

## Content for Mental Health Central: About Us: Advocacy Summary Page

### What exactly is advocacy?

There is no clear consensus on a single definition of advocacy. In general terms, advocacy is an evidence-based approach that promotes change and system reform. According to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP, 2017), advocacy is the “deliberate pursuit of change” in decision-making, attitudes, behaviour and policy, to benefit the public. For advocacy to be successful, advocates strategically think and plan their approach. This involves gaining an understanding of stakeholders, and their power, roles, motivations, frames of reference influence and inter relationships (RACP, 2017).

### What are we advocating for?

#### The Melbourne Children’s Campus Mental Health Strategy

The Melbourne Children’s Campus Mental Health Strategy 2021-25 (The Strategy) is a five-year strategy funded by the Royal Children’s Hospital Foundation. The objective of The Strategy is to deliver high quality comprehensive infant, child and adolescent mental health care supported by education and research.

Advocacy is a key enabler to promote The Strategy’s internal and external priorities in mental health care and support for children, families and carers and staff. These priorities include the promotion of mental health as everyone’s business, improving equity and access, and prevention and early intervention. The strategy implementation team members responsible for the advocacy enabler are Anitha Thiraviarajah (Lead) and Kayla Elliott (Research assistant). [Staff profiles](#).

### Actions of Advocates and the relevance to the Melbourne Children’s Campus Mental Health Strategy:

When considering advocacy for the Melbourne Children’s Campus Mental Health Strategy, there are many strategies that can be used. The following table highlights some specific strategies, including what they are and when to use them.

Strategy	What?	When to use?
Online	Social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn Websites such as Mental Health Central Apps and banner ads Videos Podcasts	Effective for disseminating key messages to wide audiences
Traditional media	Paid advertising Newspapers Feature piece on nightly news Radio	Helps government to pay attention Promotion and awareness raising with community

MCRI and RCH Communications	Bulletins Newsletters Intranet posts	Useful for internal communication within an organisation like the Melbourne Children's Campus for key updates and keeping stakeholders informed and engaged in campaigns
Letter Writing	Traditional advocacy strategy that is good for influencing specific outcomes/actions	Government engagement (e.g. funding needs, updates on official policy requirements, acknowledgement and support on policy, invitation to an event)
Letters to editor and opinion pieces	Engage with issues in media, use key messages to highlight why your opinion/view should be considered	Getting published is effective for widespread reach and community involvement  Quick method - usually limited by word count so can prepare and respond promptly to what has been published in media
Champions of advocacy	Individual or team who assist in enabling change  Champions believe in the change, are driven by vision and promote change from within	Inspires other advocates Beneficial to have a role model
Advocacy Launch	Announcement of an advocacy campaign/issue	Effective method to help garner support Can be internally focused or engage the external community
Events	Q and A's Seminars Roadshows Lunch and learns Advocacy launch Advocacy campaign	Useful to start important conversations Engagement with wider audience Forum enabling participation with audience Opportunity to share key messages you want with targeted audience
Opinion Polling	Gauge opinion of different stakeholder groups to ensure messaging is targeted	Help set up the foundation for what matters to people  Identifies gaps in understanding or knowledge to then increase awareness of the advocacy issue
Academic publications + conferences	Peer-reviewed journal articles Oral or poster presentations at a conference	Having an empirical evidence base that supports your argument helps strengthen your position. Advocacy must be evidence based

Consensus issue papers and policy briefs	Evidence-informed thinking on an issue to be shared and highlight the priority areas	Shares evidence that supports the advocacy issue and presents solutions to the problems
Engage policy decision makers + politicians + government	Can use manifestos to highlight key priority areas and call for action i.e. through formal Meetings or submissions to government	Provides an opportunity to engage with influential decision makers who can help push policy change over the line
Involvement in staff meetings	Town Halls Integrating into existing meetings to spread key messages	Bring influential people together Keep people involved Gain endorsement for different calls of action
Staff engagement activities	Lunch and learn Seminars Roadshows Summits and panel discussions	Start important conversations Knowledge exchange Create a learning environment for staff Encourage collaboration across multidisciplinary staff members
Access to education resources	Toolkits Evidence briefs Factsheets Guidelines Infographics	Practical and useful knowledge to enable capacity building in advocacy and subject matter related to advocacy issue
Collaboration opportunities	Focus groups Roundtables Advisory groups/networks Lived Experience Network	Ensure work is not being siloed Alignment of mental health agendas Ensuring unity and leadership as a Campus
Modification to policies and procedures	Policy briefs Policy recommendations	Encourages long-lasting change to be created
New legislation or policy		

Reference: [Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Advocacy Framework](#) (2017)