

“A responsibility of families, a responsibility of everyone”

Family Advocacy for Disability Inclusion in Latin America, North
America and Europe

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Before you read

— PART 0: A FEW THINGS
TO KEEP IN MIND



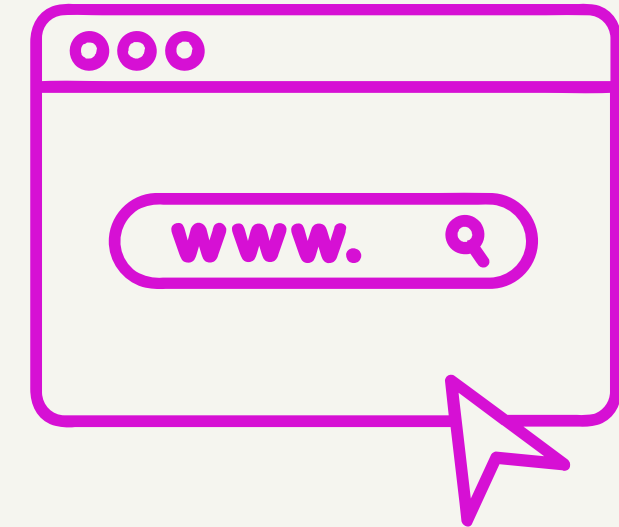
ABOUT THIS REPORT



This document is quite long.
You don't need to read it all at once.



This document has some difficult words.
You can find the definitions at the end, and on our website.



This document is one part of a research project.
That means there are more documents like this one that can give you more information.
You can read them on our website here.

TWO WORDS TO KEEP IN MIND



ADVOCACY

Advocacy is acting to support a specific person or cause. A person can advocate for something that affects them (self-advocacy) or that affects others (advocating for others).

There are many types of advocacy, like awareness campaigns, talking to politicians or starting legal cases.

In this research, we are focusing on advocacy at the school level; not at the government level

