

# Self Advocacy Support Workers

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## Training & Resource Tool Kit

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## 1. Introduction to the Tool Kit

This training and resource toolkit has been developed by the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) following consultation with self advocates, self advocacy advisors and extensive literature reviews. Thank you to all self advocates and advisors who provided their vital expertise and helped to create this toolkit.

A Support Worker Code of Conduct discussion paper was developed as part of the consultation process. In 2013 this discussion paper was distributed to self advocacy groups and self advocacy advisors for feedback.

Based on the consultations and feedback this toolkit has been developed and contains the following:

- An Introduction to Self Advocacy
- A History of Self Advocacy
- A link to a Human Rights on-line training course
- An Advisor checklist
- A booklet on best practice for Self Advocacy advisors
- Information about SARU support and self care
- An advisor job description template
- An advisor appraisal sheet and how to use it
- Information about volunteers.

Other resources available include:

- SARU *'Introduction to Self Advocacy training'* PowerPoint presentation
- Self Advocacy Advisors *Good Practice Handbook*



## 2. Introduction to Self Advocacy

### What is Self Advocacy?

**Self Advocacy simply means  
people with a disability *speaking up*  
and *speaking out* for their rights.**

The Self Advocacy Movement involves people from all over the world who speak out on important issues that affect people with disabilities.

Self advocacy is a movement that says that people with disabilities have the right to control their own life and make their own decisions.

Families, friends and advisors also have a role in supporting self advocacy. (*Adapted from Inclusion BC website: [www.inclusionbc.org](http://www.inclusionbc.org)*).

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

~ Margaret Mead



## 2. Introduction to Self Advocacy

### What are Self Advocacy groups?

Self advocacy groups are run by and for people with a disability who have joined together to have their voices heard and support each other. They work together to make sure they have the same rights, choices, and opportunities as anyone else.

Self advocacy groups are about people with a disability:

- Speaking up for their rights and helping others do the same
- Supporting each other to say what they think and what they need
- Learning, sharing information and ideas, and getting new skills
- Planning and working together for change
- Meeting new people and making friends
- Developing strong community and social networks
- Teaching people in the community about the rights, needs and issues of people with a disability
- Creating strength in numbers
- Making change

Source: Self Advocacy Resource Unit [www.saru.net.au](http://www.saru.net.au)





## 2. Introduction to Self Advocacy

### A Brief History of Self Advocacy



‘People have been practicing self-advocacy, fighting for their rights and speaking up for what they want and need since the beginning of time, but only in the late 20th century did they begin to organise and rally within official groups.’

(Excerpt from “WE ARE PEOPLE FIRST”: The History and Dynamics of the Self-Advocacy Movement. Amy Walker. February 14, 2012. Vera Institute of Justice Webinar)

**1968** Seeds of the self advocacy movement began in Sweden

**1974** First major self advocacy conference was held in the U.S. Attended by nearly 600 people, many had never spoken publicly before and were taking the microphone and being heard. For the first time many people discovered their voices did count.

**1980's** Self advocacy evolves into a civil rights movement with groups forming throughout the world.

**Today** The self advocacy movement has grown into an international movement in 43 countries, with an estimated 17,000 members or more.

For a detailed version on the history of self advocacy go to the following websites:

- <http://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels/seven/7menu.html> and click on the ‘Origins of the self advocacy movement’ menu. There are some great videos here.
- <http://mn.gov/mnddc//ada-legacy/ada-legacy-moment17.html>



## 2. Introduction to Self Advocacy

### Why is self advocacy so important?

'Self advocacy contributes to the knowledge, experience and wisdom that individuals, communities, organisations and government must have in order to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of people with a disability.'

Self advocacy strengthens the voices and skills of people with a disability to participate in their communities including all matters pertaining to learning, planning, advocacy, policy making and governing.

To promote this participation, individuals, communities, government, generic and specialist service providers are encouraged to support the important and continually growing role that self-advocacy groups play in developing leadership and increasing people's skills, confidence, influence, and inclusion.'

Adapted from position statement develop by The ARC, Washington Nov 2008: [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

Self advocacy groups are important for **people with a disability** because:

- 'they are about our rights and having a voice'
- 'they give us power and strength in numbers'
- 'we can work towards changing systems'
- 'they give us voice in saying what services we want and need'
- 'it is a way of telling the government about our needs'
- 'we can learn new skills and share information.'







