

St Paul's Advocacy Office

The Advocacy Office offers services of information and support to persons experiencing difficulties in facing problems of day-to-day living. These problems include accommodation needs, landlord-tenant disputes, immigration issues, health and disability problems, and access to social benefits and other government services.

The Advocacy Office does not offer money, food, clothing or shelter.

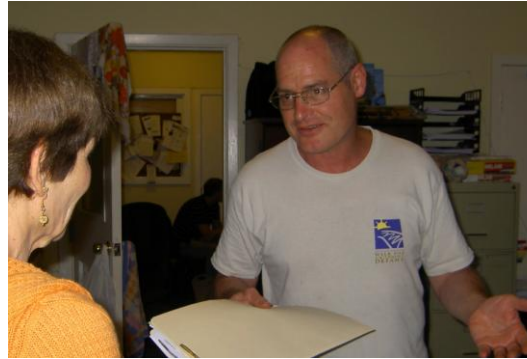
The Advocacy Office assists persons living on the street through its Outreach Worker.



No one is turned away

Clients include men and women, young and old, of all faiths and none, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or ethnicity. Most are residents of the West End or downtown, but many come from the lower mainland. They come having heard of the service mostly by word of mouth, but sometimes by referral from another agency. They all share a need for friendly help and support.

The receptionist makes the initial contact with the client, offering refreshment and making a preliminary assessment of the problem. A trained advocate then works with the client in a one-on-one situation to address his or her needs.



A receptionist receives a client

The advocate provides the client with information relevant to the issues involved, speaks on behalf of, and mediates for, the client, and represents the client at tribunals and other hearings, as needed to solve the problem. If appropriate the advocate redirects the client to a more specialized agency. Advocates have a broad knowledge base, offering a wide range of services.

Internet access is provided for clients to find information from government agencies and to download all kinds of application forms.

The Advocacy Office does not focus on specific issues or groups, but advocates for individual clients, not causes. No client is turned away and no problem left unheard.

Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

James 1:22



An advocate interviews a client

Six and a half years ago I was sick, just out of hospital. I felt close to death. I was living on welfare when the social worker called to say that changes were coming and I might lose even that. He advised me to go to the Advocacy Office.

The advocates helped me make repeat applications. Among other things one went with me to a tribunal and spoke to my doctor and wrote to my MP.

I had no idea the Advocacy Office was here and would not have known what advocacy was anyway. The first time, I just walked in and was met with patience and understanding. Initially I was reticent and embarrassed but I gradually gained confidence. I came back several times.

That was a very dark period in my life. I was in a depressing situation, living in a rooming house that was destroying me. I had no other help and did not have energy to do much. But things gradually improved.

I have had a very good experience of the Advocacy Office. I hope the work continues. We don't know the system and without knowledge you can't get on, but the advocates know.

The Advocacy Office is open
Monday and Wednesday: 9:30 am – 4 pm
Thursday: 10 am – 2:30 pm



The director discusses a case with an advocate

The Advocacy Office is a parish ministry funded by parishioners as part of their financial support to St Paul's Anglican Church. Additional funds come from individual donors (some of whom are ex-clients) and from grant-awarding agencies. No fee is charged for services.

Donors who make identified donations, for either general parish or Advocacy Office expenses, receive tax-deductible receipts

The staff of the Advocacy Office includes both parishioners and non-parishioners. If you are interested in participating in this ministry contact Ellen Silvergieter, Advocacy Office Director, at 604-683-4287.

The Advocacy Office program was initiated in 1995, during the incumbency of the Venerable Neil Gray, by John Brewin and other parishioners, and the Reverend Alan Alvare of First United Church.

November 2009