

Case Study Guide

Introduction

People are hardwired to remember stories. An experiment at Stanford University asked students to prepare a 1-minute speech. On average, the students used two and a half statistics in their 1-minute speeches whereas only 1 in 10 students told a story. However, when it came to remembering the presentations 10 minutes later, only 5% of the audience could recall any individual statistic, but 63% of the audience could remember the stories.

Stories have 'stickability' and the power to capture people's imagination and attention in ways that can inspire them to make changes and take action. This makes stories one of an advocate's most powerful tools.

This guide will look at three priority areas in which case studies can be applied in advocacy.

1. Professional development to improve advocacy practice (**Reflective practice**).
2. To highlight the work of advocacy in annual reports, to the media and the government (Reporting highlights and **best practice**).
3. To showcase individual issues that can be used for systemic change (**Systemic advocacy work**).

This guide will assist in writing effective case studies for reflective practice, highlighting best practice approaches, and elevating individual advocacy to demonstrate systemic issues.

What is a case study?

A case study is a story, it is an analysis of an individual's experience, outlining their journey, challenges faced, their current position, and/or outcomes achieved. It provides a comprehensive account that aims to shed light on the impact of an issue that a person with disability has encountered.

Why use Case Studies?

- Case studies give context to the metrics of advocacy work. Case studies give examples of the data that is reported by advocates. Case studies help to demonstrate some of the challenges in the issues faced by people with disabilities and reveal the individual experiences behind the data.
- The issues we focus on need a human face. The role of case studies and storytelling is to find someone who can fill that role and help show our audience why they should care about the issue, be it the disparity in the sheer volume of suspensions at schools for kids with disabilities or the volume of people without appropriate housing. Issues are often difficult to comprehend in the abstract, but a person's story can bring them alive.
- By sharing specific experiences, case studies make advocacy real and relatable, enhancing the understanding of stakeholders (funding bodies, boards, members of an organisation) and civil society on the value of advocacy and how the outcomes being achieved are affecting real people.
- Case studies can demonstrate compelling evidence of systemic issues, they highlight the inadequacies of current policies or processes and should give a call to action, or next steps to how the issue can be resolved.
- Case studies can be used to showcase best practices and how the actions of advocates achieved a positive outcome.
- Case studies can influence policy decisions by framing how a decision can make real differences in individuals' lives.
- Case studies can empower individuals telling their stories by allowing them to tell their story and be involved in highlighting areas where improvements are needed.

Writing case studies

To effectively write case studies for reflective practice, systemic work, and best practice:

a. Identify the purpose: Determine the main objectives of the case study, such as raising awareness, influencing policy changes, or showcasing successful interventions.

b. Select appropriate people: Choose individuals who have relevance to the purpose you are trying to convey. Where possible, discuss their lives, who are they, what do they like doing and how this issue was affecting their life.

c. Collect relevant information: Conduct interviews or surveys with the individuals involved, their families, and professionals to gather accurate and detailed information about their journey, challenges, and achievements. Be sure to include quotes and details regarding their issue, such as agencies or people involved, discuss their conversations with others and how they felt throughout the issue.

d. Structure the case study:

1. **Introduction:** Provide an overview of the individual, their disability, and the context in which they live.
2. **Background:** Describe the individual's lived experiences and the challenges they faced.
3. **Support and interventions:** Highlight the programs, services, or interventions that facilitated their progress.
4. **Outcomes and impact:** Illustrate the positive changes that occurred, both for the individual and their community.
5. **Lessons learned:** Discuss key takeaways and recommendations for improving services and policies.
6. **Call to action:** Is there anything the audience can do to help? A person to contact? A submission to sign? A campaign to follow?

e. Use storytelling techniques: Emphasize storytelling elements to engage readers emotionally and create a connection. Include quotes, personal anecdotes, and vivid descriptions to bring the case study to life.

f. Maintain confidentiality: Respecting privacy and obtaining informed consent is crucial. Anonymize or use pseudonyms to protect the identities of individuals involved.

g. Share the case study: If the case study will be in the public domain, share the case study with the individual whose story you are telling. They should have a right to understand how their story is being framed and have the power to change parts they do not agree with or see as beneficial.

