



Valley Disability Support Group

Empowerment. Inclusion. Access

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Advocacy Resource Guide

Brain Injury & Disability Advocacy Overview

Advocacy begins with a desire to create change. “A big part of advocacy work is combatting discrimination and working towards equal rights,” Zach Baldwin, the director of outreach at the American Association of People with Disabilities, said in an email.



Types of Advocacy

The advocacy types addressed in this overview are:

- Self-Advocacy
- Individual Advocates
- Group Advocacy
- Systems Advocacy
- Legal Advocacy

Self-Advocacy

Self-Advocacy entails someone who represents themselves to address issues and work towards legal, social and public policy changes. Self-Advocates can get support from **Individual Advocates** who provide one-on-one support to address issues of unfairness people with disabilities may encounter. Valley Disability Support Group members are Individual Advocates who help Self-Advocates create

Strategies and connect to additional resources to help achieve social, legal and policy changes. Citizen Advocates are available to provide support from a community perspective. They are community volunteers that advocate for specific disabilities and provide support to help individuals live independently. **Centers for Independent Living**

are nationwide and provide volunteers that support the disability community in this capacity. They promote self-determination and help individuals in long-term care.

Advocates work collaboratively to successfully advance advocacy efforts. Whether government agencies, community organizations, non-profit organizations, businesses, state and federal committees, working together helps generate ideas and new ways to assist individuals living with disabilities to live more independently.

Group Advocacy

Individual Advocates may team up with family members, friends and other like-minded Individual Advocates to mobilize efforts to bring more awareness issues. There is strength in numbers, Lawmakers are interested in learning what matters to people in the communities they represent. Individual Advocacy is effective; however if several individuals write letters, call and set-up in-person meetings with lawmakers about the same issues, these efforts will garner more attention. This attention creates a sense of urgency and equates to more interest in legislators and policymakers.

Systems Advocacy

Systemic advocacy involves working with advocates toward long-term social change. As a means of problem solving social justice issues for example, assistance by disability advocates can address issues that represent the collective rights and interests of people with disabilities. The common targets for this advocacy are legislation, policies and practices.

Legal Advocacy

Legal advocacy consists of hiring a lawyer to provide legal representation on behalf of people with disabilities, that covers issues like discrimination and human rights issues. They provide advice about discrimination and rights protected under the law. Lawyers may also be involved with legislative litigation to create positive changes to the judicial system.