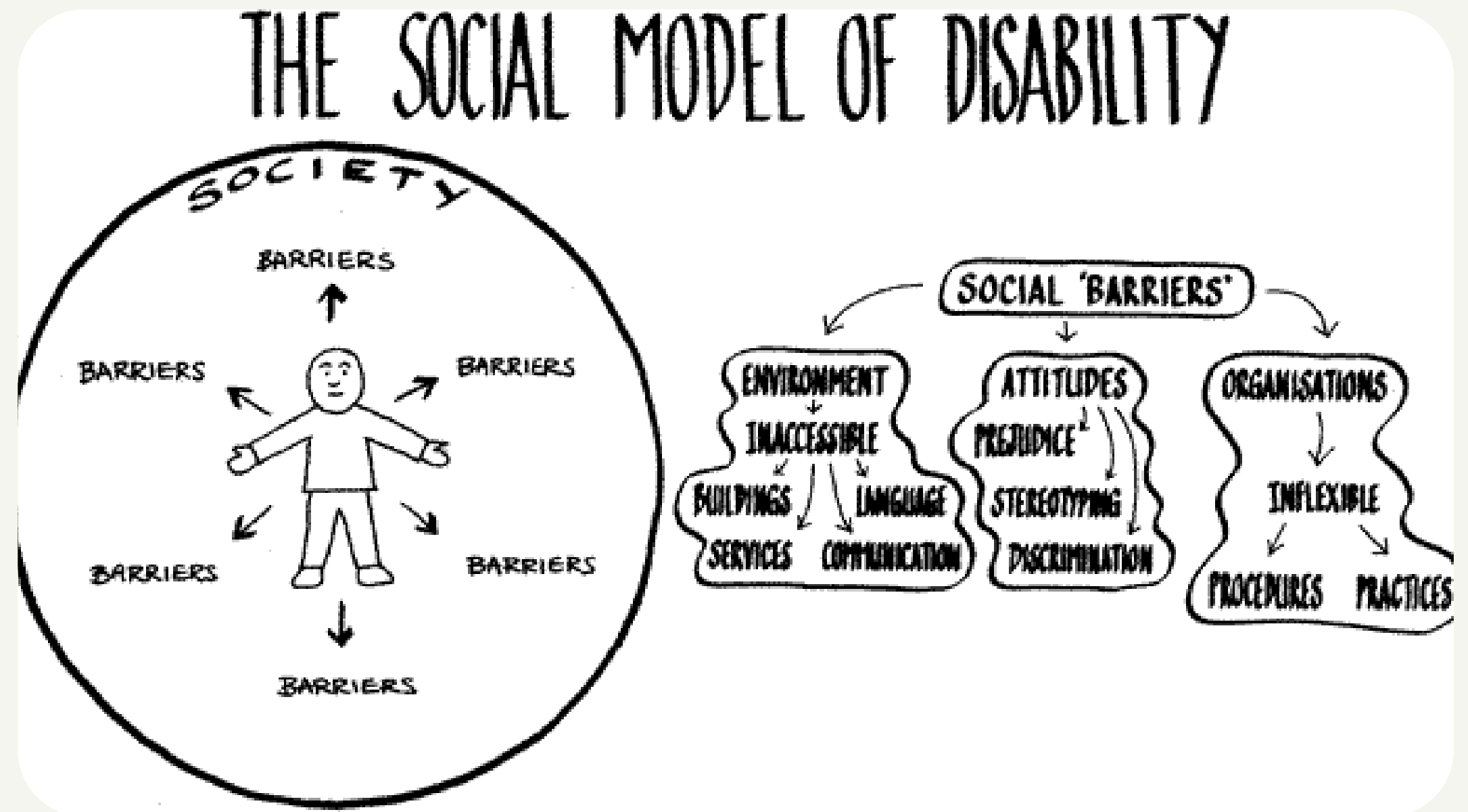


INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A type of education that includes people with and without disabilities in the same schools.

People with disabilities can have access to learning support assistants - which are called different names in different countries - but they are in the same classrooms as other students.

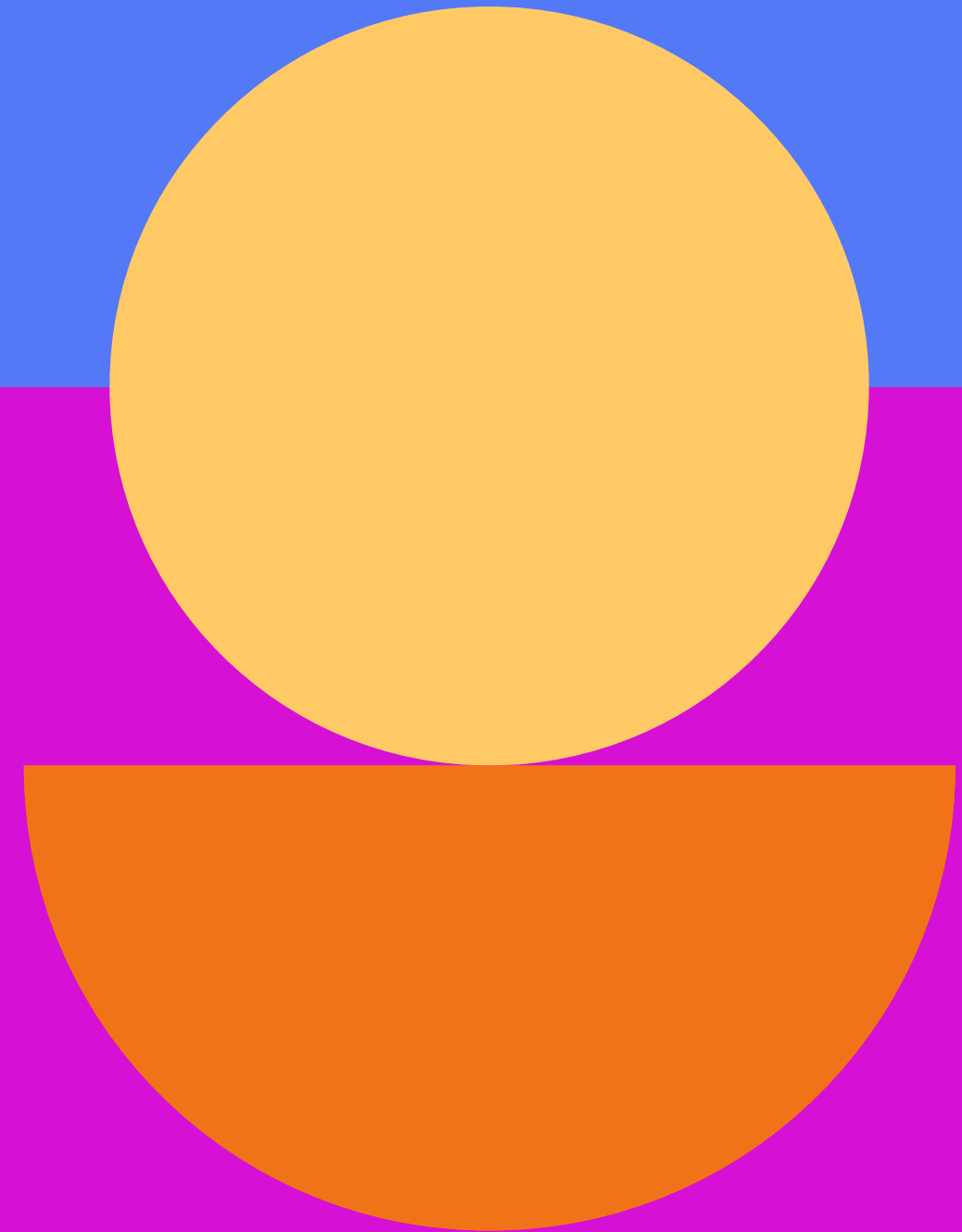
This research follows the social model of disability



