

LET'S START A
CONVERSATION
ABOUT
DEAF
AWARENESS



HOW TO
ADVOCATE FOR
YOUR DEAF OR
HARD OF
HEARING CHILD



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Advocating for your child helps ensure their needs are met. Learn about advocacy and how to advocate with confidence in a way that feels right for you.

If you have a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), it's likely you will need to advocate for them at times. Advocacy comes more easily to some people than others. However, it's possible to build your advocacy skills so you can support your child with confidence.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ADVOCATE?

An advocate is someone who represents the interests of another person. The term comes from the Latin word 'advocare', which means 'to add a voice'. An advocate might speak or act in support of an individual, group or cause.

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone. You understand their needs, goals, interests and personality. Advocating for your child can help ensure they get the services and support they need to thrive. You can be the most powerful voice for their inclusion.

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCATING FOR YOUR DHH CHILD

Calling a club in advance to arrange a meeting to discuss your child's needs.

Sharing posters of common Auslan signs or deaf-friendly communication tips.

Providing feedback if someone is not using deaf-friendly strategies (e.g. not looking at your child when they speak).

Writing a letter to raise concerns if you believe your child is being treated differently or excluded.

You might feel uncomfortable about advocating if it involves raising difficult or concerning issues. But you can find a way to go about it that feels right for you.

8 TIPS TO HELP YOU BECOME AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE

Remember people usually want the same thing you do

People don't typically set out to cause problems. Most clubs, coaches, and instructors want what's best for your child. They probably just don't know how to go about it and may be very grateful for your feedback.

Be kind and respectful

A gentle nudge or reminder about what your child needs is often the best approach. Try to stay calm and speak kindly, even if you are angry about something. You can always take further steps if needed.

“The school's commitment to providing modifications in conjunction with my advocacy about what Grace needs has really helped with inclusiveness.”

STACEY, MUM OF DEAF STUDENT GRACE

I have always advocated for Tom. I've always been that mum who's been there for him and has been his voice at times ... You need to be out there to support them; make them feel a part of their community; help them to thrive.”

DEBBIE, MUM OF DEAF AFL PLAYER TOM

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Be prepared

If you have to address a difficult issue, spend some time preparing. Gather any documents or information you need, such as emails you've sent. You might like to rehearse what you plan to say, or get someone you trust to read something before you send it.

Keep the big picture in mind

Remember advocacy is all about your child's best interests. That said, everyone makes mistakes. Try not to take things personally or get bogged down in small details.

Act early

If you are concerned about something potentially serious, don't wait and hope it gets better. Acting quickly helps your child get the support they need. It can also stop resentment from building up.

Focus on solutions

If you need to raise a difficult issue, have some solutions you can suggest. For example, if your child's instructor is not putting them at the front of the group, you could suggest some deaf awareness training. Or you could share our Blueprint resources with them.

Get support

Being an advocate can get tiring. You can ask other people to share the load with you. Partners, siblings, grandparents, friends and more can all share in the work of advocacy.

Teach your child to advocate for themselves

Wherever possible, you want your child to become their own advocate. They will learn from your example. As they get older, give them opportunities to act on their own behalf. You might like to introduce them to older DHH kids or mentors who can share their experiences and encourage them to negotiate for themselves.



“She's worked so hard and she's amazing. She's got to the stage where she's an advocate for herself.”

Deaf tennis player EJ's mum

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For further information about
Deaf Children Australia.
www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au
03 9539 5300
info@deafchildren.org.au

Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf' to refer
to all degrees and types of hearing loss.
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