

Child Advocates: Factsheet for Carers

What is a Child Advocate?

Child Advocates are lawyers who work with children and young people whose families are involved with Child Safety.

Child Advocates:

- work with children and young people (if they choose to – it is always their choice)
- are independent advocates that facilitate young people's participation in decisions that affect them
- advocate for decision-makers to consider a young person's views and wishes about their care arrangements and to uphold their rights
- hold blue cards and are guided by trauma-informed practice
- respect and promote the young person's existing relationships with family, and carers, child safety officers, youth worker staff, other legal representatives and other professionals
- are guided by the principles set out in the *Public Guardian Act 2014*, including that the young person's best interests are paramount, and
- are committed to child safeguarding principles requiring that we put the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at the forefront of our work.

A Child Advocate will usually only provide advocacy relating to legal issues, and we only advocate where others are not able to effectively respond to the child/young person's advocacy needs.

Our role seeks to fill a gap in advocacy for young people in the child protection system.

How we meet with children/young people

We meet with children and young people on their own:

- so young people have an opportunity to speak freely
- to help build a trusted and supportive relationship
- to allow the young person to feel safe to ask questions confidentially and seek advice about matters they are concerned about.

As lawyers we have a responsibility to maintain the young person's confidentiality. We do this by meeting the young person one on one. Carers are welcome to attend at the start of our visit (when we explain our role), however, we then ask to continue our meeting without the carer present.

Where/when we meet with young people

Ideally, we meet with young people in a quiet, communal space in the line of sight of a care giver. For example, an outdoor table which offers privacy, but can be seen from indoors.

We generally visit young people at home, as this is often convenient and comfortable for them. If the young person wants to meet us somewhere else, we can arrange to meet them at another location (e.g. local park, library, school or a child safety service centre). Sometimes we speak on the phone rather than meeting in person.

We frequently organise meetings through carers, and we respect your role and appreciate your time and help.

We may need to meet the young person a number of times over a lengthy period, depending on the advocacy needed and what the young person would like. We will always try to provide options.

Questions?

If you are unsure, please contact us and ask. Contact the team on

child-advocate-refer@publicguardian.qld.gov.au

or call 1300 653 187 and ask to speak to a member of our team. Alternatively, you can speak directly to the child advocate.

A decorative horizontal line in a light green color, featuring several small white circles with green outlines and a larger solid green circle. The line starts with a circular floral motif on the left and ends with a solid green circle on the right.

Contact us

t. 1300 653 187

e. publicguardian@publicguardian.qld.gov.au

w. www.publicguardian.qld.gov.au