SEPTEMBER 2021

ADVOCACY

— PART 2



WHY DO WE NEED ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES ARE

49%

MORE LIKELY TO
NEVER GO TO
SCHOOL



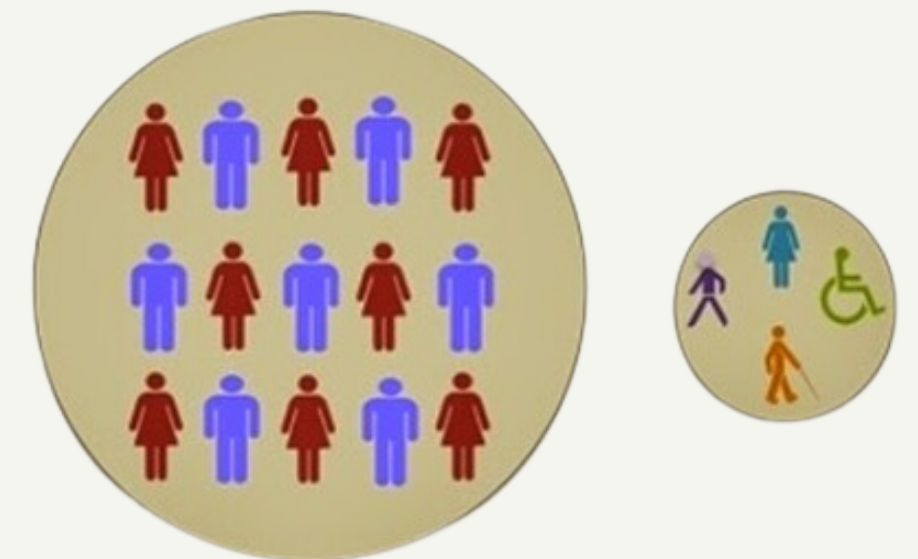
**ONLY
17%**

OF COUNTRIES HAVE
LAWS THAT ORDER
INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION



**WHILE
25%**

OF COUNTRIES HAVE
LAWS THAT ALLOW
SEPARATED
EDUCATION



But... What is advocacy?

There is no one definition of advocacy.



We asked 31 Special Olympics family members if they knew the word and what it meant. 17 family members said they did know the word.



So we asked them what “advocacy” means to them. Here’s what they said:



We asked family members: "What does advocacy mean to you?"



Here are some examples of their answers!

