



Disability
Advocacy and
Complaints
Service of
South
Australia Inc.

**GUIDE TO USING
OUR SERVICE**

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Whenever you see text in this font and in this box you will find a Plain English explanation of the text on the page. Not every page has such a box. If you have difficulties reading or understanding the text, please ask anyone of us for assistance.

The Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. is part of the Australian National Disability Advocacy Program funded by the Australian Commonwealth Government.

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9 September 2011

Our Contact Details

You can lodge your complaint at the Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. by:

Telephone	Adelaide	8297 3500
	Country	1800 088 325
	TTY	8297 4144
	Fax	8297 1155
Email	drigney@dacssa.org.au	

Or by writing a letter to:

Disability Advocacy & Complaints Service of SA
470 Marion Road
Plympton Park SA 5038

We will arrange a meeting with you at the office, at your home, or any other place you feel comfortable with.

If you have a complaint, contact us.
If you cannot get in contact with us, ask someone you trust to help you.
The address and phone numbers are on this page.

Introduction

The Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. is part of the National Disability Advocacy Program funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

Who we are:

Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. was founded and incorporated as the Disability Complaints Service Inc. in 1991. In 2002 the organisation changed its name to Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. to reflect the actual range of services offered.

We are a membership based and managed incorporated association. Our members are people with disabilities, their families, friends and supporters. The Management Committee members are elected at the Annual General Meeting and they develop the strategic directions and are accountable for the corporate governance of the Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc.

We currently employ nine employees, all are working part time. The Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. welcomes the participation of volunteers and is very fortunate to have benefited from volunteer contributions in the past.

We are getting money from the Government to help you out. You do not need to pay anything for our service. We started as a group of people with disabilities, who wanted to speak up for our rights. You can become a member of our group and elect the people on to our Board. Our Board members have a say about what we are working on and how we work. We welcome volunteers. We have around nine staff members.

What we do

Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. facilitates the airing and resolution of disability based grievances in a manner that supports and encourages people with a disability, their carers, families and associates through the provision of individual advocacy.

In accordance with our funding agreement, we will advocate with or on behalf of South Australians with disabilities, where the disability

- is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of such impairments;
- is permanent or likely to be permanent; and
- results in a substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, learning or mobility; and the need for on-going support services

Our advocates will assist in the airing and resolution of disability based grievances regardless of:

- age
- gender
- ethnic origin
- geographical location within the State

We will ensure that issues that need to be addressed systemically are brought to the attention of systemic advocacy organisations, or, if resources allow, take a systemic issue on.

We help all people with disabilities, their carers, and families if they have a complaint related to living with a disability. We do not discriminate, everyone can access our service, no matter what skin colour, religion, or gender people have.

Who can use our service?

Any person with a disability or with a mental health problem, people who support a person with a disability, and members from the wider community with concerns related to living with a disability, can ask for assistance and information.

How we can help

We can assist you to address your grievances or resolve your complaints by:

- Developing and planning a strategy with you,
- Attending meetings with you and taking notes,
- Helping you write letters,
- Making inquiries and obtaining documents with your permission,
- Supporting you in the Guardianship Board and other tribunals
- Referring you to appropriate agencies.

What we cannot do:

- Assist you if your complaint is not disability related,
- Act against your expressed wishes (if you are the person with a disability most affected by the outcome),
- Act against other people with disabilities or in neighbourhood disputes,
- Provide legal advice,
- Provide diagnostic advice (we are not psychiatrists),
- Provide financial support,
- Act as social workers, counsellors, or case managers.

We can help by working with you on your complaint. We cannot do work other people should do, such as lawyers, social workers, or specialists. We cannot give you any money for anything.

How does it work?

Anyone with a problem or a question can give us a call. We will provide information, refer to other services and/or agree to assist with the complaint.

We arrange for an initial interview, either at the office or at the person's home.

