**Advocacy** is the deliberate process of influencing those who make policy decisions or distribute resources.

**An advocate** is a person who helps someone to get what they need and speak up for their rights.

**Why do we as a society need Advocacy?**

* Helps people retain their rights
* Helps people resolve concerns or complaints about the services they receive
* Helps people experiencing mistreatment by society (or people at risk)

**It can be direct or indirect**

**Direct**: ask a policy maker in person to take action position papers, lobbying

**Indirect**: trying to influence public opinion through the media

**Types of advocacy**

* **Self advocacy**: someone who is able to speak up and represent themselves They may receive support, information or training to be able to do this better and to feel more empowered
* **Individual Advocacy**: When a person is assisted by an advocate who may take action on their behalf.
* **Group advocacy**: Similar to individual advocacy but involves representing a group of people requiring advocacy
* **Citizen advocacy**: A person is matched with a volunteer. The volunteer is the advocate. The relationship lasts for a long time.
* **Systemic advocacy**: Is about social change and addresses disadvantage and discrimination that affects a number of people. Advocacy is aimed at changing legislation, policies and practices. E.g. Lobbying politicians, campaigning and public awareness

**Advocacy Skills: ARENA**

* **Active listening:** the process of listening attentively while someone else speaks, paraphrasing and reflecting back what is said, and withholding judgement and advice. Active listening makes the speaker feel heard and encourages open conversation.
* **Effective communication:** about more than just exchanging information. It's about understanding the emotion and intentions behind the information. Effective communication is also a two-way street. It’s not only how you convey a message so that it is received and understood by someone in exactly the way you intended, it’s also how you listen to gain the full meaning of what’s being said and to make the other person feel heard and understood.
* **Assertiveness**: based on balance - it requires being forthright about your wants and needs while still considering the rights, needs, and wants of others. When you are assertive, you ask for what you want but you don't necessarily get it. When you act assertively you act fairly and with empathy. The power you use comes from your self-assurance and not from intimidation or bullying. When you treat others with such fairness and respect, you get that same treatment in return. You are well liked and people see you as a leader and someone they want to work with.
* **Resourcefulness**: the ability to overcome problems or to make do with what is available to create a solution. Being resourceful means you are proactive, see things through to the end, move deliberately in the direction of your dreams, aware of the vast amount of possibilities and opportunities around you.
* **Negotiation**: a method by which people settle differences. It is a process by which compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding argument and dispute. In any disagreement, individuals understandably aim to achieve the best possible outcome for their position. The principles of fairness, seeking mutual benefit and maintaining a relationship are the keys to a successful outcome.

**Communication strategies we can use to advocate for the issue**

* Arrange to have a meeting with your local Member of Parliament. Plan what you are going to say. The plan must have your talking points, your aim and suggestions for change. Face to face meetings are also called Lobbying. This involves making personal contact with decision makers regarding the issue in order to influence their decisions.
* Media interviews are a conversation between a reporter and a person who has a story to present re the issue.
* Persuading through drama. This method can bring a theoretical issue to life but must be presented either to persons of influence in regards to the advocacy issue or presented to an indirect target i.e. the public who will then go on to influence a direct target i.e. people of influence.
* Using social media as an advocacy tool (e.g. ice bucket challenge)
* Emails to groups who want to influence change (e.g. change.org)

**Self-management skills**

The ability to manage your own self is very important for the development of an individual. It helps one to become more responsible in life. Self-management refers to methods, skills, and strategies by which individuals can effectively direct their own activities toward the achievement of objectives, and includes:

* Goal setting
* Decision making
* Time management
* Reflection and evaluation
* Focusing
* Planning
* Scheduling
* Task tracking
* Managing emotions
* Self-intervention

**Interpersonal skills**

Interpersonal skills are the skills used by a person to interact with others properly. In the business domain, the term refers to an employee's ability to get along with others while getting the job done.

