

## WORKING AT ADVOCACY: A FACT SHEET

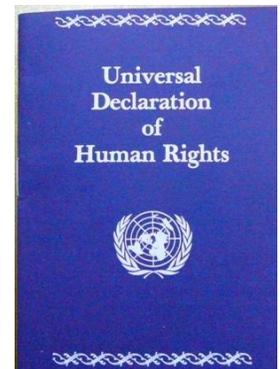
**ADVOCACY DEFINED** can mean:<sup>1</sup>

1. Supporting a right and good cause,
2. Supporting others to speak for them-Selves, and or
3. Speaking for those who cannot speak for them-Selves.

Therefore, advocacy can be for an individual, a community, national and global.

**ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES ARE BASED ON:**<sup>2</sup>

1. **Human rights equality** as fundamentally expressed in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training Skills, plus other human rights instruments, and
2. **Achieving social justice** by eliminating disparities endured or inflicted on one social group in relation to another.



**A situational experience.** The following is an example of individual to global advocacy which began unexpectedly for us. Working with relational violence victimization in private practice, a woman seeking our help began disclosing atrocities we realized were torture ordeals perpetrated by family and like-minded others (non-State actors). Unable to find non-State torture-informed literature or practitioners we made an ethical decision to help her. We successfully advocated for her to receive a disability pension based on traumatic stress related to a form of non-State torture victimization. Social injustices appeared next. Learning that Canada does not name and distinctly criminalize torture by non-State actors—private individuals or groups—prompted us to address this national legal discrimination. We then realized global human rights discrimination exists in that protection from torture has been generally considered a human right of men in warring. Our advocacy became global. Over 4000 mainly women from various countries have now spoken to us about enduring acts we now call “classic’ non-State torture.

**Tips on the work of advocating from a human rights perspective.** The following points are shared based on our professional praxis:

1. Develop in-depth knowledge about the issue being advocated for; stay true to your

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Nurses Association. (2008). *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

own expertise and do not get pulled into discussing issues you have no knowledge of. Do not be afraid to say "I don't know". Expect sharp learning curves as new knowledge develops. Do not get off track; keep focussed on the advocacy issue.

2. If supporting others to speak assist them to develop clear objectives or expectations; remember success is always achieved when speaking one's perspective as there is no control on how the listener(s) will respond.
3. When speaking for those who feel too at risk to speak for them-selves, obtain their consent about what they want spoken. Ask for consent each time when speaking for others. In time sufficient trust and safety may be established so repetitive consents may not be needed. Prevent liability by not taking responsibility to disclose names or locations for specific situations—use non-identifying generalizations.
4. Be truthful and if innocent mistakes happen apologize.
5. Know how the advocacy issue relates to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments. Connect your advocacy to the issues of equality remembering that culture, tradition, religion, or commercialization are not excuses for promoting human right inequalities and ignoring social justice.
6. Find support; connect with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other advocates whose goals relate to and are supportive of the advocacy issue.
7. Create a paper trail of the advocacy work: write reports, submit articles for publication consideration, share what has been learned, take photos and videos to record activities, use social media, engage in interviews, write press releases and op-eds, and consider boycotts. When writing ask for permission to share the quoted experiences of persons being advocated for, this validates their experiences, helps build their dignity, confidence, and support so they, in time, may decide to speak.
8. Build a library of helpful resources; these are essential for referencing.
9. When working with others prevent energies being unnecessarily duplicated by dividing the workload so that each person takes on specific responsibilities.
10. Practice not being intimidated by positional power; remember we are all equal; become aware not to defer to positional power, including male positional power.
11. Facilitating transformation can be very lengthy, identify and celebrate by acknowledging every success regardless of how minute it may seem.
12. Advocacy may expose harmful activities; offenders may use discreditation tactics to silence exposure so act quickly to undo or prevent on-going harms to your reputation. Assess safety risks. If safe to do so ask for face-to-face meetings, take meeting minutes then share this requesting notification of any adjustments. This ensures transparency which holds all engaged in silencing new realities more accountable for their discreditation tactics. Degree of safety risks varies in different countries.
13. Patience, patience, patience helps with frustration. Try finding humour in one's Self.
14. Helpful Self-care tips: Debrief frequently, deal with emotional responses such as fear that arises when addressing new issues; try to keep rested, eat well, exercise, attend to personal enjoyments, and take breaks as necessary to prevent burn-out.