

# Department of Education and DCJ Advocacy Funding Program

## Program Guideline

### 1. Context

The Disability Funding Advocacy Program (DAFP) is funded by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) involving multiple advocacy streams, including systemic advocacy, individual advocacy and representative advocacy.

The Department of Education has agreed to provide additional funding to DCJ to increase the capacity of DAFP's providers to deliver individual advocacy services for NSW public school students with disability and their families/guardians, and to support providers to work collaboratively with students, parents, carers and schools. Individual disability advocacy assists individuals to access services and supports. This includes state-wide services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, and culturally and linguistically diverse disability advocacy, as well as location-based services.

The current individual advocacy service providers funded under DAFP are:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<i>Hunter New England, Northern NSW, Mid North Coast</i>	Advocacy Law Alliance Incorporated
<i>Western, Far Western NSW</i>	Advocacy Law Alliance Incorporated
<i>Southern NSW, Illawarra Shoalhaven, Murrumbidgee</i>	ACT Disability, Aged Carer Advocacy Service Limited
<i>Northern Sydney, Central Coast</i>	Action for People with Disability Inc
<i>Western Sydney, Nepean Blue Mountains</i>	Advocacy Law Alliance Incorporated
<i>Sydney, South Eastern Sydney</i>	People with Disability Australia Incorporated
<i>South Western Sydney</i>	People with Disability Australia Incorporated
<b>State-wide</b>	First Peoples Disability Network (Australia) Ltd
<b>State-wide</b>	Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW

### 2. Purpose of the DoE funding

To provide further capacity for DAFP providers to:

- Enhance their knowledge of the education system

- Build collaborative relationships with schools and support staff to cater to the various needs of students within their communities
- Ensure students with disability and their families are supported to navigate the education system (and other related government systems) and express their needs to schools
- Increase visibility and access to the Disability Advocacy Futures Program within the education community

### 3. Beneficiaries of funding

Individual advocacy support via the DAFP is available to:

- students with disability and their families/guardians (including international students and refugees)
- parents or carers with disability
- school staff who work with a student with disability

No assessment of disability is required prior to accessing services run through the DAFP program.

### 4. Services to be provided

The services that will be provided under this scheme to students with disability and their families/guardians who attend or wish to attend NSW public schools are covered under the DAFP Individual disability advocacy service as part of the existing agreement with DAFP providers. The other two core advocacy services under DAFP, Systemic Disability Advocacy and Representative Disability Advocacy, are not funded under this agreement.

The DAFP will target those who need support to access NSW Government funded or delivered services. These services include:

- a) Individual advocacy:
  - One-on-one support and advocacy (either in person or via phone/video) to access and navigate the NSW public education system, and other services needed to support the student with disability and their families/guardians. For example, collaborating with schools and health professionals regarding students' diagnosis and reasonable adjustments in the school context.
  - Representation (where required) at meetings with the schools or other representatives of the NSW Department of Education.
  - Support with the preparation of correspondence and applications to the schools or the NSW Department of Education.
  - Build self-advocacy to engage with schools or the NSW Department of Education.
  - Assist students with disability and their families/guardians with raising concerns where appropriate.

Providers should build an understanding of the local context and, where possible, services should be delivered face to face to develop trust and meaningful relationships with students with disability, their families/guardians and schools.

- b) Capability development and relationship building:

- Internal, within the DAFP providers' organisation - providers will build additional capability in the education sector for the DAFP provider, including: upskilling advocates across regions in education-related matters, supporting advocates in complex spaces, and streamlining resources to support advocates in different regions to advocate in education.
- External, with schools - advocates will build collaborative relationships with schools and school staff, productive and collaborative practices with schools, and increase visibility of the service with parents and carers.

## 5. How families can access the services

Families/guardians first point of contact for support should be their local school. Further support and information is also available through their local education office:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/inclusive-learning-support/contact-us>

DAFP organisations provide their services based on location. Information about the services and the locations they cover will be available on the Department's website. Families can self-refer.

Schools will also be encouraged to share the information with parents and carers through a toolkit which includes communication materials explaining the program and how students with disability and their families/guardians can access the support.

## 6. Cultural safety

DAFP providers are expected to be culturally responsive and provide tailored services to meet the needs of the students with disability, their families/guardians and the school community. This includes:

- Specific measures which will support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families and communities, such as employing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff to deliver services where appropriate. Services should also be delivered in line with the [Principles of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#), the [Partnership Agreement between the NSW Department of Education and the NSW AECG](#) and the [Aboriginal Education Policy](#).
- Specific measures which will support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities. This includes providing access to interpreters and translators where necessary, and having staff from different cultural backgrounds when possible.