## 2. Introduction to Self Advocacy

### Why is self advocacy so important?

Self advocacy groups are important to **service providers** because they can:

- inform and advise on the quality of the services and make them better
- help with evaluations
- empower people to express their individual needs and be involved in decision making and choice within a service
- lead to skills development which can support person centred planning
- support self determination
- support the ideals expressed in the disability service standards including:

Capacity	Citizenship	Decision making and choice	Valued status
Participation	Leadership	Participation and integration	Individual needs







## 2. Introduction to Self Advocacy

### Why is self advocacy so important?

Self advocacy groups are important for **governments** because they can inform their work in the area of disability through:

- Having input into planning, legislation, policy making and disability action plans
- Advising on service provision
- Sitting on boards and advisory panels
- Connecting the government to the voice of people with a disability so they can develop an understanding of the challenges and issues they face
- Advising on the supports and the changes required to ensure full community inclusion
- Working in partnership to educate the community
- Ensuring full citizenship rights are upheld.

Source: Self Advocacy Resource Unit [www.saru.net.au](http://www.saru.net.au)



Self advocacy groups are important to **communities** because they can help to break down many of the barriers and myths about disability and bring about the full inclusive participation of people with a disability.



## 3. Human Rights: Online Training

### Zero Tolerance “Human Rights and You”

#### An introduction to Human Rights for Disability Support Workers

This is an **online interactive training** resource about Human Rights developed by *National Disability Services* (NDS).

While the training is aimed at disability support workers, it is a good resource for Self Advocacy Advisors. You can go on line and work through the training at your own pace.

The online training provides an overview of human rights and has links to a number of other resources.

NDS website: [www.nds.org.au/events-and-training/all-events-and-training/human-rights-and-you-e-learning-program-2781](http://www.nds.org.au/events-and-training/all-events-and-training/human-rights-and-you-e-learning-program-2781)





## 3. Human Rights: Online Training

### Why is an understanding of Human Rights important?

An understanding of and commitment to the *Human Rights of people with a disability* is the basis for your job as a self advocacy advisor.

People with a disability have the same Human Rights as everyone else; unfortunately the Human Rights of people with a disability are often not upheld.

This means people with a disability can be excluded from the things people without disability take for granted such as meeting friends, getting employment, getting an education, not living in poverty, being equal citizens and being part of the community.

The purpose of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (UNCRPD) is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

You can find more information about human rights at the following websites:

United Nations	Australian Human Rights Commission	Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission
<a href="http://www.un.org/disabilities">www.un.org/disabilities</a>	<a href="http://www.humanrights.gov.au">www.humanrights.gov.au</a>	<a href="http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au">www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au</a>



UNITED NATIONS



Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

*everyone, everywhere, everyday*



Victorian Equal Opportunity  
& Human Rights Commission



## 4. Advisors' Resources



### The Riot: An online Blog

*The Riot* is about self-advocacy.

*The Riot* offers a newsletter, a blog where self-advocates can share opinions, toolkits, games, and services to help individuals become stronger advocates.

*The Riot* covers topics that are important to self advocates, and don't like silly rules that just keep people down.

Riot website [www.theriotrocks.org](http://www.theriotrocks.org)

The following excerpt is from *The Riot*:

#### **The Good... The Bad... and The Advisor**

Self-advocates across the country were asked what they thought of their advisors. Here are their words...

- "I fell in my hotel room and I didn't know who to call so I called my advisor. She stayed on the phone until help came".
- "She gives us advice on the pros and cons on stuff but we make the decisions. She cares about us and is what an advisor should be".
- "I wanted to work for a magazine writing articles but when I asked my advisor to help me she said she wouldn't unless I paid her. She said it was beyond her job description. Due to lack of support, I almost lost the job but someone from the magazine helped me instead".
- "She stands back while we run our meetings but is always there when we need help".
- "An advisor used members of a group for a project of theirs. When the project was over, they stopped talking to them and stopped being nice. This really hurt the members".



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### People First Nebraska The Role of the Advisor information

Link to the website:

[www.peoplefirstnebraska.com/uploads/3/7/9/5/37953781/the\\_role\\_of\\_the\\_advisor.pdf](http://www.peoplefirstnebraska.com/uploads/3/7/9/5/37953781/the_role_of_the_advisor.pdf)

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[RESOURCES](#)[CHAPTERS](#)[CONVENTION](#)[OFFICERS & ELECTIONS](#)[MORE...](#)

### Our Mission

It is the mission of People First of Nebraska to **empower**, **train**, and **advance advocacy** so that People First and all people with disabilities are able to **speak for themselves**.

People First of Nebraska acknowledges our **rights** and **responsibilities** as respected and valued **members of our communities**.

