

FACT SHEET 6

Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is important for ensuring that you and your child are listened to, are assessed appropriately, have complaints heard and able to contribute to developing individual care and education plans.

There are many places and situations where you may want to exert self-advocacy on behalf of yourself and your child. These may include when in discussion with doctors and health care professionals, in hospitals, at schools, in community organisations and in everyday life.

Some people can find self-advocacy intimidating as it means standing up and exerting your own personal power. However, self-advocacy is important to ensure that the needs, goals and aspirations that you and your child have are being met.

This Fact Sheet provides: tips for self-advocating and advocating on behalf of your child; disability rights; information about advocacy guidance organisations; and, support available.

Self-advocacy tips

If you are unsure about how to self-advocate and prepare for situations where you may need to advocate for yourself or your child, we hope that the following tips will assist.

As your child ages you may want your child to be more involved or advocate on their own. Remember, your child learns from you and if you can demonstrate positive, effective and courteous self-advocacy he or she is likely to develop self-advocacy confidence along the way.

Tips for self-advocacy:

- > Be an active participant in the process
- > Clearly express what your child's needs are
- > Set realistic goals for what you hope for your child to achieve
- > Get enough information to make informed choices
- > Get information about other resources
- > If necessary, have an advocate, family member, or friend at meetings
- > If your request is not responded to in a timely manner ask to speak to a more senior person
- > If you feel you are not being responded to, writing a letter may be an effective way to communicate
- > Keep a folder of all materials, plans, and correspondence so that you can refer to these in the future
- > Take notes when you attend meetings and document all phone calls
- > Ensure that any agreed upon care or education plan is put in writing.

Disability rights

A number of international, Australian and state-based Acts and Conventions protects the rights of persons with disability. Key Acts and Conventions include:

United Nations:

Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability

Commonwealth of Australia:

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Commonwealth of Australia:

Disability Standards for Education 2005

Australian Capital Territory:

Disability Services Act 1991

New South Wales:

Disability Inclusion Act 2014

South Australia:

Disability Services Act 1993

Tasmania:

Tasmanian Disability Services Act 2011

Victoria:

Disability Act 2006

Western Australia:

Disability Services Act 1993

Advocacy support

In addition to self-advocating there are a number of organisations and Ombudsmen in Australia that advocate on behalf of persons with disability. In addition to the ones listed below Ombudsmen operate in all states and territories and can respond to issues regarding services and disability issues.

Australian Human Rights Commission

www.humanrights.gov.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman

www.ombudsman.gov.au

People with Disability Australia

www.pwd.org.au

Children with Disability Australia

www.cda.org.au

Accessing support

If you have questions or concerns about self-advocacy and the rights of your child you may want to speak to a Limbs 4 Kids team member who can assist you. You may also want to speak to another parent who has experienced what you are going through. If so, Limbs 4 Kids can connect you to a trained Peer Support Volunteer who you can speak to you. Visit our website or call us for more information and links to our online support.