

PROTOCOLS FOR PARENT ADVOCATES

The following Instruction of the Chief Executive Officer is issued under section 233 of the School Education Act 1999.

The Instruction relates to protocols that must be observed by principals and district directors when a parent advocate is called upon to support a parent or carer in relation to school issues. The Instruction comes into effect immediately.

In keeping with the Information Privacy and Security policy the school and parent advocate relationship must observe the following:

1. All persons on the premises of a school, other than current students and members of the staff of that school, are considered to be visitors to that school and therefore the Visitors on School Premises policy applies.
2. All agreements and plans recorded as an outcome of the school, parent/carers and advocate relationship must be in accordance with the Records Management policy.
3. Parents/carers will provide written approval for the advocate to act on their behalf and for relevant information and documentation relating to their issue to be shared. This approval must include commencement and conclusion dates.
4. Parents/carers will be present at all meetings to which the advocate is invited.
5. Advocates will only be able to access and to discuss information relating to specific issues about a child for which written consent has been provided by the parent, guardian or carer of that child. Statutory compulsion to provide information such as a court order, subpoena or other legal obligation would override this action.

The Freedom of Information Act 1992 (the FOI Act) allows a person to have access to personal information about him or herself, subject to some limitations. A person can also have access to personal information of any child under the age of 16 to which he or she is the parent, legal guardian or carer. The FOI Act will protect the personal privacy of other individuals, including information pertaining to a child such as comments made by staff and adjustments made at the school, from third parties that are not authorised by the legal parent, guardian or carer of that child.

6. Advocates will be informed of, and to utilize, the Department of Education and Training Complaints Management processes.
7. Parents/carers will be informed of alternative processes, including their right to progress their concern/issue to other public offices, should they feel that a successful resolution has not been reached.

The underlying principle for all complaints management is that wherever possible, resolution is sought at the local level. However, within the School Education Act 1999, provision is made for the establishment of advisory panels to perform an advisory function in the resolution of conflict to a particular child or student, or class of children or students. Disability Advisory Panels (DAP) provide a mechanism for resolving issues in relation to students with disabilities once every reasonable adjustment and accommodation has been made by the school community.

In all cases, all efforts need to have been taken at the local school level to resolve the situation prior to seeking the services of an advisory panel.

This Instruction will be published in the Regulatory Framework System.

All policy and procedural statements contained within this document are lawful orders for the purpose of section 80 (a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA) and are therefore to be observed by all Department of Education and Training employees.