



ACCESS TO INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

Background Information

AMPARO Advocacy works with vulnerable people from a non-English speaking background who have a disability for whom language and /or cultural differences make it difficult to understand and negotiate systems and services that support people. AMPARO Advocacy is committed to developing the cultural competence of the organisation and workers to overcome barriers, experienced by people from a NESB who have a disability, in accessing advocacy.

The people we work with are those most likely to be at risk and are least able to represent or defend their own interests and whose fundamental needs are not being met – inadequate food, clothing, income, support, housing, health and well being, safety and freedom from harm, having someone who cares. Advocates work on behalf of the person and in their best interests, to ensure that their fundamental needs are met. In accordance with the DSA 2006 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 AMPARO Advocacy does not discriminate on the grounds of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, cultural background or religion.

Situations where people are likely to be vulnerable include when people are:

- without permanent residency, new to life in Australia
- at risk of eviction, homelessness, or living on the street
- devalued or neglected, with their needs not known or not being addressed
- in facilities such as mental health units, hospitals, nursing homes, hostels and boarding houses, group homes, or in prison
- in physical danger or in abusive situations
- at risk of making poor decisions which leave them open to danger and exploitation
- a threat to self or to others by behaviour that is seen as challenging
- without connections, poorly supported, in harmful or unstable living arrangements

Access to Individual Advocacy Policy

AMPARO Advocacy will actively seek out vulnerable people from a NESB who have a disability and will also accept requests for advocacy from individuals themselves/ family members/friends and other agencies. AMPARO will attempt to advocate for a diverse mix of people who differ in age, disability, language, culture, living arrangement, relationships and life situations. Advocacy will be provided on a non-discriminatory basis. The majority of people who receive advocacy will require a long term commitment, however AMPARO will also provide advocacy to a limited number of individuals who have short term issues.

Eligibility Criteria:

To receive individual advocacy the person must meet AMPARO Advocacy's eligibility criteria which are:

- to have disability;
- to be from a non-English speaking background for whom language and /or cultural differences make it difficult to understand and negotiate systems and services that support people. to be vulnerable and where their fundamental needs are not being met;
- to be between 0-65years of age;
- to live within the Brisbane City Council limits;

Acceptance for advocacy is also dependent on AMPARO Advocacy having the capacity to allocate a worker to respond. In situations where a person presenting to AMPARO Advocacy is in urgent need of advocacy, it may be necessary for the organisation to review the situation of individuals currently receiving advocacy.

PROCEDURES FOR IDENTIFYING NEW REQUESTS FOR ADVOCACY

Seeking out individuals for advocacy.

Workers will seek out people who meet AMPARO Advocacy's eligibility criteria for advocacy and who may not come to our attention because they have no one in their lives who is able to speak out on their behalf. Workers do this by the following activities, but are not limited by these:

- Workers may identify people in the course of carrying out their work
- Based on the priorities set by the management committee in the strategic plan, workers will proactively seek out people who require advocacy. Workers may do this by visiting places where people with disability from non-English speaking background are likely to remain extremely isolated. This may include the following residences: nursing homes, hostels, institutions, hospitals etc.
- Workers will develop close working relationships with allies and contacts within the multicultural and disability sector that may be able to assist in identifying highly isolated and vulnerable people.

PROCEDURES FOR ACCEPTING NEW REQUESTS FOR ADVOCACY

STEP 1 – Receiving Requests for Advocacy

The worker asks permission to record details needed to consider eligibility for individual advocacy on the '**Request for Individual Advocacy Form**'.

The worker will determine the need for an interpreter to take down essential information and if needed access a telephone Translation and Interpreting Service using SWITC or TIS. If possible the worker will explain the eligibility criteria and AMPARO Advocacy's process for accepting new individuals for advocacy. Where possible all details on the form will be completed.

Declining advocacy: It may be obvious that the person does not meet AMPARO Advocacy's essential criteria to receive individual advocacy (eg. The person does not have a disability or lives out of the area of operation). **If so, inform the person we cannot work with them and why. Where possible, the worker will offer relevant information – such as strategies and referral to other agencies.**

STEP 2 – Consideration of Requests for Advocacy.

Individual workers present the information about the person requiring advocacy and their situation to a staff meeting.

Staff will discuss the person's situation and take into account:

- Whether there is a need to meet the person and whether a Translation and Interpreting Service is required to facilitate this meeting. (Inadequate information may have been collected over the phone to determine whether the person meets the criteria for advocacy).
- Whether to conduct further investigation before considering the request for advocacy. ***If so, once additional information is collected, the request would come back to another staff meeting for a decision to be made.***
- Whether the person's issues meet AMPARO Advocacy's criteria for individual advocacy. ***See Further Investigation.***
- Whether the person is likely to require a long term or short term advocacy response
- The current available resources and whether there is a worker with the capacity to work with this person?
- The mix of people AMPARO Advocacy is currently advocating for.
- Priorities identified for the year in terms of the diversity of people who differ in age, disability, culture and life circumstances.

Accept: Notify the person/guardian/family/ally that AMPARO Advocacy can provide individual advocacy. Determine a meeting time, place and the need for an interpreter. The worker will commence the process of developing a relationship with the person.

Decline: Notify referral source of outcome including reasons for not being able to offer individual advocacy. Where possible the worker will offer relevant information – referral to other agency, strategies etc.

Further Investigation:

- The worker may need to meet the person who requires advocacy and speak with other people who know the person well to find out more about their situation. This may necessitate using an interpreter. The worker will explain the role of the worker, the eligibility criteria and the process for accepting new individuals for advocacy.
- The worker may need to talk with other connections given by the person contacting AMPARO Advocacy.
- The worker will complete the Authority to Request or Release Personal Information form
- The worker will find out more information about the person's cultural background

AMPARO ADVOCACY DOES NOT MAINTAIN A WAITING LIST

Given the limited resources of AMPARO Advocacy Inc. in terms of the individual advocacy positions, it is considered unreasonable to give the expectation to people that eventually they will receive advocacy. All attempts will be made to link the person or make referrals to other agencies, and provide information or strategies that may assist the person.

However where the person meets the Eligibility Criteria for individual advocacy but is not accepted for advocacy because of a lack of resources, staff will inform the person requesting advocacy that they can approach AMPARO Advocacy again in 3 months if their situation has not changed or become worse, and their request will be reassessed.