, members may also attend membership meetings and annual general meetings.

If you are interested in any of these areas, or becoming involved in any way, contact a member of the Board of Management or the Co-ordinator on (02) 4229 4999, (02) 4229 4064 or 0408 411103.

Address:

Suite 8, Centretown Plaza, 128-134 Crown Street, WOLLONGONG NSW 2500

Postal Address: PO Box 5134, WOLLONGONG NSW 2500