At the first interview we explore the issues and strategies. We agree on a plan of action with the person and act only with the strict and explicit permission of our clients.

When all avenues have been exhausted or a positive outcome has been achieved, we close the issue.

When is the service delivered?

Our advocates are available during business hours, Monday to Fridays unless there is a Public Holiday.

The service is delivered when a person or someone acting on their behalf, requests assistance, or when a rights infringement against a group of people is reported to the service.

How is the service delivered?

The service is delivered in a way which is strong, empowering, skilful, competent, easily accessible, with a minimum of conflict of interest, ethically correct, legally correct, in the interest of the person with the disability using the Service.

Anyone who has a problem can contact us. One of our advocates will discuss your problem and suggest some action. You will always need to agree to anything the advocate does on your behalf. We are open Monday to Friday. We want to help people to get their rights and will do our best to provide a quality service.

Purpose, Vision and Mission Statement

Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. is governed by the following philosophies:

Purpose:

The purpose of the Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. is to provide a broad range of advocacy services to assist people with disabilities to address their grievances and complaints in all areas of life.

The purpose of our service is to increase awareness in the community about the disabling conditions created by society for people with impairments.

Vision:

Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. wants to be recognised by people with disabilities and the wider community for excellence in advocacy service provision and as a provider of opportunities for people with disabilities.

Mission:

Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. is a community service, which is driven and informed by people with disabilities, their families and friends. It is our mission to enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities, to advocate for the removals of barriers to full participation and to proactively eradicate the social exclusion many still face.

Our purpose, vision and mission explain why we are there and what we want to achieve. We want to help people with disabilities to get their rights. Everyone should be able to participate in all areas of life. We are here to help people live a better, more independent life.

The Advocacy Process

Initial Interview

You will receive a letter from us acknowledging your complaint. The letter will also tell you if you have to wait for our service and how long approximately you will have to wait.

If the demand on our service is greater than we can currently manage your issue may be placed on the waiting list.

Our waiting list is divided into three categories:

- Important
- Urgent
- Very urgent

If you would like to know how our Chief Executive Officer makes this and other decisions around the intake procedure, please ask for our **Service Intake Policy and Procedure**

As soon as an advocate becomes available the Chief Executive Officer will allocate your complaint.

The Advocate will then contact you to discuss your complaint. Usually you will receive a letter from your advocate with an introduction. If your issue is very urgent and you have appointments coming up, your advocate may meet you without an introductory letter.

Once you have contacted our office someone will listen to you and write up your details. If we are very busy you will get a letter telling you how long you have to wait. Once an advocate is available and it is your turn, the advocate will contact you. If your issue is very urgent tell us when you first contact us. If an urgent issue comes up while you are waiting, call us and let us know.

HAVE ANYONE YOU CHOOSE ACCOMPANY YOU TO THE SERVICE OR OTHER MEETINGS: You may feel more comfortable bringing along a family member or an advocate to assist you with your complaint.

BE KEPT INFORMED: You will be kept up to date with the progress of your complaint and the Advocate will discuss with you each step of the complaint, seeking your permission to progress to the next step of the complaint.

DECIDE HOW YOU WANT YOUR COMPLAINT ACTED ON: You are the person who decides what actions will be taken throughout the process of resolving your complaint.

LODGE YOUR COMPLAINT ANONYMOUSLY: Even though we need to keep details about a client for our files, you can have the advocate act on your complaint for you without using your name.

WITHDRAW YOUR COMPLAINT ANYTIME: At any stage during the process of resolving a complaint, you can ask the Advocate to stop working on the complaint and close the complaint file.

LOOK AT YOUR FILE AND CHANGE ANYTHING YOU THINK IS WRONG: Even though the complaints file is owned by the Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of SA you have the right to look at the file and ask for information to be changed if you think the information is incorrect.

You have the right to

6. bring a friend for support
7. know what's going on
8. decide where you want to go next
9. not tell us who you are, make the complaint secretly
10. stop your complaint
11. ask that anything we have written in your file be changed.