* Verbal communication.
* Non-verbal communication.
* Listening skills.
* Negotiation.
* Problem-solving.
* Decision-making.
* Assertiveness

**Intrapersonal skills**

Intrapersonal communication is a self-talk conversation, while interpersonal is the one between many people. Emotions, feelings, perceptions and attitude within a person are called interpersonal skills. e.g. self confidence, self-esteem, being patient, straightforward.

* Verbal communication.
* Non-verbal communication.
* Listening skills.
* Negotiation.
* Problem-solving.
* Decision-making.
* Assertiveness

**The difference is that "interpersonal" refers to relationships or actions that take place between two or more people while "intrapersonal" refers to things that go on exclusively within one person. "Inter" is a prefix meaning "between."**

**Conflict resolution skills**

* Negotiation
* Assertiveness
* Active listening
* Communication
* Body Language
* Manage stress, remaining calm
* Control your emotions
* Pay attention to the feelings being expressed
* Be respectful of differences

**The 3 Step Conflict Resolution Process**

* Negotiation
* Agreement
* Resolution

**The TRG Model**

* **Time management:** an essential skill that helps you keep your work under control, at the same time that it helps you keep stress to a minimum. We would all love to have an extra couple of hours in every day. Seeing as that is impossible, we need to work smarter on things that have the highest priority, and then creating a schedule that reflects our work and personal priorities. With this in place, we can work in a focused and effective way, and really start achieving those goals, dreams and ambitions we care so much about.
* **Reflection and evaluation**: Evaluation is a systematic effort to learn from experience. It is a common human activity, one that enables us to make sense of the world and our impact on it. The understanding that comes from careful evaluation empowers us to act more effectively. The closely related processes of reflection and evaluation are important in determining the effectiveness of individual and group work. In reflection, we ask specific questions about our practice, and we answer these by the more formal process of evaluation.
* **Goal setting:** The definition of goal setting is the process of identifying something that you want to accomplish and establishing measurable goals and timeframes. When you decide on a financial change to save more money and then set a certain amount to save each month, this is an example of goal setting.

**Advocacy Plan**

**Step 1 – Investigate a problem or issue that requires action**

* Identify the problem. (Know your issue.)
* Include statistics and relevant information about the problem.
* Establish your objectives and identify target audience
* Relate the problem to human rights
* Are there any laws or policies which relate to this problem?

**Step 2- Devise goals and strategies to assist with the problem or issue**

* Devise Goals. (Relate to the issue, objectives, human rights)
* Devise strategy/ies or acceptable solution(s) based on the issues identified in step 1.
* How will you raise concern for this issue and encourage the community/government to take responsibility?
* What advocacy methods/ communication strategies will you use? Why?
* What communication skills will be required?
* Discuss possible impacts of the strategies and any legal issues surrounding the proposal.
* Discuss how the population group’s wellbeing will be protected by your advocacy proposal.

Additional helpful steps:

