

	Policy Number	POL042
	Introduced on	19/12/2011
	Endorsed on	01/12/2012
	Last review	V.4 16/01/2016
	Next review	16/10/2019

# ADVOCACY POLICY

## DEFINITIONS

“An advocate” is a person who, with the authority of the consumer, represents the consumer’s interests.

Consumers may use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf. This may be a family member, friend or advocacy service and will be accepted by VIWA as representing the interests of the consumer.

Advocates may be used when information is given, referrals made, grievances or for any other communication between the consumer and VIWA. Guidelines for Advocates are included with the Authority to Act as an Advocate.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the service is guided in receiving advocates and in providing an advocacy service for its consumers;
2. This policy applies to all consumers accessing the service.
3. All staff of the service are made aware of the Advocacy Policy and contribute to any review of the policy based on its applicability to practice.

## RATIONALE

The benefits of advocacy, in relation to improve outcomes for consumers, include:

- Consumers can be supported and empowered by having a voice where they may otherwise be unable to communicate their needs or concerns; and
- It enables consumer needs and issues are raised awareness to the service.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Appropriate advocacy promotes understanding, engenders harmonious outcomes, raises awareness; provide solution-focused strategies, to promote better outcomes for consumers.

## POLICY STATEMENT

1. Consumers may use an advocate of their choice, including a family member, friend, staff member, representative from another agency, or advocacy service, to negotiate on their behalf;
2. Notice of the wish to use an advocate is to be signed by the consumer (see Advocate Authority Form);
3. The consumer has the right to revoke authority and/or change their advocate at any time, with signed and dated authority overriding any previous advocacy authority;
4. A consumer may choose to have an advocate represent their interests during:
  - Assessment;
  - Reviews of the consumer’s situation;
  - Complaints; and
  - Any negotiation or communication between the consumer and the service.

## PROCEDURE FOR APPOINTING AN ADVOCATE

Consumers wishing to use an advocate should inform VIWA in writing (if possible) of the name of the person they wish to negotiate on their behalf; or completing the Advocacy Authority Form. The consumer has the right to change their advocate at any time and should inform us in writing (if possible) of any change. The Authority to Act as an Advocate may be completed by a staff member over the phone if required, the form must then be sent, together with a stamped addressed envelope, to the client for signature.

VIWA staff will receive training (if necessary) in the use of advocates.

All clients who are formally referred by the service will receive information regarding the use of advocates.

## REFERENCE

Advocacy Procedures

Carer Recognition Policy

Consider Consumer's Financial Difficulty Policy and Guidelines

Consumer Complaint Policy & Procedure

Consumer Rights and Responsibility Policy

Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy

Fee Review Policy and Procedures

Freedom of Information Policy

CHSP Eligibility Policy

CHSP In-Home Service Policy

Workplace Bully Policy

Workplace Harassment Policy