

Age-Friendly Business[®]

Core Concepts, Definitions and Practice Questions

Advocacy

Defining Generic Key Terms and Concepts (gain understanding of and answer these as the course progresses)

- **Advocacy – Definition by Derivation:** Advocacy is derived from the Latin words “ad” meaning to, or towards and “vocare” meaning to call to, summon, address. “Vocare” is also the root of “vocation” or a calling. Therefore “ad-vocare” conveys the concepts of calling, speaking out on behalf of; calling, bringing things towards or to, and calling “out” about, calling attention to. Advocacy is a process whose “*precise*” definition changes, depending on the exact circumstances, environment, situation in which it takes place.
- **Concept of ‘Representation’:** Advocacy is derived from the French word for “lawyer”, which is “avocat”. A lawyers’ primary function is to “represent” his or client. Just as a lawyer “represents” his or her client, an advocate “represents” an individual or a group.
- **Types/Levels of Advocacy:** Advocacy takes place on two levels:
 1. *The Systems Level:* local, regional, provincial, federal
 2. *The Individual, ‘Personal’ or family level:*
- **Why Advocacy is Needed:** Advocacy is needed because:
 - ‘Systems’, especially health and social services have become inordinately complex.
 - ‘Communication and ‘interpretation’ deteriorate as system resources dwindle
 - Staff reduction increases risk of error
 - Being under resourced leads to ‘rationing’ of services
- **Steps in the Process:** The process of Advocacy is one of:
 - Communication – clear, concise, accurate, persuasive
 - Follow-up – timely, able to get responses, be persistent
 - Action – consider options, assess costs of options, formulate plan of action, enlist appropriate help
- **Advocate’s Characteristics/Attributes:** Advocates need to be able to communicate; listen; to observe and record; to interpret; to organize. They also need to have above average qualities of empathy; of compassion; of persistence; and of courage.
- **Benefits to a PROFESSIONAL:** A PROFESSIONAL who becomes an ‘advocate’ for senior clients modifies, broadens and deepens the client relationship. Seniors place a great deal of importance in ‘trust’ in personal and business relationships. Being an advocate brings the advocate great personal satisfaction, helps build relationships and can enhance his or her personal and business reputation.

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Additional Thought-provoking Questions.

1. Have Canadian and U.S. Health Care providers ever acknowledged, in a formal and pro-active way, the value of patient advocacy? – If so, how?

A few years ago various progressive hospitals appointed “Patient Advocates”, paid staff members with the sole responsibility of looking after the best interests of patients.

2. Where they have existed, have the outcomes of patient-Advocacy services been evaluated? If so, what did the results show?

A number of evaluation studies of these positions found them to be very effective in increasing patient/family satisfaction with patient-care and in reducing the number of litigation actions brought against the hospitals and their staff.

3. What happened to patient-Advocate services? – Why?

As hospitals faced severe budget cuts, these “Patient-Advocate” positions were among the first to go!

1. Is it better for an advocate for a senior to be a family-member or a non- relative? – Discuss the pro’s and con’s of both options.

It depends on the circumstances, the knowledge required, and who has the skills, attributes and interest to be a good, effective advocate.

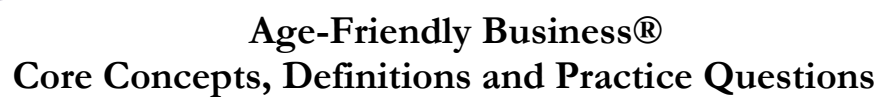
2. As a PROFESSIONAL being an ‘advocate’ for a senior whose wishes would you consider as paramount, the client’s or the families? – State why.

The duty of care is always to the client and all discussions are subject to confidentiality. As long as the client is mentally competent, the decision is his or hers to make. Family may have a hidden agenda or be looking to exert control over the senior.

6. Give an example (no ‘real names’, please) of a situation in your own family, or within your client-base, where you might see yourself, as a PROFESSIONAL, being an effective advocate.

7. In what ways do you think that being an effective advocate for a senior could result in positive outcome(s) for you, as a PROFESSIONAL?

8. “Seniors don’t care how much you KNOW, until they know how much you CARE!” - Comment on how this well-known premise is impacted by your role as an advocate.

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