



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services



Disability Advocacy  
Support Helpline

# The Disability Advocacy Support Helpline



An Easy Read guide



## How to use this guide



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means DSS.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

**Bold**  
Not bold

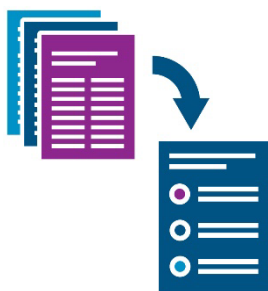
We wrote some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words in bold mean.

There is a list of these words on page 40.



This is an Easy Read summary of another guide.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find more information about our guide online.



[www.advocacylaw.org.au/#helpline](http://www.advocacylaw.org.au/#helpline)



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.



This guide is quite long.

It includes a lot of information.



You don't need to read it all at once.

## **Knowledge of Country**

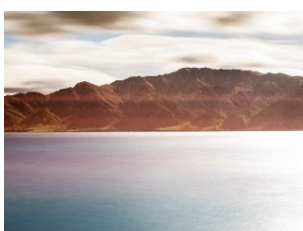


We recognise First Nations peoples as the traditional owners of our land – Australia.

They were the first people to live on and use the:



- land



- waters.

## What's in this guide?

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# What's the Disability Advocacy Support Helpline?



The Disability Advocacy Support Helpline is a phone line that supports:

- people with disability
- families and carers
- support workers.

We call it the Helpline.



You can find it through the Disability Gateway.

**1800 643 787**



You can call the Disability Gateway:

- Monday to Friday
- 8 am to 8 pm.



Ask for the 'Disability Advocacy Support Helpline'.



The Helpline will then call you back.



The Helpline can support you with free **disability advocacy**.



Disability advocacy is when someone supports you to speak up for your **rights**.



Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.

Disability advocacy supports people with disability to take part in:



- decisions that affect them



- the community



- services and support.

# Who can use the Helpline?



The Helpline wants to provide safe services to everyone.

This includes:



- First Nations peoples



- **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)** people.



CALD people:

- come from different backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.





The Helpline also supports **LGBTIQA+** people.

LGBTIQA stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning and asexual.



The '+' is for people who are part of the LGBTIQA+ community but don't talk about themselves using a word from this list.

## How can the Helpline help you?



If someone isn't treating you fairly, Helpline staff members can give you advice.



They can also support you to speak up for yourself about your rights.



They can help you:

- know your rights
- protect your rights.



They can support you with up to 3 phone sessions for one advocacy problem.

Helpline staff members will:



- listen to you



- give you information



- help you think about what to do



- work with you to agree on steps you can take to fix your problem.



If they can't work out how to fix your problem, they'll find other services that can help.

## What problems can you get help with?



The Helpline can help you with one problem at a time.

The Helpline can help you with a problem with:



- housing



- finding a job and getting paid



- school and learning



- transport.

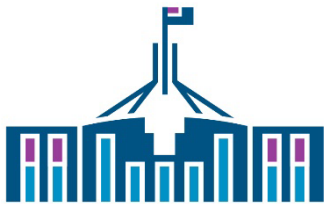
The Helpline can help you with a problem with:



- health care



- money.



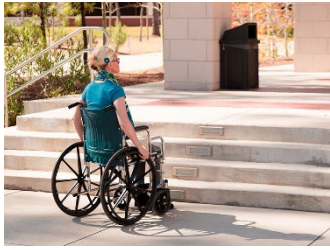
The Helpline can help you with government services.

For example, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).



The Helpline can help if you have a problem with:

- disability services
- other services or businesses.



The Helpline can help you if something isn't **accessible**.

For example, transport.



When something is accessible, it's easy to:

- find and use
- move around.

### What problems can't you get help with?



If Helpline staff members can't help you with your problem, they'll support you to find a service that can help.



They'll also tell you why they can't help you.