## 7. How the services will work with the NSW Department of Education and its schools

DAFP providers and schools are expected to work respectfully, collaboratively and cooperatively to find solutions to address the needs of students with disability and their families/guardians. To achieve this:

- The provider will assist the students with disability and their family/guardian to express their needs and discuss these with the school.

- The provider will work with the school to understand what they have already done to address the support needs, what they have not been able to do and why, and what can be done collectively moving forward.
- Where a student needs supports that are not available from the school's available funding and resources, the DAFP provider will support the family to seek and access these services from the broader service system, and will communicate with the school about progress as agreed to with the family/guardian. For example:
  - The provider will liaise with the student's Allied Health, specialists, medical and service providers where appropriate to collaborate in identifying evidentiary reports outlining recommended adjustments in the relation to the student's disability and related diagnoses and to help identify what supports are reasonable in the school context.
  - Where there is no existing third-party relationship, the provider will support the student with disability and their family/guardian to access the required support and will communicate with the school about progress as agreed to with the family/guardian.

To foster the relationship between the DAFP providers and the department and schools, the NSW Department of Education will host information and feedback sessions with the DAFP providers to:

- Create a shared understanding of working collaboratively with schools, where school representatives will be invited to share their views on how to collaborate effectively.
- Discuss inclusive education for all students, covering topics such as Aboriginal Cultural Education, and Inclusive Education practices, amongst other department policies.
- Discuss and learn from the experiences of the DAFP providers and schools in this program.

DAFP providers are required to attend these sessions and disseminate the knowledge across their organisation, upskilling their advocates across regions in Education-related matters and working with schools.

DAFP providers are expected to refer to the following documents and resources to guide practice:

Subject	Importance	Link
Information about support persons and advocates	This guide helps families, parents, carers, support persons and advocates understand the role of a support person and advocate and how they can assist during the complaint process	<a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/translated-documents/information-about-support-persons-and-advocates">https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/translated-documents/information-about-support-persons-and-advocates</a>
Parent and Carer Engagement principles	The Parent and Carer Engagement Framework helps us to better understand what's important to parents and carers so that we can deliver a consistent, high-quality experience to the benefit of student outcomes	<a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/engaging-our-parents-and-carers">https://education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/engaging-our-parents-and-carers</a>
School Community Charter	The School Community Charter outlines the responsibilities of parents, carers, educators and school staff in NSW public schools to	<a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/school-community-charter">https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/school-community-charter</a>

Subject	Importance	Link
	ensure our learning environments are collaborative, supportive and cohesive	
Information about inclusive education	This hub provides information on personalised support for student learning in relation to disability	<a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support">https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support</a>
Disability Standards for Education	The Disability Standards for Education clarify the obligations of education and training providers, and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability	<a href="https://www.dese.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005">https://www.dese.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005</a>
Engaging with diverse school communities	This resource assists school leaders in creating a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal families and diverse communities when accessing the complaints handling process at the local school level	<a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/culture-and-diversity/engaging-communities">https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/culture-and-diversity/engaging-communities</a>
Multicultural NSW Act	This act promotes the equal rights and responsibilities of all the people of New South Wales within a cohesive and multicultural society and recognises and values the different linguistic, religious and ancestral backgrounds of the people of New South Wales	<a href="https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2000-077#sec.3">https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2000-077#sec.3</a>
Code of Conduct	The Code of Conduct reflects the department's core values and is a reference to support their day-to-day decision making	<a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/department-of-education-code-of-conduct">https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/department-of-education-code-of-conduct</a>

## 8. Feedback and referral for further resolution

Where DAFP providers cannot find a resolution to the issue(s) they are supporting a family with, they can refer the matter to the Complaints and Feedback team through the form on the Department's website at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/complaints-compliments-and-suggestions/complaint-compliment-suggestion-form>

The response to this matter will be coordinated by the Complaints Resolution team in collaboration with the DAFP Senior Project Officer.

To better support Aboriginal families in this process, please refer to the factsheet Information for Aboriginal families on how to make a complaint or provide feedback about our schools: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/complaints-compliments-and-suggestions/guide-for-parents-carers-and-students#Support12>

For feedback on DAFP service providers on matters relating to advocacy in Education, please submit a complaint, compliment or suggestion to: [dafp@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:dafp@det.nsw.edu.au)

For issues not relating to Education, please contact the relevant body or Department.

Providers, schools and families/guardians are encouraged to share stories about collaborations that have improved outcomes for students with disability and their families/guardians. These will help to identify exemplary practices and leverage these to guide best practice within the program.