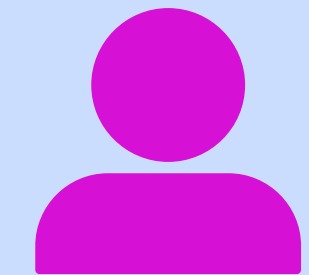
Influencing other people

"Influence over a person or thing"



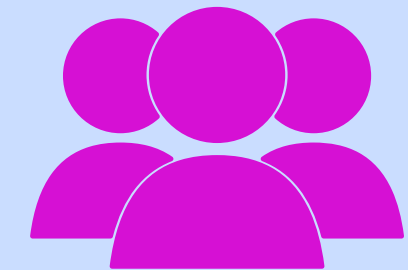
Protecting a person's interests

"Having a voice for my son and making sure he is heard and receives what he needs and deserves"



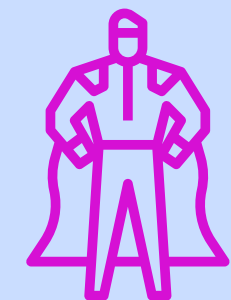
Protecting a group's interests

"Supporting and helping people (especially people with disabilities) to get what is rightfully theirs"



Being an example

"What she managed to transform for other people"



So, what is advocacy?

We used this definition from the Butler County Department of Developmental Disabilities because it summarizes everything and is easy to read:

- *Advocacy is acting to support a person, cause or policy.*
- *People can advocate for themselves, others or both.*
- *Advocacy may mean different things to different people and may change depending on the situation.*

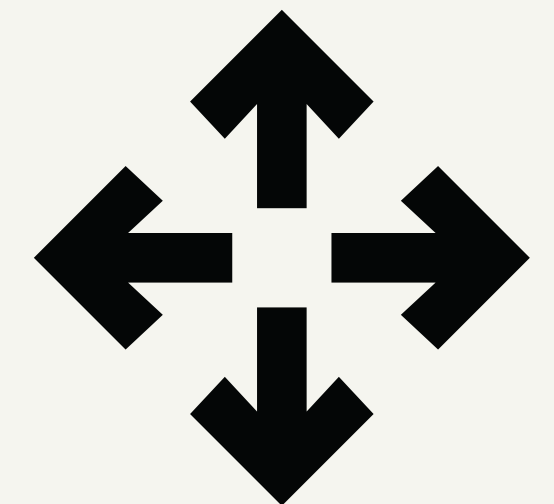


Advocacy happens as an answer to something that is unfair.



For example, when a country has a law that orders inclusive education, but in reality, children are being excluded from education.

We found that advocacy can happen in four main ways.

