Advocacy: Supporting You and Your Family

At Bridges for Learning, we believe every child and family has the right to be heard, treated with respect, and involved in decisions about the supports they receive.

What is an advocate?

An advocate is someone who supports you to speak up, understand your rights, make decisions, or have your voice heard. An advocate works for you and supports what you want.

An advocate can be a:

- Family member or trusted friend
- Carer or support person
- Professional advocate from an independent advocacy organisation

You can choose to have an advocate involved at any time. You do not need permission from Bridges for Learning to use an advocate.

When might an advocate help?

An advocate may be helpful if you:

- Need help understanding information or making decisions.
- Want support during meetings or planning discussions.
- Feel your views are not being listened to.
- Need help resolving a concern or making a complaint.
- Want support to understand your rights.
- Need assistance communicating your wishes.

Having an advocate will not affect the supports or services you receive from Bridges for Learning.

Your rights

You have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect.
- Be included in decisions about your child and family.
- Ask questions and receive information in a way you understand.
- Raise concerns or make a complaint without fear of being treated differently.
- Choose to have an advocate or support person with you at any time.

If you are worried about safety

Everyone has the right to feel safe.

If you, your child, or someone you know has experienced or witnessed violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination, please tell us. We will listen respectfully, take your concerns seriously, and respond promptly.

Bridges for Learning will:

- Listen to your concerns and treat them confidentially where possible.
- Take immediate action if someone is at risk of harm.
- Follow our safeguarding and incident management procedures.
- Support you to access an independent advocate if you would like one.
- Explain what will happen next and keep you informed throughout the process.
- Meet our legal obligations to report concerns where required.

You can also make a complaint directly to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission at any time. You do not have to speak with Bridges for Learning before contacting the Commission.

Independent advocacy services

Independent advocacy organisations provide free and confidential support to help people understand their rights, resolve concerns and make informed decisions.

Some organisations that may be able to assist include:

- Family Advocacy
- Disability Advocacy NSW
- Belongside Families

Our team can provide contact details or help you connect with an advocacy service if you would like support.

We are here to support you

If you have questions, concerns or need support, please speak with a member of the Bridges for Learning team. We are committed to working with you respectfully, listening to your feedback, and ensuring your family's rights, choices and wellbeing are always protected.