

POLICY 1.3 – ADVOCACY POLICY

Purpose

This policy outlines Wonderland Community Services' (WCS) commitment to supporting the rights of participants/young people to access advocacy services, including independent advocates, especially in situations involving complaints, incidents, or decisions affecting their lives.

Policy Statement

WCS acknowledges and upholds the critical role of advocates, including independent advocates, in promoting and protecting the rights, interests, and choices of people with disability.

WCS is committed to:

- Cooperating with advocates and representatives chosen by participants/young people
- Facilitating access to advocacy services
- Respecting the role of advocates in complaint resolution and incident management processes
- Supporting participants/young people in understanding and exercising their rights

Definition of an Independent Advocate

Under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*, an independent advocate is defined as a person who:

- Is independent of the NDIS Agency, NDIS Commission, and any NDIS providers involved in supporting the participant/young person
- Provides advocacy that assists the participant/young person to exercise choice and control and to have their voice heard
- Acts at the direction of the person with a disability, reflecting their expressed will, preferences, and rights
- Is free from conflicts of interest

Implementation and Participant Support

To support access to advocacy:

- All participants/young people will be informed of their right to an advocate, including through WCS's website and induction materials
- Upon request or where a need is identified, WCS will assist participants/young people in finding and connecting with a suitable advocate
- This may involve coordination with Support Coordinators, Local Area Coordinators (LACs), or other relevant services
- WCS will typically use the NDIS Advocacy Finder Tool: <https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/>

Application of This Policy

This policy applies to:

- All WCS staff, including employees, contractors, and volunteers
- All services and supports provided by WCS
- All participants/young people engaged with WCS

WCS staff must:

- Respect and support the involvement of advocates in any interactions, meetings, or formal processes involving participants/young people
- Actively uphold a person's right to advocacy without interference or discrimination

Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislative or regulatory changes are required. Staff, participants/young people, and advocates are encouraged to provide feedback to inform improvements.

DATE	PERSON/S	DETAILS
31.07.2025	Becci Fazldeen	Review and update
21.01.2025	Ashleigh Davis	Review and update
30.08.2023	Bronwyn McMullen	Review and update
07.11.2021	Toni Mehigan	Policy created