



Advocacy Teams

An overview of vision, expectations, and best practices

Vision and Mission

As a family of church planters and disciple makers from The Austin Stone, our vision is to catalyze a church planting movement (CPM) in 100 unreached people groups (UPGs).

Advocacy teams, commonly called a-teams, partner in the work of this vision by supporting goers sent by The Austin Stone. These teams play a critical role in goers' longevity as they help goers thrive and stay on task. Thriving described as the degree to which the goer is happy, healthy, and holy. A goer is on task when they are aware of God's vision and calling for their life and when their decisions and actions, both large and small, align with that calling.

As a church body, The Austin Stone desires to walk with goers in a way that they are able to flourish in these two areas. Many parts of the church body work toward that end, and advocacy teams are a vital component of that work. In light of this, goers are now required to form their advocacy team before they launch.

What Do Advocacy Team Members Commit To?

Advocacy teams are a part of the broader For the Nations team. Advocacy teams are groups of 6-12 individuals that formally commit to supporting a goer's thriving and staying on task. To accomplish this goal, advocacy team leaders and members commit to, at a minimum, the following responsibilities:

- Seek a healthy, maturing relationship with Christ
- Agree with The Austin Stone's Affirmation of Faith
- Participate in the community of The Austin Stone as a partner in good standing (for advocacy team leaders)
- Gather regularly (at least once a month) to facilitate the health of the advocacy team and consistent care for the goer
- Proactively and regularly communicate with the goer (at least monthly) on an individual level
- Regularly pray for the goer and the people they minister to as an individual and as a team
- Financially contribute to the goer's work (recommended but not required)
- Serve the goer in ways that contribute to their health, happiness, and holiness
- Serve as a member of the advocacy team for at least one term of the goer's ministry (typically 3-4 years)



What Does “Advocacy” Mean?

Advocacy before God

Advocacy before God looks like interceding for a goer through prayer and fasting. A-team members should regularly pray for their goer and regularly ask God to move among the people group where the goer serves. Team members should participate in prayer individually as well as corporately during team gatherings.

Advocacy among Supporters

A-team members actively cultivate, encourage, and equip the goer’s financial and prayer supporters. In some instances, A-team members will identify and recruit new prayer and financial supporters for the goer.

Advocacy among the Local Church Body

Advocacy teams speak well and often about their goer with the local church. They also share how others can pray for the goer and their people groups, and encourage them to participate in the Great Commission through praying, giving to a goer or the For the Nations general fund, and/or joining an advocacy team.

Advocacy with Church Leadership

Advocacy teams communicate when their goer is stateside and work with church leadership to identify and procure needed resources. Advocacy teams also share other specific needs (in the states or overseas) with the church leadership.

Advocacy within the Team

Advocacy teams are fellowships. Team members continually exhort and encourage one another to persevere in praying for, reaching out to, and investing in their goer.



Advocacy Team Best Practices

Establish Clear Expectations

The heart of a healthy partnership between the advocacy team and the goer is a healthy rhythm of communication and mutually clear expectations. Goers and advocacy teams should establish these expectations and rhythms before the goer launches, at the beginning of the advocacy team's service and regularly assess and adjust the expectations and rhythms as needed.

Cultivate a Healthy Team Dynamic

Time and energy invested in the unity and health of the team fosters greater care and support for the goer. Time has shown that the internal health of the advocacy team has a stronger impact on a goer's sense of care from the team than individual team members' relationships with the goer. Therefore, focusing time and energy on creating a healthy team is a worthwhile investment.

Take Ownership and Initiative, with an Open-handed Posture

As advocacy teams care for goers, questions will consistently arise:

- What should team members pray for during a particular month/week/day?
- How can the team bless the goer physically while they are abroad?
- How can the team cultivate a broader support network for the Goer?

Questions like these are good ones. They should, however, be initially addressed by the team before posing them to the goer. Asking for the goer's input first can place an unintended burden on them as they try to answer broad questions. The team should instead consider *proposals* for serving the goer rather than *open-ended questions*. For example, a team asking, "What can we pray for?" might be better off saying, "We're thinking about praying for these five things this month for your and your people group. Do you have any additional requests or suggestions for different topics?" The second question initiates a dialogue with the goer and may help trigger further thought. When asking these questions, advocacy teams should broach them with humility and grace. Doing so can energize the goer and encourage them as they see the team proactively considering them and the work they are called to.



Become a Good Listener

One of the most vital roles an advocacy team plays is cultivating a safe place for the goer to process various thoughts, experiences, struggles, and praises. Because of this, advocacy team members are encouraged to grow in their ability to actively listen and ask good questions. It also is difficult for those living stateside to understand cultural complexities and the day-to-day context the goer lives in, which makes it difficult to offer suggestions as to what the goer should do in their ministry. Listening and asking questions can be more beneficial as it allows the goer to reflect, clarify, and implement contextualized solutions. In situations where the goer needs further assistance, the advocacy team should encourage goers to reach out to their care coach or Field Office overseer.