

Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
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CCDC INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

CCDC provides some individual advocacy to persons experiencing problems that we are in the process of addressing on a systemic basis. We provide this service to our members, but allow persons needing individual advocacy to become members. We are not a service provider. This document is intended to clarify what we can and cannot do as well as expectations.

What is individual advocacy? It is the process of assisting another person to achieve a desired outcome. In our case it means we assist someone to get a benefit, service, or policy change out of a state agency, local agency, or service provider. It can involve making calls on your behalf, writing letters, filing complaints, filing appeals, doing press-releases, inviting groups of people to meetings, and more.

What do you mean by systemic advocacy? CCDC is about changing the rules and laws and systems that make our lives harder or exclude us. For example, we think that people should be able to live in their community with supports and that no one should have to live in a nursing home if they want to be home. We try to change Medicaid rules and laws to make this happen, but also help people on an individual basis until the change is complete.

Will information be kept confidential? No. We are doing this work to make changes, therefore if we advocate for you we will want to share your story when in policy meetings, with legislators, etc. We share basic information not personal details. For example we may say that we assisted someone to get a new wheelchair and here is how the state tried to deny the chair. We would not say we assisted Susan Jones who is a C-6 quadriplegic of this address.... Also, because of federal privacy laws we will ask anyone that we help to sign a release of information allowing us to speak to the state or provider to help resolve the problem. If you become or are a client of our legal program, anything between you and a CCDC attorney will remain confidential according to legal professional ethics.

What will it cost me? We do not charge people with disabilities. We gladly accept any donations and hope that you will use your knowledge to help someone else in a similar situation. We rely on volunteers and welcome volunteer hours. We do expect letters of support for our fundraising if you feel that we helped you. We must raise money to cover the costs of doing this work.

What do I have to do? We expect clients receiving individual advocacy to follow through with any suggestions we give, or requests, such as getting information, returning release forms, etc. If clients are not able to do so, we expect them to tell us directly. We expect clients to be honest with us, so that the other side does not surprise us. We expect clients to ask any questions and be sure that the result we are asking for is the result that you really want. It is ok to change your mind, but not in the middle of a hearing.

What kinds of cases do you take? We are not staffed to take emergencies of any kind because we are not always able to quickly return calls. We are currently taking Medicaid cases, particularly denials of mental health services, denials or delays in prescription drugs, problems with wheelchairs, rural transportation and any problem with any provider. Our priority is helping people in, or at immediate risk of, entering an institution. We can help with some other issues, depending on the issue, our workload, etc. We also offer training to people that want to be volunteer advocates.

What don't you do? We do not do social security eligibility (disability determination) because there are attorneys that do this work. Although they take some of the back pay, we only handle what no one else can or will do. We do not handle evictions because we do not have the staff capable of quick responses. Sometimes we can help deal with a problem landlord or homeowners association if there is plenty of notice. Legal Aide does do evictions. We do not assist with basic benefits such as food stamps; leap, HUD, or help people find money for rent or car repairs. Your local ILC should be able to help with basic benefits---for car repairs the only advice we have is to take the bus.

How can I access an advocate? Call 303-839-1775 or 1-877-256-5667 and leave a message on the general voice mail. Do not leave a message for the Executive or Legal Directors. That will only mean that it will take longer before someone calls you back. You will get a return call from either an assistant on staff or volunteer getting details. Once we get the details we can tell you if this is something that we can help with or not. If not, we do our best to find a referral. We try to return calls the same week. There are times when we are not able to do that. If you do not hear anything after 10 days, call again. We usually have someone respond, even if it is to say that we cannot even discuss the matter at this time. Do not call more frequently or leave multiple messages---this will not speed up a return call. Do not say that you will only speak to one specific staff member.

How much time do you spend with your clients? As much as it takes to get the job done. We make sure that we read over the telephone, email or fax letters to clients before we send them out. Initially we may need to spend a lot of time either in person or on the telephone. There may be lulls as we wait for hearings, and then lots of activity preparing for a hearing. The amount of time will totally depend on the complexity of the case.

Before I decide if I want CCDC to provide individual advocacy can I get a reference of a former client? Sure, just call and ask --we will have the former clients call you rather than printing personal numbers on this document.

What are the qualifications of my advocate? We are not a clinical service. Advocates need to know how to work the system using a variety of techniques. All advocates get training by CCDC and are supervised by the Executive Director or her designee. Most of our advocates are unpaid volunteers. Potential advocates must demonstrate certain amount of skill before doing advocacy unsupervised.

This document is intended to be a basic outline of advocacy services provided by the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition. This is not intended to be a contract, or promise of service to any individual on any issue. We are a private organization and take no government money and reserve the right not to provide individual advocacy to any person on any issue at any time. Our focus is systemic advocacy and individual work supplements our systemic work. We do not have an infrastructure to respond to all requests, or emergency requests. ,

Julie Reiskin, Executive Director