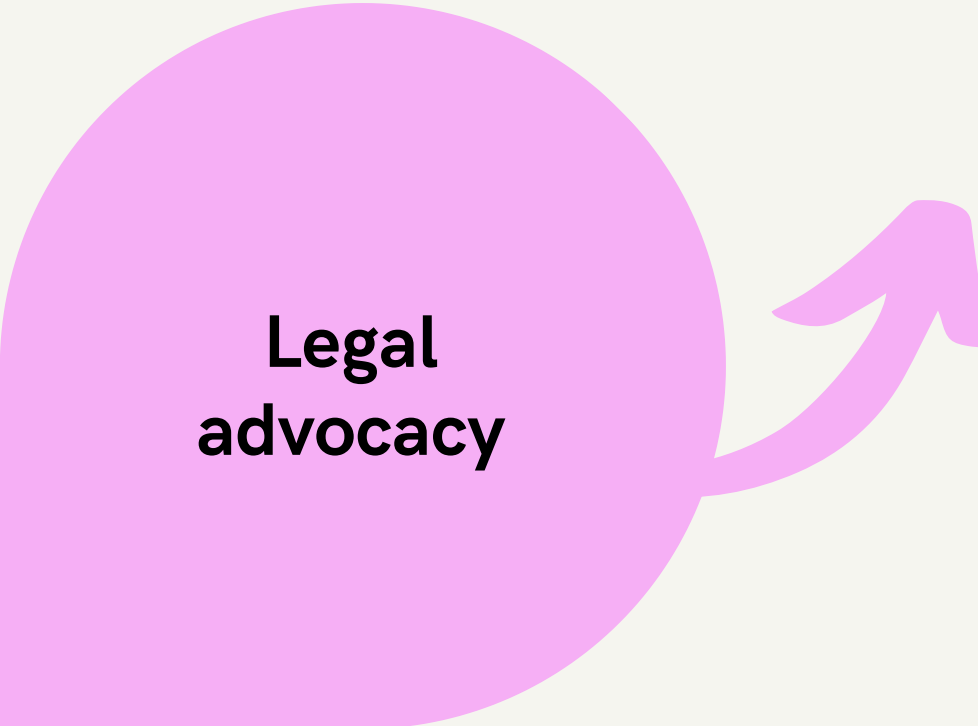
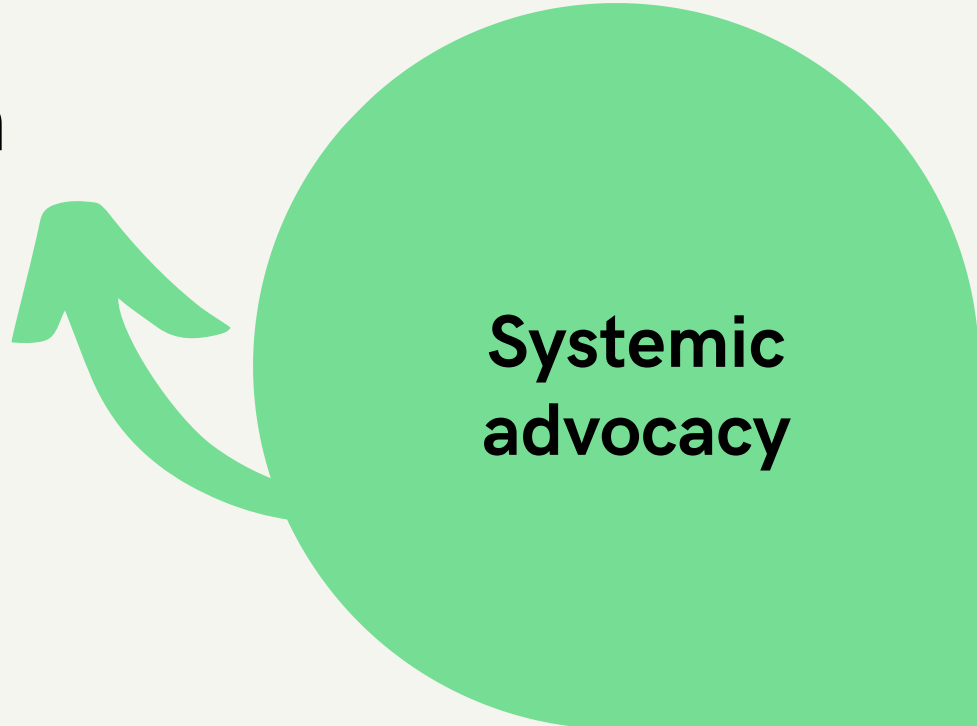


Case study: Survey respondent

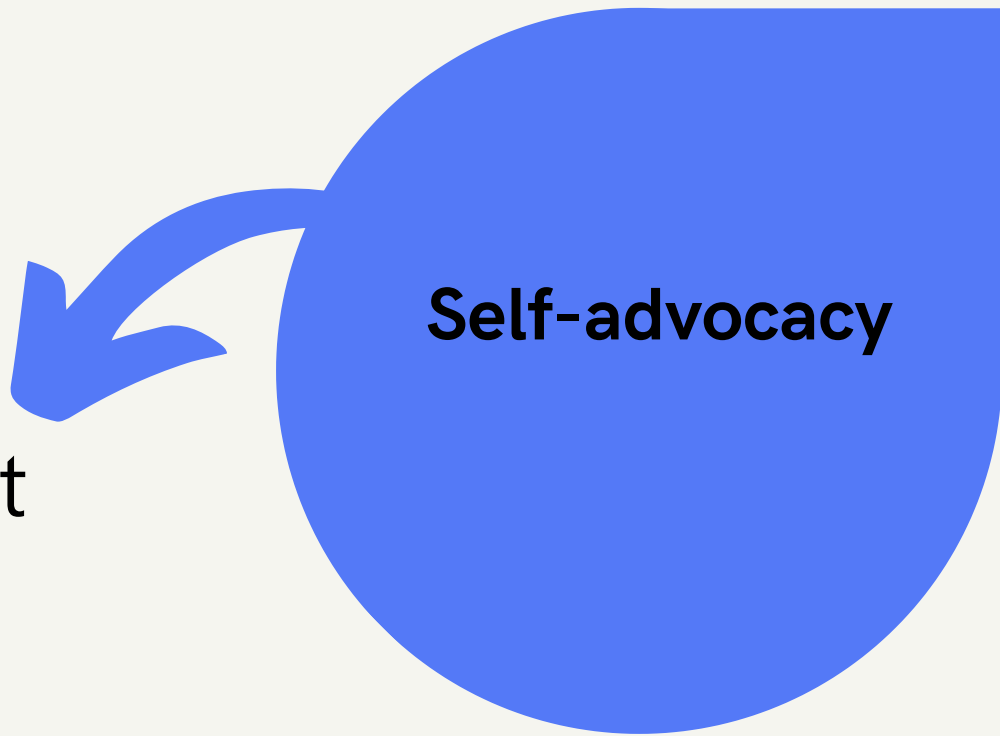
- One of the people who answered our survey shared their own experience making sure their child got access to education. Let's call their child John.
- When John was 5, they tried to enroll him in the local school. However, some of the teachers did not want him to study there.
- So, the family member went to the Local Government to explain the case, because they had people who are specialized in these types of situations. The school's director spoke with them as well and they explained that the school could not reject John according to the law.
- This is an example of how parents make sure laws are followed in reality.