Case studies purpose

Reflective practice

- **Self-awareness and personal growth:** Case studies and storytelling encourage individuals to reflect on their own actions and experiences, allowing for a deeper understanding of self. Their own personal strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. By examining real-life examples, advocates can identify patterns and themes that resonate with their own practice, fostering self-awareness and facilitating identified areas for personal growth.
- **Critical thinking and analysis:** By analysing other advocate's case studies, advocates are required to critically analyse and evaluate actions. By exploring different perspectives, challenges, and outcomes presented in narratives, practitioners can develop a more nuanced understanding of complex situations. This cultivates critical thinking skills and enhances their ability to make informed decisions and judgements in their own practice.
- By reflecting on case studies and storytelling, advocates can **identify gaps in their knowledge or skills**. By comparing their practice to successful examples, they can uncover areas where they may fall short or failing to reach their full potential. This process enables them to recognize opportunities for professional development and implement changes to improve their practice.
- Case studies and storytelling **provide inspiration for innovation and continuous improvement**. By examining best practices and success stories, practitioners can gain insights into new strategies, techniques, or approaches that they can adapt or adopt in their own work. This enables them to stay current, evolve their practice, and continually strive for excellence.
- Advocates could include an unresolved case study as **part of their supervision**. This gives an opportunity to regularly review their practice to identify areas for improvement or highlight systems issues occurring through their work.

- By creating peer-reviewed case studies, **strategies can be refined**, such as storytelling techniques, best practice language or bias/stereotypes, and highlight emerging issues within the disability community.

Practical applications: Formal supervision, team meetings, peer networks, personal growth.

Best practice

- Case studies and storytelling provide practical examples of how best practices have been successfully implemented in real-world situations. By showcasing specific projects, organisations, or individuals that have achieved exceptional outcomes, they offer tangible evidence of what works and how it can apply to similar contexts.
- **Inspiration and motivation:** When presented with compelling case studies and stories of best practices, individuals and organisations are inspired and motivated to strive for excellence. These narratives serve as powerful examples of what is possible, encouraging others to embrace innovative approaches, replicate successful models, and continuously improve their own practices.
- **Knowledge sharing and collaboration:** Case studies and storytelling facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences across advocacy. By disseminating information about successful best practices, collaboration is encouraged and the exchange of ideas, fostering a collective learning process that benefits the outcomes achieved.

Practical uses: Board reports, news articles, funding bodies, social media, highlighting the work of advocates to civil society.

Systemic work

- **Emotional connection:** Case studies and storytelling have the power to engage people by evoking emotions and creating a personal connection. By presenting real-life scenarios, they humanize issues, making them more relatable and compelling. This emotional connection helps generate empathy and support for systemic advocacy efforts.
- **Illustration of impact:** Through case studies and storytelling, systemic advocacy can demonstrate the tangible impact of policies, practices, or injustices on individuals or communities. By showcasing specific instances and the resulting consequences, it becomes easier to highlight the urgent need for change and the potential benefits it could have for those affected.

- **Amplification of marginalized voices:** Case studies and storytelling offer a platform for amplifying the voices of individuals and communities who are often marginalized or unheard. By sharing their lived experiences, these narratives shed light on the injustices they face within the system, creating awareness and garnering support to address systemic issues from a personal perspective.
- **Building a broad coalition:** The power of case studies and storytelling lies in their ability to engage diverse audiences. By presenting different narratives and perspectives, systemic advocacy can build a broad coalition of supporters representing various sectors, demographics, and interests. This collective support can enhance the advocacy efforts' reach and influence, making them more effective in sparking systemic change.
- **Inspiring action and policy change:** People are often motivated to act when they connect emotionally with stories that highlight the need for change. Case studies and storytelling can inspire individuals to get involved, whether it's through advocacy, grassroots organizing, or policy reform. They have the potential to influence decision-makers by presenting compelling evidence and compelling narratives, ultimately leading to real policy change at a systemic level.

