



Self-Advocacy Manual

**This Self-Advocacy Manual was adapted from the Ethnic Disability
Advocacy Centre's 'Let Me Speak' manual with permission.**

Created 2015; Updated 2025

Teaching Self-Advocacy Skills - Manual

Catulpa Community Support Services assists individuals and families with exceptional needs to reach their goals. Underpinning our work with persons we serve is the commitment to recognize and honor an individual's voice and choice. We encourage all opportunities for the person to speak up for themselves, which we refer to as Self-Advocacy.

The “**Let Me Speak**” manual provides a learning structure and tools to support the process of skill building for self-advocacy and augments the work we do. The manual, written in 2007 for persons who were multi-linguistic and who had developmental disabilities, was made available from the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre in Australia website.

The step-by-step approach helps the individual identify the problem and to develop a plan to execute their own problem-solving solutions with resources available to them.

Self-esteem, assertiveness, conflict resolution and communication activities are included, as well as opportunities to increase awareness of self and others when seeking resolutions. Included in the manual are practical exercises regarding making a phone call, writing letters, and preparing for meetings.

The “**Let Me Speak**” manual has a strong process framework. It would allow a group to create their own story and work through the process as in a methodical manner to the same ends. However, included in the appendix are suggestions of other stories that would be well suited as a framework for building self-advocacy skills.

The Mini Tool

Acknowledging that teaching self-advocacy may occur in our work on a 1:1 basis, a Mini Tool was adapted from templates in the “**Let Me Speak**” manual. The Mini Tool is intended for quick reference to promote self-advocacy in real time. The Mini Tool Kit is included in the appendix.



Step 1

Understanding Self- Advocacy

In this step we will discuss:

- What is self-advocacy?
- Why is it important?
- When is self-advocacy useful?
- Where is self-advocacy useful?
- Who can use self-advocacy?
- How do you self-advocate?

At the end of this section there are a few questions for you to answer. Read over the information then when you think you understand what self-advocacy is and when and how it is useful, try to answer the questions.

What is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself about the things that are important to you, asking for what you need and want and telling people about your thoughts and feelings. Self-advocacy means you know your rights and responsibilities and you are able to make informed choices and decisions that affect your life. The goal of self-advocacy is for you to decide what you want then develop and carry out a plan to help you get it. It does not mean you can't get help if you need or want it, it just means that you are making the informed choices and you have to be responsible for the choices you make.

Why is self-advocacy important?

It is important to learn self-advocacy skills because it helps you decide what you want and what is possible for you to expect. When you have good self-advocacy skills you can have more control and make the life decisions that are best for you. Self-advocacy helps to empower you, to speak up for yourself and make decisions about your life.

When is self-advocacy useful?

- When you want to be listened to
- When you are making a complaint
- When you are developing or reviewing a personal plan (Note: the presenter may need to clarify what is meant by a personal plan)

Where is self-advocacy useful?

There are many places that you might want to speak up for yourself or ask for what you want such as:

- At home
- At work
- At school
- At the hospital
- At the doctor
- At the shops
- On the bus
- Community agencies

Who can use self-advocacy?

Anyone...

- who says what they think and feel
- who speaks-up for things they believe in
- who knows and understands their rights and responsibilities
- who takes responsibility for their own life
- who makes decisions that affect their life
- who helps to improve their life
- who tries to change the way things are done

How do you self-advocate?

- Decide what you want to speak up about.
- Plan how you are going to speak up.
- Speak up for yourself.
- Have the freedom to be able to make basic choices about your life; you are the one who has to live your life so you should be able to make decisions which affect you.
- Ask for the support from others if you need some help. The final decision will always be yours.
- Believe you are able to make changes in your life that are not working and work towards the things that are important to you.
- You are responsible for your decisions.

Activity 1.1: Understanding Self-Advocacy

In your own words answer these questions. Your answers do not need to be perfect; this is just to help you to understand what self-advocacy is.

What is self-advocacy?

Why is self-advocacy important?

Where are some places where you could self-advocate? List 3 places.

When would you self-advocate? List 3 situations.