When you try to change the whole system



When you work with a lawyer to fight for your rights in court



When you fight for your own rights and interests

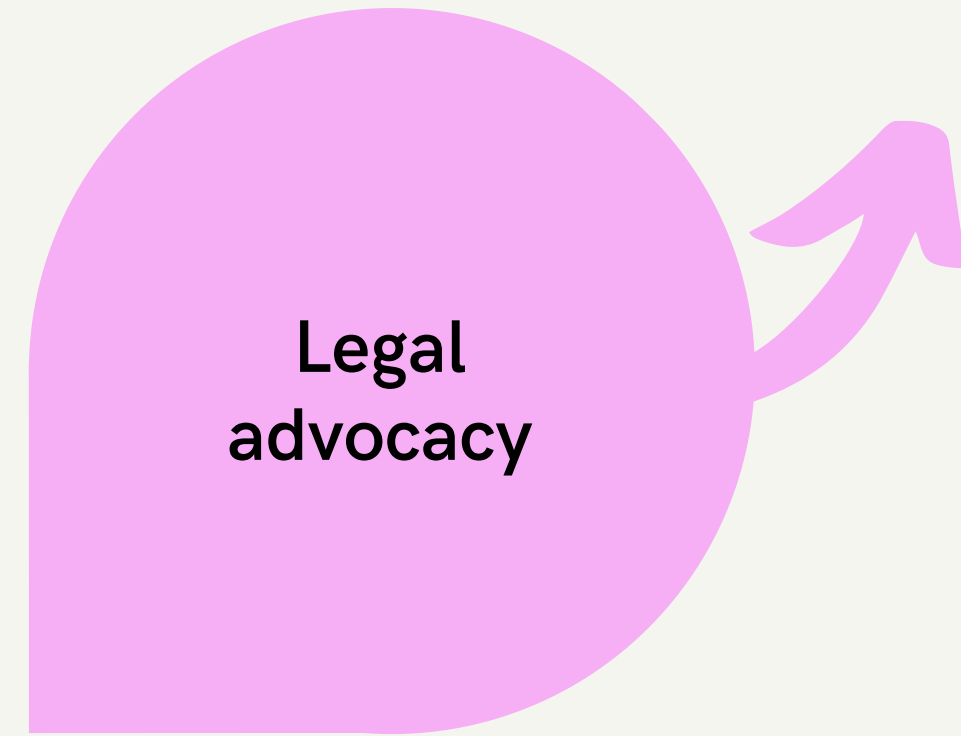
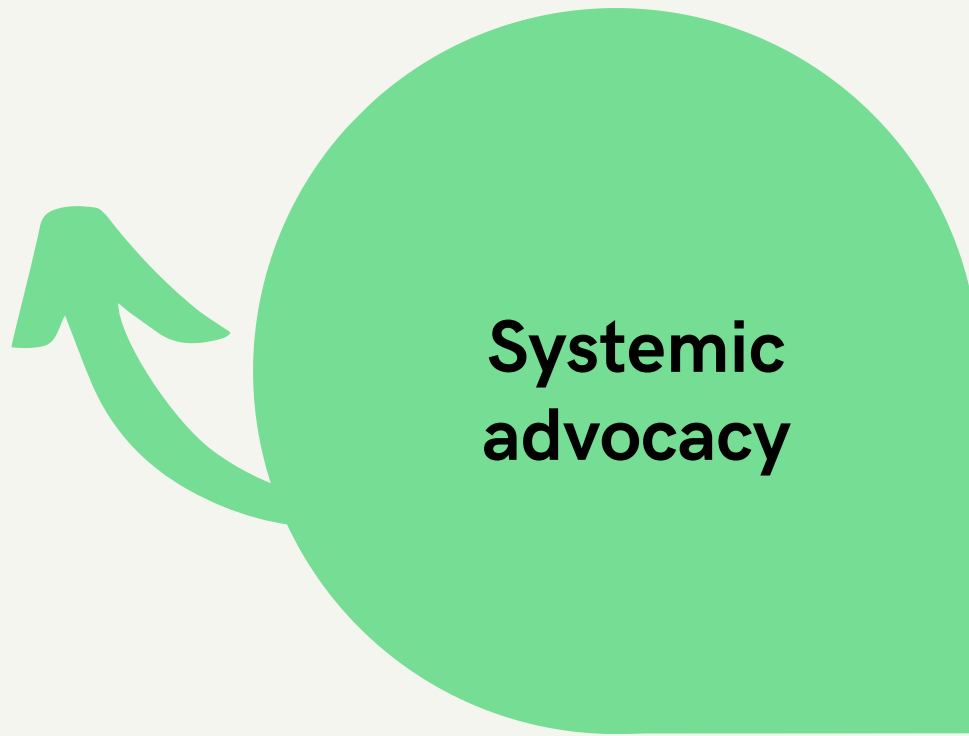