People First of Nebraska **supports our local chapters** so we can become a bigger, better organization as a whole.





## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor checklist 1: Self Assessment

No	Self Assessment Question	✓	x
1	Am I really listening to what self advocates are saying or am I imposing my point of view?		
2	Have I checked out my actions with the self advocacy group and self advocates?		
3	Is there a conflict or potential conflict of interest with any of my actions?		
4	Are my actions controlling in any way?		
5	Do my actions support and improve self advocate's:		
	• self-respect?		
	• self-confidence?		
	• self-reliance?		
6	Do my actions:		
	• encourage self advocates to take risks?		
	• decrease self advocate's dependence on me?		
	• support self advocate's independent decision-making?		
	• support self advocate's problem solving?		
	• encourage group discussion?		
7	Do I make sure that self advocates can:		
	• question my point of view?		
	• tell me they don't need me?		
	• give me constructive feedback about my actions?		
8	Do I realise that advisors, self advocates and self advocacy groups can make mistakes and experience problems?		
9	Do I reflect on these mistakes and problems and review what I could have done better?		
10	Do I encourage self advocates to reflect on and review my actions and their actions?		



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor checklist 2: Skill Development

Qualities: Actions that affirm & empower	✓	✗	Qualities: Actions that condemn & restrict	✓	✗
Allow and encourage the group to make their own decisions			Make decisions that are 'best' for the group		
Give and take constructive criticism			Give and take criticism in an angry, punitive or hurtful manner		
Teach people to run their own meetings			Direct, lead or run the meetings		
Encourage people to use their own words			Change people's words so they sound better		
Teach people how to.....			Do things for.....		
Can relate to members			Do not share any common ground with members		
Aware of who needs assistance			Do not recognise the abilities of all members		
Truly interested in the group and their issues			Try to persuade the group about issues important to the advisors		
Respect the decisions the group makes			Try to change or manipulate decisions		
Provide the group with information			Withhold or selectively share information		
Use 'people first' language			Refer to members as anything other than a person		
Work out conflicts positively			Encourage people to take sides against each other		
Develop a trust between members and advisor			Break people's trust and confidence		
Follow up on things advisor promised			Make excuses for not following up on promises		
Accept the diversity of all the members			Not able to relate to all members		





## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor checklist 3: Group Member Feedback

Does your self advocacy support worker....	Answer			Notes
	Yes	No	Don't know	
Listen to everyone in your group				
Help your group to know it's goals				
Help your group to achieve it's goals				
Know all members strengths, talents and interests				
Support members to use their strengths, talents and interests				
Take criticism well				
Respect all group members				
Help your group to plan and be organised				
Ask for help when they need it				
Report to your group about the work they are doing				
Use their time well				



### 4. Advisors' Resources

#### Where can advisors get support?



#### Taking care of yourself

The role of a Self Advocacy Advisor/Support Worker can be very rewarding, but at times the role may be demanding and isolating. Taking care of yourself is vital to remaining an effective and positive group support. Practicing self-care is also an important professional development activity that will help you to 'bounce back' each day over the long term.

Self-care for support workers is about actively looking after your own mental health and wellbeing so that you can more effectively support the people you work with.

#### What does self-care look like?

Self-care is engaging in activities and practices that give you energy, lower your stress and contribute to your wellbeing. Activity examples include:

- Exercising regularly
- Taking time to eat well during your work day
- Fostering positive relationships, at work and at home
- Noticing when your stress is manageable, and your physical and emotional wellbeing is enhanced
- Doing these activities regularly before you feel under stress.

Self-care is a daily and long-term activity; remember that self-care activities will be different for everyone. Self care involves making a commitment to your health and wellbeing for today and into the future.

Self-care takes practice. In order for workers to be at their best, they require a holistic approach to activities undertaken throughout the week. Self-care includes many of activities such as being able to ask for help and support; maintaining healthy professional boundaries; practicing and developing skills; learning from mistakes; celebrating wins; having hobbies and interests, and building activities that give you pleasure into your everyday life.

Adapted from [reachout.com](http://reachout.com) – Self Care for Professionals



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Job Description template

The following position description is an example of a Self Advocacy Advisor job description which can be altered as required.

#### Position Description

Position Title: Self Advocacy Advisor

Employment Type: Temporary/Permanent/Permanent Part Time

#### Tenure of Employment

Permanent or temporary? Casual, part time or full-time? Include start and finish dates.

