

Advocacy

By Sabrina Nichol, Kent State University (Peace and Conflict Studies major)

Definition:

Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others. It enables people and groups to shape public discussion on important issues and ensures that communities have a voice in the policies that impact their lives.

Types of Advocacy:

Self-Advocacy refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate and assert their own interests, desires, needs, and rights. In order to self-advocate it is important that an individual understands and has identified their strengths and needs.

Individual Advocacy refers to a person or group of persons concentrating their efforts on just one or two individuals.

Systems Advocacy refers to the changing of policies, laws or rules that impact the lives of society members and can be targeted at a local, state, or federal level.

Administrative Advocacy takes place where laws are carried out and involves identifying necessary changes in policies and practices.

Legal Advocacy seeks to influence the exercise of laws that impact clients or nonprofits through the court system.

Community Advocacy challenges assumptions about vulnerable populations within a community. It is used to change misconstrued public perceptions by providing accurate information on issues of community concern and assisting in making community members' voices heard.

Significance:

Advocacy is important because it seeks to ensure that all people in society are able to have their voice heard on issues that are important to them, protect and promote their rights, and have their interests considered when decisions are being made that impact their lives. Advocacy is a large part of civic and political engagement as it brings community members together to assert their own interests for a certain cause and promote the change they want to see.

Key Ideas/Tools:

Activities that comprise advocacy work:

- Organizing
- Research
- Education
- Nonpartisan [voter mobilization](#)
- Litigation
- Lobbying

Ways to get your organization more involved in advocacy:

- Educate
- Evaluate missions and goals
- Collaborate
- Assess

Further Scholarly Resources:

Books:

Richey, S., & Taylor, B. (2021). *Political Advocacy and American Politics : Why People Fight So Often about Politics*. Routledge.

Scourfield, P. (2021). *Using advocacy in social work practice: A guide for students and professionals*. Routledge.

Websites:

Advocacy Focus

<https://www.advocacyfocus.org.uk/understanding-advocacy>

What Is Advocacy?

https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/What_Is_Advocacy.pdf

Refocusing the Debate about Advocacy

<https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2010.01629.x>

Developed in Collaboration with the Growing Democracy Project.
Learn more about the Growing Democracy Project at www.GrowingDemocracyOH.org