When you fight for one person's rights and interests



Example:

Linda Jordan, member of a parent group in Newham (UK), ran for City Council. As Counselor, she was able to close special education schools and use that money for inclusive education.

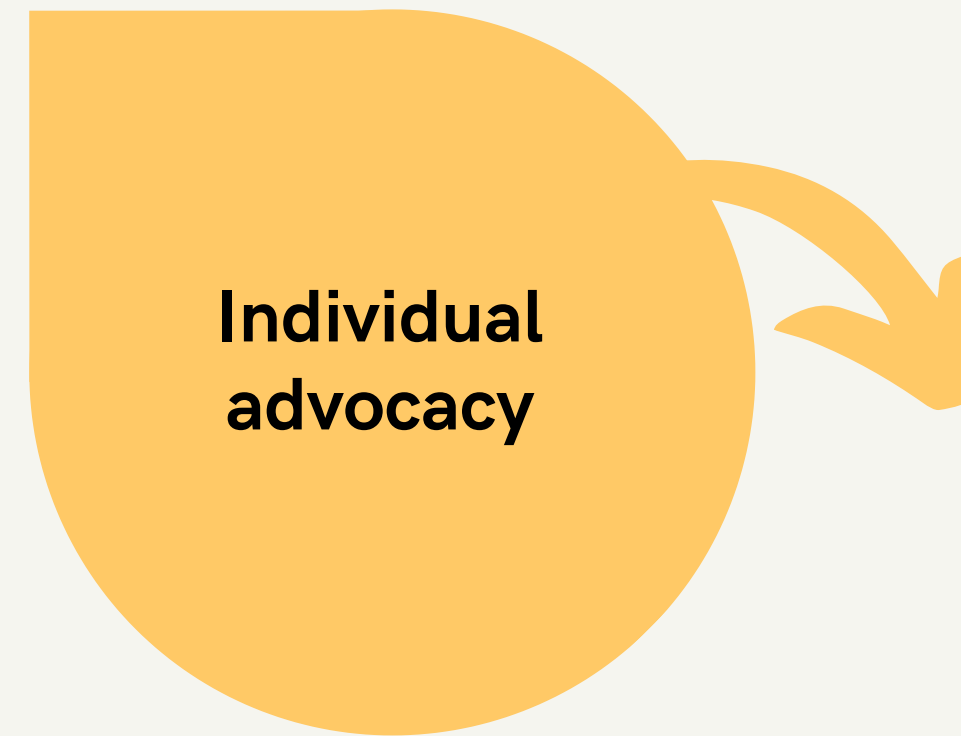


Example:

The European Center for the Rights of Children with Disabilities (CEDCD) takes on cases of families whose children can't access education.

