

Advocacy in human services – a case study

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A range of services designed to promote independence and to enhance quality of life are provided by Under the Rainbow, all of which encompass care and purport of local community members, in particular those who require relief from poverty and/or the dependents of any such persons.

Advocacy is the primary role of case managers' who volunteer at Under The Rainbow and in this human service setting and any other it is essential for services to be provided accurately. This essay will define advocacy in a human services context as well as discuss the type of advocacy that is beneficial to clients in this chosen human service setting.

In conclusion, this essay will also describe issues that Under The Rainbow have encountered whilst implementing advocacy and change and the way the current political climate can effect their ability to engage in advocacy and deliver quality human services. Nihilist the definition of advocacy in general is broad, in human service and social Nor practice advocacy is essentially the process of protecting human rights or to change discriminatory or abusive treatment to the vulnerable, whether working with an individual or a group (Corey, Corey & Callahan, 1998).

Human service workers all act as advocates in the course of their work (Sorensen and jack, 2001) and the Australian Association of Social Workers ' Code of Ethics' (2002) supports this view citing, ' The social worker will advocate for changes in policy, service delivery and social conditions which enhance the opportunities for those most vulnerable in the community' however Format and Atkinson (2005) argue that advocacy is ' not social work, but its principles and values resonate closely'.

Regardless of one's definition, the 'key concept' in the notion of any type of advocacy, is that it requires at least three parties: the client, the advocate and 'the other side' (School of Health and Human Services, 2007). Literature suggests that the differing types of advocacy seem as broad as its definition and a number of different types of advocacy exist, however within Under the Rainbow's human service framework they are predominately concerned with individual or 'case' advocacy.

According to Whooper & Larsen (1993), case advocacy is a way to 'obtain resources or services for clients that would not otherwise be provided' and this theory underlies Under the Rainbows belief that to advocate for a client is 'to bring about some form of personal and/or social change' (School of Health ND Human Services, Under the Rainbow is a voluntary community based organization which now boasts a membership of sixty-five individuals, many of whom work with clients as advocates for change.

The goal for each volunteer who manages cases for Under the Rainbow is to promote fair, equal, and humane treatment through fundraising, charity provision (food and clothing), welfare work and social action against injustice for the disadvantaged. Under the Rainbow's social work practice is mainly concerned with implementing changes in the local community to assist in poverty relief to redecoration 'voluntary' clients (Barker, 1991), though some are referred.

While the majority of Under the Rainbows' charity work is concerned with 'lending a hand' materially and financially, they also work one-on-one with clients to determine "why they 'needed a hand' in the first place and

therefore consider both aspects of their human service delivery forms of 'advocating'. However there is some argument as to whether charity and advocating is in fact the same thing.

The assertion by L ' Hornblende (2002) that charity work ' simply means offering one-on-one help without effort to give people the opportunity to participate in working with others to change their situation' is challenged at Under the Rainbow who believe 'empowerment' of a client is both valuable and essential. Individuals who seek help from Under the Rainbow often see themselves as powerless' and unable to make changes in their lives and sadly, those who are discriminated against, are often the most vulnerable.

Under the Rainbow clients can be distinguished by many inequalities involving social issues in areas such as power, authority, and wealth, working and living conditions, health, lifestyle, gender, education, religion, and culture.

Because the nature of Under the Rainbow is predominately a charity, they realism some of the clients who ask for welfare assistance will not want to be involved in any further actions for changing their situation and staff may only be required to ' advocate' once.

However, they know from experience there are just as many of their clients who will want to get involved and connect with others in order to work together for social and personal 'empowerment'. Or clarify empowerment further, Sultan (2005) states that the empowerment recess involves ' engaging the client, family, group, or community in developing strengths to personally and politically cope' and a number of 'empowerment' Northrop <https://assignbuster.com/advocacy-in-human-services-a-case-study/>

and programmed covering issues such as budgeting, self-esteem and parenting are implemented at Under the Rainbow to facilitate this.