#### Position Objectives

- To support self advocates to establish and run an independent self advocacy group run by and for people with a disability.
- To support the group to establish pathways to have their voices heard and to have real input into all levels of service provision, government and the broader community.
- To support peer advocates to access resources, training and advice that ensures their ongoing control of the group as an independent entity which is not shaped by outside expectations of people without a disability.
- Promote the empowerment of people with a disability.



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Job Description template

#### Key Responsibilities and Duties

- Support the development of skills needed to ensure the group is managed and controlled by people with a disability.
- Provide the encouragement, support, and advice required to assist the group to undertake meetings and group activities.
- Support group planning to identify issues they wish to address and activities they wish to undertake.
- Support active participation and decision making of all the members of the group.
- Assist the group to work towards becoming self-sustaining.
- Assist the group to source ideas, practical training, advice, networks and resources in the areas of:

Individual Self Advocacy	Self-management	Working towards change	Planning
Group self Advocacy	Governance	Decision making	Lobbying

- To support the group to network and link with other self advocacy groups and self advocacy networks.
- To support the group to develop and/or maintain links or partnerships with local disability advocacy organisations and other relevant organisations.



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Job Description template

#### Organisation Relationships

Responsible to: *insert name*

Internal Liaison: *insert name*

External Liaison:

Self Advocacy and Disability Advocacy Sector, People with Disabilities and their Families/ Carers, Disability Service Providers, Mainstream Service Providers, Community Groups, Local, State and Commonwealth Government departments and representatives, Local, State and Commonwealth politicians and other key decision makers.

#### Accountability, Extent of Authority

*Self Advocacy Group to complete.*

Who is the Advisor accountable to, what sort of decisions can the Advisor make?

#### Key Selection Criteria

- A commitment to and an understanding of the principles of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Knowledge of the Disability Sector.
- Awareness of, or experience in, the disability advocacy or self advocacy sector.
- Demonstrated understanding of the principles of community inclusion, empowerment and consumer participation in planning and decision making and practical evidence of this.
- Experience in working with broad range of community organisations, government bodies and consumer organisations.
- Ability to develop and foster partnerships with key stakeholders.
- Experience in or a firm understanding of the principles of consumer control and the role of a worker in supporting this.



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Job Description template

#### Specialist Skills and Knowledge

1. Demonstrated experience working with people with a disability.
2. A commitment to participant empowerment and involvement in planning and decision making.
3. An understanding of community development theory and practice; principles of community inclusion and participation and community planning strategies.
4. Excellent knowledge of the disability service system.
5. Personal attributes of flexibility, energy and a commitment to innovation and creativity.

#### Management Skills

1. Skills in managing time, setting priorities, planning and organising one's own work.
2. Skills in developing a systematic approach to mapping key community issues and needs.
3. Accurate and concise report writing skills.

#### Interpersonal Skills

1. Well developed written and verbal communication.
2. Ability to accept responsibility and be accountable for performance.

#### Qualifications and Experience

1. Experience in working with disadvantaged groups/people with disabilities: experience training in community development work.
2. Competence in computer based data processing, word processing and spreadsheets.
3. Current driver's licence essential.



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Job Advertisement template

Position Title:	<i>Group to Add</i>
Employer:	<i>Group to Add</i>
Work Type/s:	<i>Group to Add</i> eg. contract, part time etc
Classification/s:	<i>Group to Add</i> eg. Community Development, Disability Services, Project Management
Sector/s:	<i>Group to Add</i>
Location:	<i>Group to Add</i>
Applications close:	<i>Group to Add</i>

Self advocacy groups are run by people with disabilities who have joined together to have their voices heard and to support each other. They work together to make sure they have the same rights, choices, and opportunities as anyone else.

This is an exciting position working with the **ADD GROUP NAME** self advocacy group located in **ADD LOCATION**.

The position entails supporting **ADD GROUP NAME** to **ADD THE JOBS TO BE DONE BY THE WORKER**.

You will have a demonstrated commitment to the human rights of people with disabilities, the ability to work within the principles of community inclusion, empowerment and participatory decision making and an understanding of Self Advocacy.

A current police check is essential.

Applications, including CV, should be emailed to **ADD CONTACT NAME AND EMAIL**, using the subject line: Self Advocacy Group Worker.

All applications must address the key selection criteria as outlined in the attached job description.

**Make sure you include the Job Description with the Advertisement.**





## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Appraisal Form

A staff appraisal is a formal meeting where the group and the worker get together and discuss how everything is going.

An appraisal is an opportunity to spend time working out what is working well in a job and if anything needs to change.

It is a time for workers and group members to look at the job description together and see if any changes need to be made and talk about work plans.