They can't help you with the  
**Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).**

The AAT is a government organisation.



They check government decisions, like decisions  
about the NDIS.

The AAT might:

- make a new decision
- agree with the first decision.



Helpline staff members can't give you legal advice.

But they can support you to find people who  
can give you legal advice.

They can't help you with more than one problem at the same time.



For example, if you need support with:

- the NDIS
- and
- money problems.



They would only be able to help you with the NDIS or money problems.

If you need help for another problem, you'll need to contact the Helpline again after they close the first issue.



Helpline staff members also can't support 2 people about the same problem if they want different results.



## How do the services work?



A Helpline staff member will work with you to fix your problem.

It's important for you both to work together.



They deliver their services over the phone.

You can get up to 3 sessions for one problem.

First, a staff member will ask about:



- your problem



- what happened so far



- the result you want.

The staff member might:



- speak up for you if you want



- help you understand the problem



- support you to speak up for yourself



- help you build your skills.



When you build skills to speak up for yourself, it can help you fix problems in the future.



They might tell you that you can make a **complaint**.

When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.



The staff member will tell you if you're doing something that's stopping you from getting the result you want.



They'll also tell you about things you could do that could help you get the result.



The staff member's job is to support you.

And make sure you're at the centre of what they do.

## Who will you work with?



Helpline staff members all have the skills and experience to work in disability advocacy.



They have many different backgrounds.



The Helpline tries to make sure the same person supports you for the whole time during your problem.



You might get support from a different Helpline staff member if you return for help with another problem.



Helpline staff members can't accept any gifts or payments from people they support.



They always make sure there isn't a **conflict of interest** between:

- you
- the staff member you work with.



A conflict of interest is when someone could affect a decision so the result is better for them.



If they find a conflict of interest, they'll explain how to deal with it.



You can take a break now if you want.



You're about halfway through the guide.

# Your rights



People must treat you:

- fairly
- with respect.



You can make your own decisions about your disability advocacy.



You have the right to find and use information that you can understand.



You have the right to **privacy**.

Your privacy is your right to choose:

- what you want to keep safe and private
- what other people can know about you.



You have the right to feel safe to make a complaint about a staff member if you aren't happy with their service.



You have the right to work with a staff member who doesn't:

- have a conflict of interest
- work with a disability service **provider**.



A provider supports people by delivering a service.



## What you have to do



If you use the Helpline, you must treat their staff members with respect.



You should tell your staff member everything you know about your problem.



You should work with your staff member.

And you should work towards fixing your problem.

This includes doing things you both agree to.



You should tell the Helpline as soon as possible if you need to change or cancel a phone appointment.



If a staff member asks you for a document by a certain time, you need to provide it by that time.



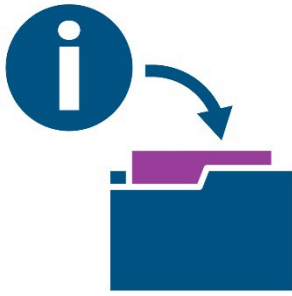
You also need to stay in contact with the staff member who is helping you.



If they can't contact you, they can't support you.

And they might stop trying to fix your problem.

## Your personal information



The Helpline collects information about everyone who uses their services.

They collect information about:



- you



- the problem you want to fix



- the result you want.



They keep the information on a computer.



They keep your information for 7 years.



After 7 years they might delete your file.



And they don't need to give you a copy of your file after the 7 years.

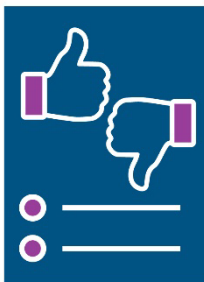
## Why do they collect your information?



When they collect your information, it helps them keep track of how they're helping you.



Helpline staff members take notes about what they've been doing to help you.



Their notes help them to create reports to show if the Helpline is doing its job well.

The reports don't use anyone's name.