Practical uses: campaigns, media articles, highlighting systemic deficits.

Ethics

- **Consent:** Deidentified case studies still require consent. You are using someone's story and experience; any sharing should be done with permission.
- **Ensure cultural sensitivity:** Respect the cultural diversity within the disability community and represent it appropriately in case studies.
- **Collaboration with individuals:** Involve individuals with disabilities in the process of creating case studies to ensure their voices are accurately portrayed and their consent is obtained. Consent should involve a rigorous process of informing the person of where the case study will be shown, what audience will see it and for what purpose. Explain that consent can be withdrawn at any time and have documented proof of consent (whatever method is most appropriate for the individual and their communication needs).
- **Contextualize challenges:** Present a comprehensive understanding of the external factors impacting the individual's experiences, such as societal attitudes, policies, or systemic barriers.

- **Measure impact using metrics:** Incorporate quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate the tangible changes resulting from interventions or advocacy efforts.

Conclusion

Case studies and storytelling are essential tools for disability advocates to convey the experiences of people with disabilities, influencing stakeholders and advocating for positive change. By incorporating these best practices, advocates can create compelling case studies that effectively engage boards, serve as reflective practice tools, and highlight best practices for improved systems and policies.

At the end of this guide, there is a sample template from the Department of Social services (DSS) that they supply organisations to assist in methodically outlining case studies they have been working on. The case study below has been populated with a hypothetical situation to give an understanding of how each field may be filled. Below the populated case study, is a blank template if required.

DSS Case Study template

Below is a case study template from the Department of Social Services (DSS). This template is supplied to National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) providers as a guide for outlining systemic work that organisations have been involved in. The below has been populated with a sample to outline a hypothetical issue an organisation may have been involved with.

Provider Name	Advocacy123
Reporting Period	Jan - June 2023
Case Study Key Theme	Social inclusion
Participant Details	Bill - Bill is a 53-year-old man who uses a wheelchair to assist in his mobility requirements. Bill is an avid rugby league fan and follows the Canterbury Bulldogs. Bill believes they have a chance to win the premiership next year. Bill lives in a supported accommodation house with four other people.
Overall Themes	Access, inclusion, Human rights
Case Study Summary	<p>In a recent house meeting, all the housemates discussed wanting to all go to the shopping centre near them every Thursday to go shopping, have dinner and watch the football at the pub joined to the centre. They wanted to do this independently of any support. To get to the shopping centre, the housemates must cross a main road, but the road does not have a safe place to cross- no crossing or traffic lights for one kilometre in either direction.</p> <p>Bill called the council who said it was not their responsibility to pay for a safe crossing due to the zoning of the street. Bill did not think this was right, so he called "Advocacy123" to support him. His advocate heard Bill's story, got his</p>

	<p>consent, and contacted the council regarding Bill's access issue. The advocate cited the dangers of this road, and that council should make every effort to ensure people with disability can have equal access to services and facilities. The council still declined, so the advocate raised a complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). The AHRC mediated a resolution with the local council that saw them apply for a New South Wales state government grant and install traffic lights for safety when people cross the road.</p>
Systemic issues	<p>Accessible infrastructure for people with disability to services and facilities available to the public</p>
Costs avoided/Consequences if advocate not available	<p>If this issue was not resolved, there was a chance of injury or death of a member of the community.</p>
Lessons Learnt	<p>Advocacy123 has learnt that whilst initially, this was an individual advocacy issue, they were contacted by multiple individuals with this same issue after taking on Bill as a client. This made them realised this issue was part of a larger, systemic issue with the council. Council did not have adequate processes for accessibility, and so would often not act, or defer to other authorities when issues were raised. Advocacy123 consulted with council around this and are now part of the local council access group to assist in any further issues in the community.</p>

DSS Case Study template

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Participant Details	
Overall Themes	
Case Study Summary	
Systemic issues	
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