It is also a good time for workers to talk about how they are finding their job and say if they need anything. Staff appraisals are usually done once a year.

Staff appraisals are a time to formally thank and appreciate workers efforts.

On the following pages are the templates for a staff appraisal. They can be altered depending on the needs of the group.

To use this form, organise a time for some group members and the worker to come together and discuss.

Depending on the needs of the group this form can be used as a discussion point rather than filled out by individuals.





## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Appraisal Form

To be completed together by <i>Worker</i> and <i>Group</i>			
Group Name:		Date:	
Worker's Name:			
Group Members involved in this appraisal:			
Let's talk about the job description:			
Duties	Still working on it	Finished	Need to Change
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
New Duties to add:			



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Appraisal Form

To be completed by *Worker* only

What have you achieved?

What are you doing well?

Is there anything you would like to improve or change?



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Appraisal Form

To be completed by **Group** only

The Group is really happy with the work you have done....

The Group has helped you with.....

The Group would like you to work on.....



## 4. Advisors' Resources

### Advisor Appraisal Form

To be completed together by <i>Worker</i> and <i>Group</i>		
Actions:		
What needs to be done?	Who will do it?	When?
<i>example: Talk to the committee about this appraisal and any changes that need to be made</i>	<i>example: The group representative</i>	<i>example: At the next committee meeting</i>
1		
2		
3		
4		
Anything else to add?		
Signed by the Worker:		Signed by a Group Representative:
Date of Next Appraisal:		



## 5. Other Resources

### Information about volunteers

All volunteers have a right to:	All volunteers are expected to:
Orientation at your host organisation	Commit to their volunteer position
Recognition as a valued team member	Be punctual and reliable
Clarification of your role (through your position description)	Notify in advance any changes to your availability
Agreement about hours and conditions (through your volunteer agreement)	Accept responsibility for your actions and behaviour
Access to training to perform duties to the standard required	Notify your host organisation of any potential hazards or dangerous situations
Information and consultation on matters directly or indirectly affecting you and your duties	Abide by your host organisation's volunteer policies
Support and supervision in your role	Deal with complaints in the appropriate manner
Adequate insurance cover and a healthy, safe work environment	Carry out the duties listed in your volunteer position description, including training
Awareness of the organisation's grievance procedure	Respect the rights and privacy of others
Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses	Give advance notice before leaving their host organisation.
Freedom of choice (including refusing positions that may be filled by paid staff rather than volunteers)	Support other team members and ask for support when needed
Holiday breaks	
Access relevant information about your host organisation, e.g. volunteer policies.	
Unlike paid staff, volunteers are not covered by industrial awards.	

Source: Volunteering Victoria 2012. Published February 2013



## 5. Other Resources

### Who are self advocacy supporters?

Self advocacy supporters can be anyone: families, friends, partners, work colleagues, support workers, disability services or networks, advocates, local politicians, public servants, Lion's club members, etc., The list is long.







## 5. Other Resources

### How can people support self advocacy?

There are many ways to support self advocacy and self advocacy groups. Here are just a few ways:

- Promote local self-advocacy groups in the workplace or community.
- Promote self advocacy to disability specialist services and generic services.
- Promote self advocacy as a way for people with a disability to be included in the community e.g. in mainstream or community groups, the arts, recreation and leisure etc.
- Promote self advocacy as a way for communities to become more inclusive.
- Promote self advocacy groups so that they can be involved in real decisions that influence local, state or national policy. People with disabilities are interested in many things and don't just want to talk about disability issues.
- Promote local self advocacy groups to boards or committees and encourage them to seek their representation.
- Make meetings and information accessible.
- Let groups know if you have or know of a meeting room that self advocates can use.
- Tell people with a disability about self advocacy and link them with existing groups or encourage groups to form when people want them.
- Volunteer your time to support a self advocacy group.
- Understand the difference between supporting and taking over – and make sure not to take over.
- Recognise and acknowledge self advocates hold the power over their lives– no one else.
- Make sure your involvement is genuine not just 'tick a box'.
- Support self advocates in the way they want to be supported.
- Help sort out practical things like transport, meeting rooms, sourcing or providing equipment.
- Make sure people are not set up to fail. Asking, "is this a real situation where people can make a difference," or, "is there a hidden agenda?"
- Support people to know what power they have and what they can change.
- Tell people about the Self Advocacy Resource Unit.



This **Tool Kit** is part of a **Support Workers** kit produced by:



Please contact SARU if you have any further ideas for the *Tool Kit* or if you have any comments on this discussion paper and its content.

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