Clients also often need help when dealing with other agencies and a Justice of the Peace service and help with letter writing, telephone and electronic correspondence is also offered. Often clients feel they have been treated unfairly by other advocacy and law agency's and challenging another organization's reasoning, on a clients leaf or as an individual can be referred to as ' persuasion advocacy' (Reardon, 2001).

Many times writing a letter or involving law enforcement agencies to negotiate point NAS been stressful tort Under the empowerment'. Rainbow and their clients to turner instill Therefore, Under the Rainbow staff believe offering an individual help, whether through the distribution of groceries or an activity similar to the ones discussed above, is seen as empowerment for social change. Under the Rainbow ' advocate' for and 'empower' their clients, bringing people together where they are then able to aka action to change their situation.

Schneider & Lester (2001) include empowerment in their definition as part of the practice of advocacy and conclude that ' this value is based on the belief that individuals have strengths to acquire knowledge, become assertive, and develop skills, and through social work advocacy, these strengths can be set in motion'. Vanessa, who has worked with Under the Rainbow for nine months states, ' when I Interview clients, I encourage and pay attention to the capable person I see in front of me.

My focus as an advocate is never on their previous history, as there is nothing I can do personally to change it. The importance for me is what the client wants from life and how it can be achieved' (Peers comma. 2/4/08).

Whilst working as an advocate Vanessa does not expect nor require a client to self-disclose, however they usually do, In which Vanessa defines as a relationship based on trust and mutual respect.

Respecting the privacy rights and confidentiality of Under the Rainbow's clients is extremely important and they believe that excellent ethical conduct must be practiced in order to be a credible community advocate.

Cultural, language, disability and other accommodations are also provided for. If personal conflicts of interest should occur the advocate will step aside and ask for help from another party.

As Under the Rainbow is self-regulating, ethical decision-making and the process of critical reflection, evaluation and Judgment ' through which a practitioner resolves ethical issues, problems and dilemmas' (Terrine, 1986) is extremely important in both personal and professional context. As well as individual and personal advocating, dissolving barriers and building a sense of community on a local level, Under The Rainbow promote ' global unconsciousness' and pride themselves on their broad worldview and high awareness of the inter-relatedness and sacredness of all living things.

All Under the Rainbow Inc. Members are active, both personally and professionally, in many social arenas confronting a broad range of social and political issues.

Advocacy of this type, which refers to a connection with social movements', is known as 'activist' or 'cause' advocacy (Healy, 2000) and often involves 'active criticism of or engagement with government policies and practices' (School of Health and Human Services, 2007).

Many members of Under the Rainbow have strong lobbying and media skills and some of their more prominent contributions and support include subscriptions and memberships to other advocacy groups and organizations such as New Internationalist Magazine, Bush Heritage Australia, Amnesty International and Greenback as well as Indigenous organizations, animal and environmental protection groups and interests in many other diverse global activist platforms.

Under the Rainbow has also purchased and helped plant thousands of trees in South East Queensland through the Queensland Folk Federation at the Woodward Folk Festival site. Under the Rainbow is self-sufficient and as yet to receive any government funding. Relying on donations from its members and the general public to support their services is successful, but often unpredictable and can cause frustration when resources are limited.

However, being an incorporated association means that Under the Rainbow is only accountable to themselves, their donors, members, clients and community.

Not being affiliated with any government, church or social agency means they are not subject to any other types of accountability usually required under public auspice and this is preferable. Under the Rainbows projects, which are both broad and long-range, draw only on individual and group

advocacy skills from its membership pool, preferring to remain exclusive and not out-source help from other agencies. In recent years, new set of ideas, such as advocacy, consumerism, empowerment, participation, and anti-discriminatory practices have all influenced social work practice and this has had an impact on social work values.

This new set of ideas is referred to as ' radical values' (Adams et al, 2002) and are concerned with challenging oppression and discrimination, it is within this value system that Under the Rainbow continues to operate. Advocacy is essentially the process of standing up for the rights of others who are being unfairly treated (Sorenson and Black, 2001) and has the potential to bring significant and sustainable change for the better.

It can empower individuals and communities and generate many resources whilst bringing diverse organizations together to work on common issues.