

APF

Adelaide People First

Vision Statement

This statement is designed to provide a strong foundation for the activities concerned with the purpose and direction of Adelaide People First. All our planning and related decisions should be consistent with our values and vision statements.

Adelaide People First is an independent, grass-roots, values-driven, principled People First group with vision and purpose. Our People First group is for, owned, led and driven by people with lived experience of or labelled with intellectual disabilities.

We are PEOPLE FIRST. We refuse to be shackled by the chains of negative labels and stereotypes. The labels and stereotypes belong to society. Society is responsible for whether or not the labels and stereotypes are applied and, of course, their associated consequences. We do not own them; neither individually nor collectively, as people with lived experience of or labelled with intellectual disabilities. We will not allow ourselves to be limited by low expectations.

Adelaide People First has passion, vision, leadership and a deep understanding of the issues which affect people with intellectual disabilities or those of us who are mistakenly labelled in this way.

Adelaide People First is here for people with intellectual disabilities who are most at risk of abuse, neglect, discrimination and exploitation in the Adelaide metropolitan area. We know from our own lived experience people have been segregated, congregated, isolated and marginalised.

Adelaide People First also knows that people with disabilities are still not afforded, to this day, adequate, appropriate support to live typical, ordinary, valued lives in the community. We strongly believe a typical, ordinary, valued life best meets the needs of everyone and reduces the risk to abuse, neglect, discrimination, exploitation and oppression.

We need to understand what institutional practice, is, if we are to break down the walls of oppression. Adelaide People First strongly agrees with and supports the definition of an 'institution' used by the Canadian De-institutionalisation Task Force.

Their definition of an institution is:

“An institution is any place in which people who have been labeled as having an intellectual disability, are isolated, segregated and/or congregated. An institution is any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise, control over their lives and their day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size. An institution is not just a place, it’s the way people think.” www.institutionwatch.ca

This definition speaks strongly to the thinking and practices of institutionalisation. Through our advocacy action, we will strive to break down the walls of such thinking and practices. We do not accept any form of an institution, not even in disguise.

Adelaide People First will conduct our advocacy within a Social Advocacy framework.. This means we will have a strong foundation which includes clearly stated values, vision, definition and principles of advocacy. Our Plain English definition of Social Advocacy is taken from Wolf Wolfensberger. Our plain English definition is as follows:

Social Advocacy is:

Active.....speaking, acting, writing with minimum conflict of interest for what is truly and honestly believed to be best for a person or group in order to promote, protect and defend the welfare of, and seek justice for either the individual or group being advocated for, in a way which strives to be strong and powerful and which might be, or actually is costly to the advocate, this means the advocate shares in the lived experience of the least powerful person or group” (Silvana Gant)

Adelaide People First’s principles of advocacy are:

- 1. Advocacy is always loyal to and stands up for the least powerful person/group**
- 2. Advocacy addresses real human needs of the person or group**
- 3. Advocacy is motivated by what is truly and honestly believed to be best for the person or group and “bends over backwards”**
- 4. Advocacy strives for minimum conflict of interest**
- 5. Advocacy is as powerful as possible**
- 6. Advocacy can be costly to the advocate, this means advocacy shares in the lived experience of the least powerful person or group**
- 7. Advocacy has honesty, dignity and staying power**

Adelaide People First will advocate strongly, passionately and wisely on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities who are the least powerful. We will advocate for social, political and economic change in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities who are the least powerful. Our advocacy will be driven by a systems and community focus.

We will conduct our advocacy action in a way that is mindful not to add to the discrimination, abuse, neglect, exploitation and oppression experienced by people whose lives have become marginalised through institutionalised thinking and practices. Adelaide People First will reflect on the deeper issues which affect people with intellectual disabilities, to ensure that we consider the big picture and how the individual parts of the picture affect each other. We will go beyond human rights and take what is honestly and truly believed to be best, as well as what Australian society needs to look like, into account before taking action.

Advocacy is a social justice movement, **not** a service. For this reason Adelaide People First understands the critical need for advocacy to be and remain independent from service provision. Our definition of independent advocacy is:

“To establish independence, an organisation or group needs to have advocacy as its core activity and not to be a provider of any services, especially the following: employment, accommodation support, personal care support, independent living support, respite, vocational training, brokerage, mediation, case management.

Advocacy for people with disabilities must be conducted by organisations or groups which are able to demonstrate independence from all actual, potential or perceived conflicting interests. Independence cannot be indicated by the separation of services from advocacy within an organisation or group.”

The International People First movement is socially and politically active on the human rights issues which affect us and on the issues of de-institutionalisation and valued lives for people with lived experience of or labelled with intellectual disability, who are the least powerful. Adelaide People First will promote this aspect of advocacy action through all our activities..

Adelaide People First, WE are stronger when we work together. Adelaide People First will strive to be a People First group networking well- in solidarity with our allies in the People First, disability and social justice movements with whom we share values, vision and understanding of advocacy.

Through all our decisions and activities, Adelaide People First will promote, advocate and defend an Australian society which celebrates diversity, acceptance, compassion, justice, fairness, equality and respect for the human dignity of all, in this, our Australian Society.