PLACE LIMITS ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORKER WHILE THEY ARE ACTING AS YOUR ADVOCATE: You will be required to sign an authority form to give permission to our advocates to approach other individuals or organisations on your behalf. You have to agree to every step of the advocacy process. You are entitled to place limits on the extent of the authority that you give to our agency. Once the complaint has been resolved this authority is no longer valid. A new authority form is required with each new complaint lodged.

CHOOSE A DIFFERENT ADVOCATE: If for some reason you feel you cannot work with a particular advocate, you have the right to request another worker.

MAKE A COMPLAINT AGAINST US: You can make a complaint about the service and our policies etc. or make a complaint about your advocate or any other staff or Management Committee member of the service.

You have the right to

12. tell your advocate what you want to be done;
13. ask the manager to change your advocate;
14. complain about us;

Your Responsibility as a Client

Every client has the responsibility to:

- Ask questions when they do not understand something.
- Provide as much information as they can relating to the complaint.
- Participate in the decision making process of the complaint.
- Be truthful at all times.
- Not to make unreasonable demands in the resolution of the complaint.

If you want to complain about our service

If you wish to lodge a complaint about the Disability Advocacy & Complaints Service, our policies and/or any employee or volunteer:

You can lodge a verbal or written complaint to the Chief Executive Officer of the Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc.

If you are not happy with the Chief Executive Officer's investigation of your complaint you can lodge a complaint with the Chairperson of our Board of Management.

If you are not happy with the response from the Chairperson you can complain to

- the Complaints and Referral Hotline on 1800 880 052, or
- our funding body, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Disability Services Program, G.P.O. Box 9848, Adelaide SA 5001.
Telephone: 82376048 TTY: 82376031.

Access to our service:

470 Marion Road, Plympton Park SA 5038
Ramped front and back entrance,
Rear car park behind our office

Phone: 8297 3500
Country Callers 1800 08 8325
TTY: 8297 4144 Fax: 8297 1155
Email: drigney@dacssa.org.au



Key Performance Indicators

Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia has adopted the following Advocacy Service Standards and Key Performance Indicators (KPI). These standards were adapted from the existing Disability Services Standards for disability employment services and the proposed Standards from the Department for Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, released in November 2006.

Standard 1: Accessing advocacy

People with disability have opportunities to access advocacy on the basis of relative need and available resources.

1.1 DACSSA Inc. adopts, applies and promotes non-discriminatory entry rules in respect of age, gender, race, culture, religion or disability, living arrangements, consistent with the contractual obligations and purpose of DACSSA Inc. and relative need and available resources.

1.2 DACSSA Inc.'s entry and exit procedures are fair and equitable and consistently applied.

1.3 People with disability are informed about how decisions about access and prioritisation are made.

Everyone who has a complaint can access our service. The complaint must be related to living with a disability. Carers and family members can contact us on your behalf, or if they have a complaint. We have a policy which states how we decide whether we can work on a complaint or not. You can ask anyone in our office to explain the policy to you, or to get a copy of it.

Standard 2: Individual needs

People with disability receive advocacy that is designed to meet their individual needs and best interests.

2.1 *Advocacy objectives are negotiated and documented with the person or people with disability and reflect their needs.*

2.2 *All advocacy activities reflect and respond to these needs, including opportunities to involve a support person of their choice*

2.3 *In meeting the needs of a person or people with disability, DACSSA Inc. will seek to minimise conflict of interest or to deal with it transparently (including conflict of interest between individuals and perceived conflict of interest)*

2.4 *DACSSA Inc. helps to empower people to advocate for themselves or family or others with appropriate strategies (such as information, training, mentoring, support, etc).*

We are committed to acting only with your agreement, every step of the process. Nothing will be decided without you knowing about it. All advocates will explain what has happened or is likely to happen. If you do not understand something, please ask. Without you we cannot do anything.

