



Field Definition for Automated Advocates

An automated advocate is a technology tool that:

- Works on behalf of someone to help them achieve their goal more quickly, affordably, or easily than they otherwise would have by reducing their administrative burden through the use of automation, AND
- Uses insights from users' aggregate experiences to advocate for improved functioning of the overall system for everyone.

Examples

GetCalFresh: an Automated Advocate that uses technology to shorten the amount of steps needed to sign up for and stay enrolled in SNAP in California (“CalFresh”). GetCalFresh uses tactics like branched form intake, document assembly, and automated text message reminders to reduce the time it takes to apply for CalFresh online from more than 45 minutes to 8. GetCalFresh recently publicized its usage data in the wake of a surge in applications from COVID-19 to advocate for

across-the-board improvements in government digital services. It also publishes regular recommendations on service delivery, such as [this report](#) on how to mitigate barriers to CalFresh access for applicants who are experiencing homelessness.

UpSolve, an Automated Advocate that helps users file for personal bankruptcy through guided interviews and automated document assembly. UpSolve has helped its users clear more than 230MM USD in debt and has shared its aggregated insights publicly, such as in these [news interviews](#) using its data to predict the financial impacts of COVID-19 and to advocate for online filing options.

Rentervention, an Automated Advocate that guides Chicago renters through their rights and options as tenants and automatically creates legal communications for them as needed. Rentervention then uses tenant inquiries to “[go upstream](#)” and create resources for common tenant pain points so the tenants have the information they need to avoid an eviction.

Fresh EBT, an Automated Advocate built by Propel to help EBT users across America check and manage their benefit usage. Fresh EBT works by [automatically querying EBT processors](#) for balance information on a user’s behalf. Propel has used its user feedback to advocate for clarity and consistency in how government [distributes benefits during moments of crisis](#), [for increased data accessibility](#) from government contractors who run benefits tracking systems, and for additional social safety net options after it saw [early data](#) from its users about the impact of widespread layoffs during COVID-19.

If a tool includes either automation or advocacy, but not both, it may be helpful but it does not qualify as an Automated Advocate.

Examples of helpful tools that would need to be expanded in order to qualify as full Automated Advocates include:

Standalone document assemblers: Document assemblers are assistive tools that are intended to save work for users at an individual level. In order to qualify as an Automated Advocate, a guided interview or doc assembly tool would need to compile commonalities in user needs and use that to improve its product, such as in the UpSolve example above.

Government benefits screeners: Benefits screeners use guided questions to inform users about their potential eligibility for benefits but often do not save users from any of the downstream work needed to apply for those benefits. To qualify as an Automated Advocate, a benefits screener could be built as an API and intended to lessen program requirements for clients and agencies that use it. The builders of the [NYC Benefits Screening API](#) and the [Eligibility APIs Initiative at 18F](#) are both exploring this path.