Step 2

Understanding Yourself and Your Skills

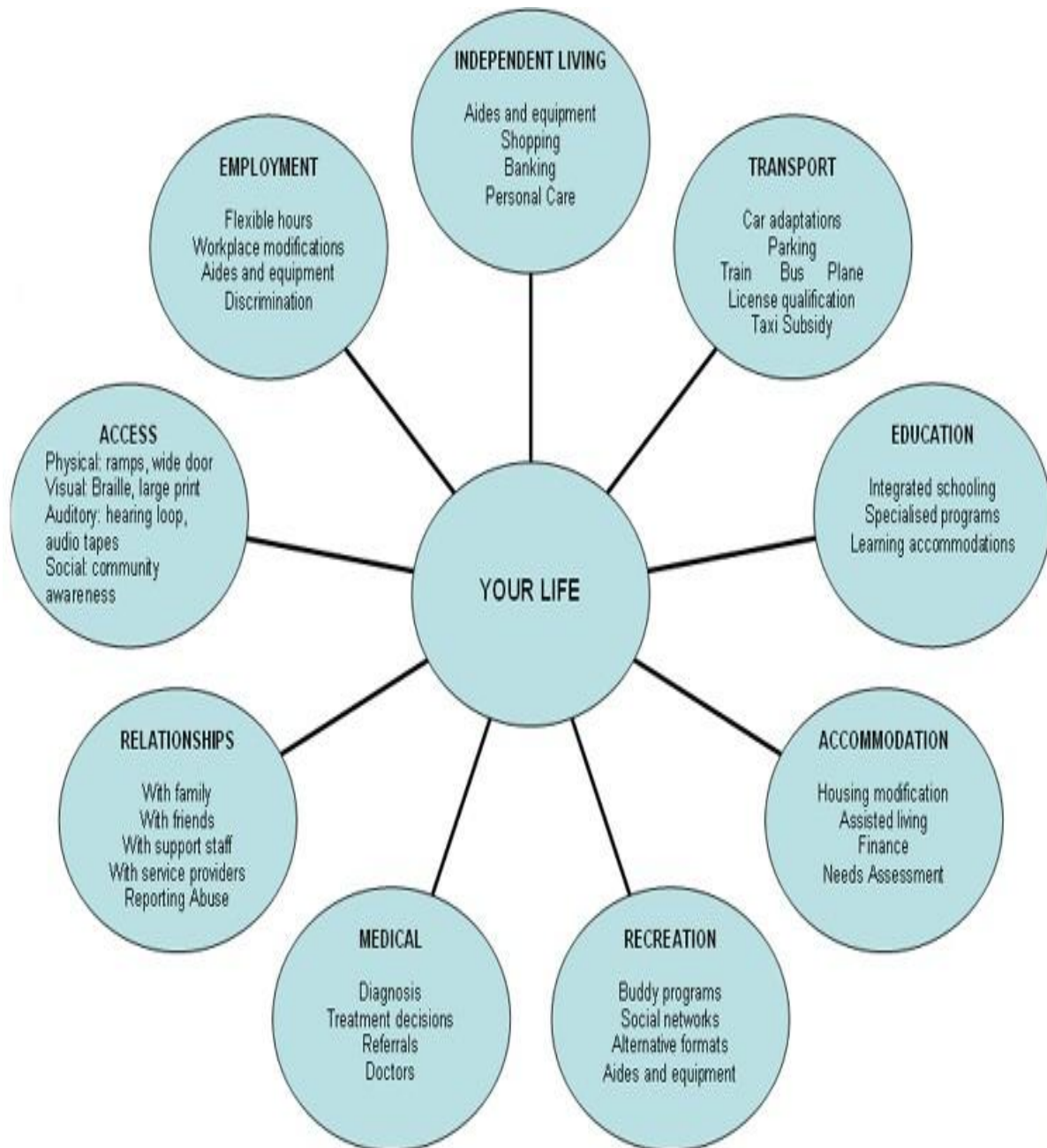
In this step we will discuss:

- Where you could use self-advocacy
- What skills you need to speak up for yourself
- What skills you need to help other people let you speak up for yourself

In this step you will be working on learning about yourself, what you are good at and what you would like to change in your life.