Example:

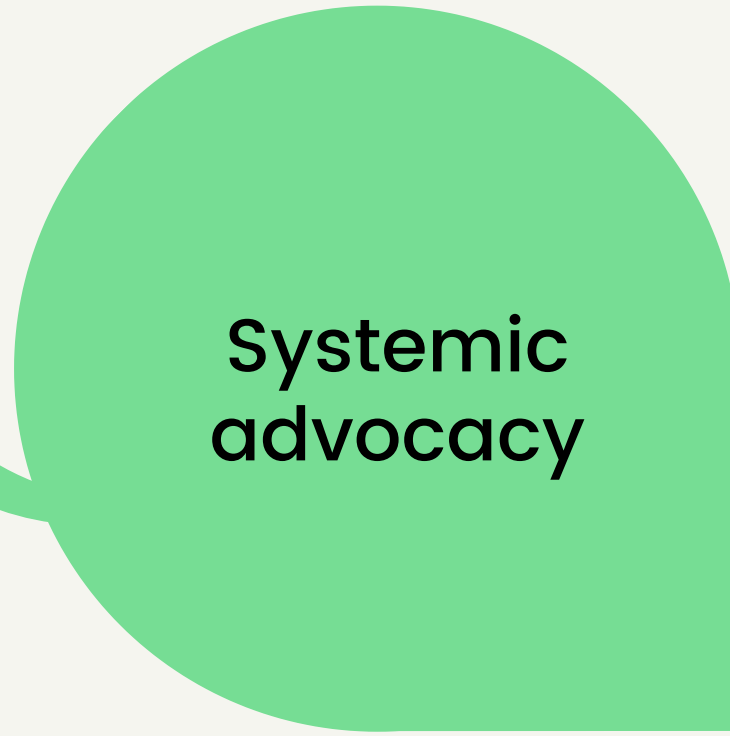
Organizations like Plena Inclusión (Spain) and the Alliance for Inclusive Education (UK) include people with disabilities in their inclusive education projects.



Example:

In the United States, the Volunteer Advocacy Project trains people to become advocates who support students with disabilities and their families.

**Some families
do this too!**

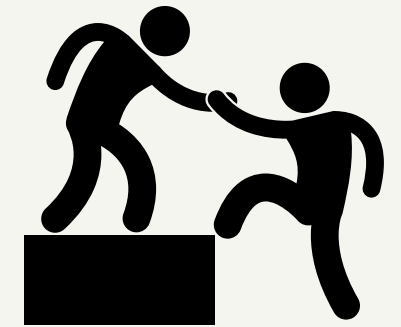


**This is what
most families
do!**



Most family members do “individual advocacy”

- Individual advocacy is when someone supports a specific person with a disability to get what they need.
- This can include things like helping them access support, solve conflicts, or understand relationships.
- Historically, individual advocacy has been done by family members, because they are naturally there for people with disabilities since the start.



THESE ARE THE THINGS THEY ADVOCATE FOR

We asked family members "In what capacity did you advocate for them?" and gave them a list to chose from



Individual advocacy for inclusive education looks like:

- Of the 31 people we asked, 23 **had** advocated for inclusive education. Mostly it was to make sure their children had access to quality education.
- Family members do this by:
 - Meeting with school officials to discuss their child's needs.
 - Working with the school to develop a plan for their child's accommodations.
 - Working to change laws.
 - Staying in touch with the school to make sure their child is really learning.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- We asked 31 Special Olympics families about their experiences with advocacy for inclusive education. You can read what we found [here](#).
- We did research on the strategies, barriers and outcomes of advocacy for inclusive education. You can read what we found [here](#).

