

# Advocacy Service Guide

Advocacy is a means of empowering people by supporting them to assert their views and claim their entitlements and where necessary representing and negotiating on their behalf.

# Advocacy Service Guide

The purpose of this guide is to give you an overview of the Citizens Information Service (CIS) Advocacy Service. It is laid out in a question and answer format. It also includes two forms which need to be signed at the beginning of the advocacy process.

## What does the CIS Advocacy Service offer?

The CIS offers a free, independent and confidential advocacy service to people who need support or representation in accessing their rights and entitlements. The CIS is governed by a set of policies and procedures.

In Advocacy, the Information Provider moves beyond providing information and advice to support you with more difficult issues. Advocacy is a partnership between you and your Information Provider. The Information Provider will work with you to achieve the best possible outcome. This could include:

- » Writing letters with you and on your behalf
- » Negotiating with third parties on your behalf
- » Supporting/representing you in meetings with third parties
- » Supporting/representing you in an appeal/tribunal

The Information Provider may, with your permission, refer your case to another service that is more suited to your needs.

## Will my information be kept confidential?

Your information will be kept safe and secure on an electronic case management system and/or in a locked filing cabinet. You can receive a copy of your information at any time.

The information you give to an Information Provider is confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone outside the CIS without your permission.

The Information Provider is supervised by their Development Manager. Each CIS is supported by a Regional Advocacy Support Worker (ASW). By signing the Advocacy Service Agreement Form you are consenting to your case being accessed and discussed by the Development Manager and ASW where appropriate. Where case studies are used for training, names and details are changed.

In exceptional circumstances the CIS may need to disclose confidential information about your case. These circumstances are:

- » Immediate risk of serious harm to you or to another person
- » Disclosure of child abuse
- » A Court order

You will be informed by the CIS if this needs to happen.

## What is Data Protection?

Data protection is about your right to privacy. Under the Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003 the CIS has responsibilities in relation to your information. The CIS will:

- » Keep information relevant to your case on file. This file will be kept up to date by your Information Provider. We only hold original documents if needed for your case, otherwise copies will be kept.
- » Ensure your information is kept in a secured cabinet and on a password protected electronic case management system.
- » Ensure you have access to your files upon request. The CIS will handle all requests for files in a timely manner.
- » Keep a record of your file for six years after case closure. After this time the CIS will destroy all documents relating to your case in a safe manner.

## What is the purpose of the Advocacy Service Agreement form?

The Advocacy Service Agreement is an agreement between you and the CIS. This should be signed at your first meeting.

It recognises your responsibility for information you give to the Information Provider and your responsibility to carry out certain tasks during your case.

The Advocacy Service Agreement form that you sign is valid for the duration of your case. If, in the future you require the CIS to act in another matter, you will need to sign a new Advocacy Service Agreement form.

## What is the purpose of the Authority to Act form?

All clients availing of a Citizens Information Advocacy Service must sign an Authority to Act form. It gives the Information Provider permission to act on your behalf. It informs third parties that the Information Provider has the authority to receive information about you as well as negotiate on your behalf. You will be given a copy of this signed form for your own records.

The Authority to Act form that you sign is valid for the duration of your case. If, in the future you require the CIS to act in another matter, you will need to sign a new Authority to Act form.

## How can I withdraw from the service during a case?

If you no longer want to receive an advocacy service from the CIS, you must inform the CIS of your decision (in writing if possible).

## Can my service be withdrawn by the CIS?

The CIS will withdraw its advocacy service to you if:

- » You do not answer questions, respond to letters or attend meetings or hearings.
- » You choose to have a Solicitor, Trade Union, or other formal representative act on your behalf.

You must inform your Information Provider immediately if this happens. Any of these situations automatically terminate the Advocacy Service Agreement and Authority to Act and the CIS can no longer represent you.

## What are the limitations of the CIS Advocacy Service?

- » We cannot provide an emergency service as we will need time to prepare your case.
- » We cannot provide legal advice or represent you in civil or criminal courts.
- » We cannot offer you an advocacy service if a Solicitor or Trade Union is acting for you on the issue.
- » The CIS will do its best to assist you but cannot guarantee success.
- » The CIS cannot act for both sides in the same dispute. Please tell us if you become aware of a conflict of interest.
- » We cannot make decisions for you.

## What if I am unhappy with the advocacy service I am receiving?

If at any time you are unhappy with the service a CIS Information Provider gives, please discuss your complaint with the Information Provider so that he/she can try to resolve it straight away. If you prefer to approach someone else, ask to speak to the Development Manager. Complaints forms are also available on request.

# Authority to Act form



Citizens  
Information

ECMS Case No: \_\_\_\_\_

I the undersigned give authority to \_\_\_\_\_

Citizens Information Service to act on my behalf, to request and receive all documents, records and decisions relating to my case and to keep a record of my claim/case.

Case/Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Client(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, the information I have provided is full and accurate.

I understand that this Authority permits the Citizens Information Service named above to represent me in this case/claim only.

Client(s) Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (If necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Advocacy Service Agreement form

- » I confirm that my Information Provider has explained the advocacy service to me and I have received the Advocacy Service Guide.
- » I understand that this service is governed by policies and procedures and that I can ask for a copy of these at any time.
- » I will give accurate and up-to-date information to my Information Provider. I will inform the named CIS of any changes in information or circumstance.
- » I will answer questions and respond to letters from my Information Provider and I will attend meetings and hearings as required. I will forward any relevant correspondence which I receive to the CIS.
- » I understand that if I do not answer questions, respond to letters or attend meetings or hearings this may lead to the withdrawal of my service in line with CIS policy.
- » I understand that my information will be kept securely on an electronic case management system and/or locked filing cabinet. It will be destroyed six years after my case is closed in accordance with the Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003.
- » The CIS has access to a Regional Advocacy Support Worker (ASW) and my case may be discussed with the CIS Development Manager and the ASW. The CIS reports to the Citizens Information Board on its work but will not provide any information which will identify me.

Client(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

CIS Information Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT

INFORMATION PROVIDER

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DATE

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DAY

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TIME

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## OUR CONTACT DETAILS

## THINGS TO DO

YOU

US

## You can get Citizens Information if you:



**LOG ON**

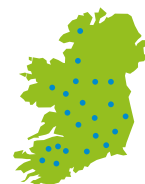
[www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)



**CALL**

**0761 07 4000**

Mon to Fri, 9am-8pm



**DROP IN**

260 locations nationwide