* Defining the advocacy goal: It can be helpful, at the preliminary stage, to define the goal of the proposed advocacy initiative. What positive change can be expected to result if the initiative is successful? Is the initiative intended to improve access to information, to promote dialogue, or to strengthen voice and influence? Or will it contribute to all of these things? Or to broader development goals? Who will be the primary beneficiaries of the initiative? Has any similar initiative been tried before? If so, what were the results? Is anything similar being considered or planned? Are there opportunities to build a partnership-based approach from the outset?
* Developing the strategy: In developing the strategy, it is advisable to return to the advocacy goal and to set specific and realistic objectives that can be achieved within a reasonable, defined timeframe. It should be possible at the end of such a period to say whether or not they were achieved What policies are already in place? How are these reflected, or not, in current laws and regulations? It is important also to be aware of relevant international treaty obligations, laws and standards.
* Selecting the advocacy approach: What advocacy strategies are most likely to influence the target audiences? Will it be effective to work through dialogue and negotiation with policy makers? What is the likely impact of public pressure – can it be expected to lead to a positive response or to resistance? What sort of treatment can be expected from the media: supportive, hostile, or indifferent?
* Using the media: The media – radio, television, press and online media – have a particular role to play in public advocacy initiatives, especially campaign-based approaches. Not all advocacy work uses the media, and a media-based approach carries risks as well as opportunities. The media can bring a mass audience, potentially increasing profile and credibility, but they can also bring bad publicity and may contribute to mobilising opposition as well as support. Using the media requires planning and skills, including building contacts, knowing the media audience, writing press releases, placing stories, being interviewed, providing visual imagery and organising newsworthy events.
* Getting the message across: Good communications is at the core of effective advocacy. This requires attention to the message, the audience and the means of delivery. The message needs to be clear: it should explain what is being proposed, why it is needed, and what difference it would make. It also needs to be compelling: it should be crafted to the interests and knowledge of the audience. The means of delivery must ensure it is received and heard – whether, for example, a written proposal, face-to-face presentation or public demonstration. It is rare that a single advocacy message will be received and acted upon. The message needs to reinforced, by repetition and through the influence of secondary audiences.

**Step 3 – Produce and implement**

* Produce and mobilise required resources (letters, emails, campaigns, etc.). How will you do this?
* Implement planned strategies – how will you do this?

**Step 4- Evaluate and monitor the success of the advocacy plan**

* How will you monitor the solutions to the problem or issue?
* How will you monitor the participation of individuals, families, communities and governments?
* Outline how you will evaluate the success of your strategy.

The process and results should be evaluated not only at the end of the planned timeframe but on a regular basis so that adjustments, if needed, can be made to the strategy and plan of action. (E.g. Track your plans and progress. Consider outcomes of meetings, media feedback, target responses, communications, etc.) After your strategy has been put in place, outline how you will evaluate the success of your advocacy strategy (relate back to your goal or target).

**Monitoring and evaluation:** Throughout the implementation phase it is important to monitor the process, the results and the policy context. Mechanisms are needed to track activities such as meetings and communications and to monitor results such as media coverage and expressions of public support. Data needs to be maintained on the target audiences: contact details, positions they have taken, offers of assistance and so on. The process and results should be evaluated not only at the end of the planned time frame but on a regular basis so that adjustments, if needed, can be made to the strategy and plan of action. review your progress at regular intervals – if others are involved include regular contact and meeting with them to keep the informed

**Product, Process, Service, System or Environment that can support an individual to communicate and advocate their beliefs and values about the issue are…**

* Products – i.e. Telephone, Internet.
* Process – i.e. Unfair dismissal
* Service – i.e. NGALA, Consumer Protection
* System – i.e. Legal Aid, Family Relationship Centres
* Environment –i.e. Democratic Society: This allows for the freedom of speech and expression where all members can communicate their views without retribution and persecution. It gives all members of the society equal voice to express themselves.

**Barriers to an advocacy plan:**

* Lack of credibility: Being judged by experts and may not be perceived to have the appropriate voice. Unrealistic expectations of outcomes or lack of communication or planning can contribute to the view
* Lack of organisation: Sustainability of advocacy activity requires increased organisational support. Advocacy is more effective when the cause is a collective one and when the individual is supported by a strong organisation
* Resistance to change: Change is difficult to implement. Larger organisations with well-developed cultures can be met by negative responses
* The nature of society: Information and education assists in shaping community attitudes. To alter community attitudes information and education can assist in altering community views on social injustice
* Political will: Despite a well-constructed cause and message, advocacy activities may not produce the outcomes sought because of political factors that may not be apparent. Sometimes a good idea is just too challenging at that time or in that situation
* Sustainability: Sometimes advocacy activities require sustained effort. Energy or interest in a cause may not be sustained for a range of reasons. Withdrawing may feel like ‘letting the side down’. New ways may need to be found to ensure support for individuals and to maintain continuity of effort