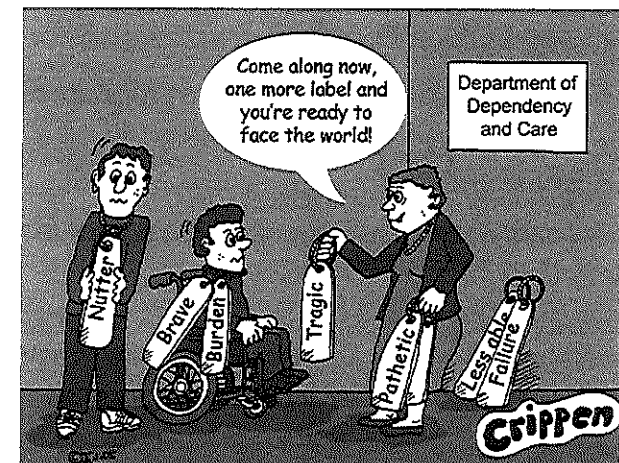
Standard 3: Decision-making & Choice

People with disability have the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions about the advocacy activities undertaken

KPI 3.1 People with disability are supported to make their own decisions about the advocacy activities they require.

KPI 3.2 DACSSA Inc. acts upon the choices made by the person with a disability. Where a person with a disability has impaired decision making capacity, ethical guidelines will be used to inform decisions about advocacy activities.

All advocates must make sure no decision is made without you, and nothing is done without your permission. If we act on behalf of many people with disabilities, we will ask those most affected what they want.



Standard 4: Privacy, Dignity & Confidentiality

The right of people with disability to privacy, dignity and confidentiality is recognised and respected.

4.1 *DACSSA Inc. complies with the Information Privacy Principles of the Privacy Act 1988 in order to protect and respect the rights of people with disability.*

4.2 *DACSSA Inc. promotes privacy, dignity and respect for people with disability*

All of your personal information will be kept private and confidential. No one is allowed to harass others.

Standard 5: Participation & Integration

People with disability are supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in the community Standard 5: Community Development

5.1 *Through advocacy, opportunities for participation and involvement in the community are promoted.*

5.2 *Where appropriate, DACSSA Inc. takes action to introduce, influence or produce positive systemic change in the community.*

We will support you if you want to form an interest group or if you want to have a say about other services

Standard 6: Valued Status

The intrinsic value of people with a disability is recognised and each person is supported and encouraged to enhance their valued status in the community.

6.1

Through advocacy, the aspirations and strengths of people with disability are promoted.

6.2

DACSSA Inc. promotes the intrinsic value and the valued status of people with a disability in all its activities.

We are committed to helping all people with disabilities to make a difference in their community. We will offer training courses and have short information sessions. Anyone who wishes can become a member and get involved in the management and planning of our service.

Standard 7: Complaints and Disputes

People with disability who have a complaint or dispute with DACSSA Inc., are encouraged to raise it, and have it resolved, without threat of retribution

7.1 *DACSSA Inc. informs people about how to raise complaints or disputes about any areas of dissatisfaction with DACSSA Inc., without threat of retribution.*

7.2 *DACSSA Inc. seeks to resolve complaints or disputes raised by people with disability, with access to both internal and external complaints resolution mechanisms*

Anyone can make a complaint against us. If you have a complaint about one of our employees or volunteers, you can talk about it with the Chief Executive Officer. We welcome complaints, because we want to get better. We appreciate your complaints. No one will be treated worse because they have a complaint against us. If you are unhappy you can talk to the Chairperson of our Board, or complain to people outside of our agency.

Standard 8: Service Management

Each agency adopts quality management systems and practices that optimise the effectiveness of advocacy for people with disability and facilitates continuous improvement.

