

Advocacy is the action of an individual or group of people to bring about positive change in people's lives. Students with FASD need caring adults in their lives who will work to ensure that their unique needs are understood and that they receive the support necessary to live a safe, satisfying and successful life.

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

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### ■ *Be an effective advocate for students and families by:*

- assuming the best of others
- modelling the kinds of behaviour you are advocating for
- being open-minded
- acting in the spirit of children first
- working as part of a team—with parents and caregivers, with school staff and with other community service providers
- believing in collective wisdom and respecting differing perspectives and beliefs
- being willing to compromise
- remaining focused on solutions
- making the time you spend with others a positive time.<sup>5</sup>

### ■ *Do your research and find out who has the responsibility and authority to make the changes or decisions that will make a positive difference for the student.*

When parents and caregivers believe something needs to change for their child, encourage them to approach first the people who work directly with the student—teachers, the counsellor, the principal. Agree on a length of time to try these changes and when progress will be reviewed. If these strategies and interventions just aren't working, encourage the parents and caregivers to ask the principal about next steps; the process for review and/or consultation may vary from school jurisdiction to school jurisdiction.

### ■ *Focus your efforts.*

And finally, when choosing what to advocate for, consider the wise advice of educator and social activist Jonathan Kozol to pick “battles large enough to matter, small enough to win.”