

What is an Advocate?

An advocate is someone who stands alongside a person who wants support and:

- Intercedes or acts on behalf of another person.
- Assists them to speak their views or will speak on their behalf
- Acts on the person's instructions and supports them.
- Works on behalf of a person to promote their ideas and interests and helps to ensure that their rights are respected and protected.

Informal Advocacy

- An advocate has no legal power to act on the client's behalf unless they are a Legal Advocate who is appointed as legal counsel for the client.
- The advocate's role includes the provision of support necessary to seek redress in any dispute.
- Informal advocates act on the client's behalf, but decisions are made by the client. If the client is incapable of expressing their wishes, the informal advocate may act on the wishes of the legal guardian, Power of Attorney or other formal advocate.

Types of Advocacy

There are different types of individual advocacy available to BCH clients. Informal advocacy is often provided by a family member, carer, friend, neighbour, medical practitioner or other BCH staff member, depending on the situation and the client's wishes.

There are also a number of external advocacy agencies that clients may choose to access. If a client does wish to access an external advocacy agency, BCH will support them to do so.

The details of some external advocacy agencies are provided below. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and BCH will work with an advocate from any external advocacy agency.

- Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)
1800 700 600
www.opan.org.au
- Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV)
1300 368 821
www.seniorsrights.org.au
- Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)
1300 309 337
www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
- Rights Information and Advocacy Centre (RIAC)
03 5222 5499
www.riac.org.au
- Barwon Disability Resource Council (BDRC)
03 5221 8011
www.bdrc.org.au
- Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)
[Youth Affairs Council Victoria | Get advocacy support \(yacvic.org.au\)](http://Youth Affairs Council Victoria | Get advocacy support (yacvic.org.au))

What can an Advocate be involved in?

An advocate can be involved and support clients in a variety of ways:

- Support to ensure rights are upheld.
- Find out information on client's behalf.
- Be present during assessment processes.
- Help to provide service providers with relevant information.
- Communicate the interests and ideas of clients.
- Explore service options
- Help clients with complaints and appeals processes.
- Assist clients if they've been involved in an incident

How can Advocates provide support?

Advocates can provide support in a variety of ways, including:

- Pre-appointment sessions to advise the client and assist them to self-advocate in their appointment
- In person meetings/appointments at BCH
- Over the telephone
- Supporting clients during virtual meetings and/or telehealth appointments with BCH staff