8.1 *DACSSA Inc. has clearly stated aims and objectives that communicate to people with disability and other relevant stakeholders the scope and limitations of DACSSA Inc..*

8.2 *DACSSA Inc. has governance and management systems in place that facilitate quality management practices and continuous improvement.*

8.3 *DACSSA Inc. is structured and operates independently, in such a way that it is as free as possible from conflicts with other service provision and the interests of people with disability.*

Standard 9: Employment and Volunteering Conditions

Each person with a disability enjoys working conditions comparable to those of the general workforce, volunteer workers included.

KPI 9.1: All employees, regardless of their disability, receive wages according to their relevant Industrial Award, and if applicable, at a pro rata wage determined through a transparent open employment award assessment.

KPI 9.2: All employees, regardless of their disability, enjoy the same employment conditions consistent with general workplace norms.

KPI 9.3: All volunteers enjoy the same working conditions as the employees, apart from receiving wage. All costs of volunteers arising from participation in Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc.'s activities are reimbursed.

Everyone employed with us gets the same wages and working conditions. All volunteers can ask to get the money back they have to pay to come to work.

Standard 10: Consumer Education and Empowerment

People with disabilities access training and education, which will empower them to become more independent in their actions to speak up about issues of their concern.

KPI 10.1: Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. facilitates access to, and delivers, client education programs that facilitate self advocacy skills, subject to available funding. The content of these programs are determined by client interest and need.

KPI 10.2: Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc. delivers a consumer representative training program to increase the participation of people with disabilities on decision-making boards and committees.

We are committed to assist you to participate in our service, or others. If you are interested you can ask us about our training courses. We have courses to train you to help out as a volunteer. You can be trained to be a Board member, or to do other things. This may help you find a job later, or gain experience.

Standard 11: Staff recruitment and training

Each person who has an employment relationship with DACSSA Inc. has appropriate skills and competencies.

11.1 DACSSA Inc. ensures that staff have relevant skills and competencies.

11.2 DACSSA Inc. provides opportunities for the appropriate and continuing training and skills development for each staff member.

All of our advocates are well trained and experienced. We ensure that all employees know and do the right thing. If you want to become a volunteer you have the right to ask us for training to do the job.

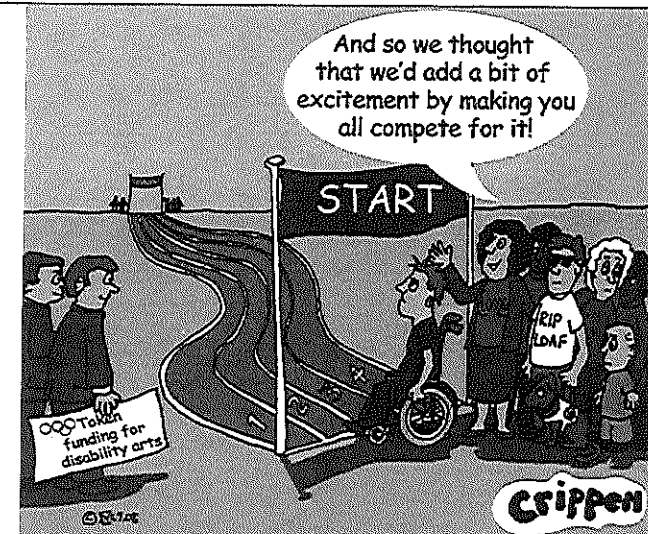
Standard 12: Protection of human rights and freedom from abuse

DACSSA Inc. acts to prevent abuse and neglect and to uphold the legal and human rights of people with disability.

12.1 DACSSA Inc. takes all practical and appropriate steps to prevent abuse, neglect and discrimination of people with disability.

12.2 DACSSA Inc. upholds and promotes the legal and human rights of people with disability.

We are actively fighting for the human rights of all people with disabilities. We are fighting against all forms of abuse and neglect against people with disabilities.



<http://www.crippencartoons.co.uk/cartoons/funding/funding02.shtml>