For example, they might create a report about:



- how many people they worked with



- what types of disability these people have.

## Who can see your information?



The only people who can see your file are the staff members who work with you.



If the Helpline needs to talk to other people about your problem, they'll ask you if they can share your file with them first.

But they don't have to ask you if:



- someone is in danger



- the law says they must share information in your file.

## Can you see your information?



You can ask for a copy of your file.

You can ask for it:



- while you're working with the Helpline



- up to 7 years after you stop.



You just have to contact the Helpline and ask.

You can only ask for a copy of:



- your file



- your child's file.



You'll need to prove who you are when you ask for a file.



If the Helpline gives you a copy of your file, the file will still belong to them.



## How do they keep your information safe?



The Helpline wants to make sure they keep your information:

- safe
- private.



They'll keep your file in a safe place on their computer system.

They call it the Customer Relationship Management System.



The Helpline has rules about keeping your information private.

They call it their  Privacy Policy Statement.



You can find it on their website.

[www.advocacylaw.org.au/#helpline](http://www.advocacylaw.org.au/#helpline)

# How to give feedback about the Helpline



When you give **feedback**, you tell someone what they:

- are doing well
- can do better.



Your feedback can be:

- good
- bad.



The Helpline wants to receive any feedback you have for them.

It helps make their services better.



If you're not happy with their services, you can also make a complaint.



They will handle your complaint fairly.

It won't affect:

- the problem you want to fix
- how they give you support.

If you want to give feedback or make a complaint, you can talk to:



- a staff member



- the person you have a problem with.



You can bring someone you trust with you when you:

- give feedback
- make a complaint.

For example, a family member or a carer.



You can email them.

[thehelpline@advocacylaw.org.au](mailto:thehelpline@advocacylaw.org.au)

You can also write to the Helpline.



Suite 1, Level 2, Devonshire House  
408 King Street  
Newcastle West  
NSW 2302



You can contact the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service.

This is an organisation that:

- doesn't work for the Helpline
- makes their own decisions.



You can call the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service.

**1800 880 052**

## More information



You can contact the Helpline for more information about their services.



You can find the Helpline through the Disability Gateway.

**1800 643 787**



You can call the Disability Gateway:

- Monday to Friday
- 8 am to 8 pm.



Ask for the 'Disability Advocacy Support Helpline'.



The Helpline will then call you back.



You can call the National Relay Service if you:

- are deaf or hard of hearing
- find it hard to speak using the phone.



TTY

**1800 555 677**



Speak and listen

**1800 555 727**



If you need something in a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS).

**131 450**



You can ask these services to connect you to the Disability Gateway.



You can email the Helpline.

**[thehelpline@advocacylaw.org.au](mailto:thehelpline@advocacylaw.org.au)**



You can visit the Disability Gateway website.

**[www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/legal/advocacy](http://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/legal/advocacy)**

# Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words mean.



## Accessible

When something is accessible, it's easy to:

- find and use
- move around.

## Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)

The AAT is a government organisation.



They check government decisions, like decisions about the NDIS.

The AAT might:

- make a new decision
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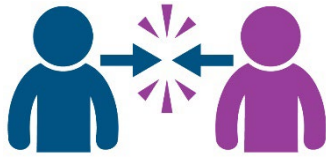
## Complaint



When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.





### **Conflict of interest**

A conflict of interest is when someone could affect a decision so the result is better for them.



### **Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)**

CALD people:

- come from different backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.



### **Disability advocacy**

Disability advocacy is when someone supports you to speak up for your rights.



## Feedback

When you give feedback, you tell someone what they:

- are doing well
- can do better.



## LGBTIQA+

LGBTIQA stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning and asexual.

The '+' is for people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community but don't talk about themselves using a word from this list.



## Privacy

Your privacy is your right to choose:

- what you want to keep safe and private
- what other people can know about you.



## Provider

A provider supports people with disability by delivering a service.



## Rights

Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



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