Activity 2.1: Where You Could Use Self-Advocacy

Using the following diagram, identify where you can use self-advocacy in your life. A blank template is available in the Templates section at the back of this manual.



Activity 2.2: Skills Required to Speak up for Yourself

What are some examples of skills that would be useful when speaking up for yourself?

The following list are examples:

- Confidence
- Self-esteem
- Being informed
- Know your rights and responsibilities
- Decision making
- Goal setting
- Organization
- Support networking
- Problem solving
- Negotiation

Refer to the list of skills you need to speak up for yourself and decide which skills you possess and which skills you need to develop.

Skills I Have

Skills I Want to Improve

Step 3

Understand Your Rights and Responsibilities

In this step we will discuss:

- Your rights as a person
- The laws that protect your rights
- Your responsibilities as a person
- How self-advocacy and services relate
- Catulpa Community Support Services Statement of Rights for Persons Served

What are your rights?

Rights refer to the way people are entitled to be treated. Some rights belong to everyone because they are human; these rights are called human rights. Human rights define what we are all entitled to – a life of equality, dignity, and respect. It is important to exercise your rights, not just for your own sake, but for the future sake of others.

In Canada, human rights are protected by federal, provincial and territorial laws. The following are laws that protect human rights¹

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982
- Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977

¹ Canadian Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). *How are human rights protected in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/eng/content/how-are-human-rights-protected-canada>

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Charter's purpose is to protect every Canadian's right to be treated equally under the law. The Charter guarantees broad equality rights and other fundamental rights, such as:

- The freedom of expression
- The freedom of assembly, and
- The freedom of religion

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to governments and protects the rights of all Canadians from infringements by laws, policies or actions of governments.

The Canadian Human Rights Act

The Canadian Human Rights Act protects people in Canada from discrimination when they are employed by or receive services from the federal government, Indigenous governments or private companies that are regulated by the federal government.

People can use the Canadian Human Rights Act to protect themselves against harassment or discrimination when based on one or more of the 11 grounds of discrimination, which include:²

- Race
- National or ethnic origin
- Colour
- Religion
- Age
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Family status
- Disability
- A conviction for which a pardon has been granted or a record suspended

Refer to the Government of Canada's Justice Law website for a full version of the Canadian Human Rights Act at <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/>

²Canadian Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). What is discrimination. Retrieved from <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/>

What are your responsibilities?

Along with rights come responsibilities, responsibilities say how you are expected to act in order to have your rights protected.

It is important to know what your rights and responsibilities are before you start Self-advocacy. If you do not know what your rights and responsibilities are you, might ask for something to change that cannot be changed or you might not ask for it in the right way. It is also good to know what your rights and responsibilities are, so you know if you are being treated unfairly and need to speak up to protect yourself.

In Canada, responsibilities include:³

- Obeying the law
- Taking responsibility for oneself and one's family
- Serving on a jury
- Voting in elections
- Helping others in the community
- Protecting and enjoying our heritage and environment

Catulpa Community Support Services Statement of Rights for Persons Served

All people have basic rights, described in a variety of documents including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights/Convention on the Rights of the Child/Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities; the Child and Youth Charter of the Simcoe County Child, Youth and Family Coalition. We support and promote these rights.

As a person receiving service from Catulpa Community Support Services, you also have the right:

1. To be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect, regardless of gender, culture, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, socio-economic status, spirituality or ability.

³ Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (n.d.). Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/discover/section-04.asp>

2. To information so you can make informed decisions:
 - given in a way that you can understand
 - about all of the services and supports you may be eligible to receive
 - about how your worker can help you
3. To receive service in a way that respects your individual needs including those based on your own ethnic, spiritual, language, family and/or cultural needs.
4. To know what information is kept in your record, to have your personal information kept confidential and to decide who can have access to your personal information, unless there is a requirement by law to share it; and to ask that the information be changed if it is not correct.
5. To decide what service you want, and to refuse service.
6. To give feedback (both positive and negative) about your service and to receive a prompt response to your complaint without worry.
7. To have qualified staff help you.
8. To be free from harm, including mental, physical, verbal, emotional and financial abuse.
9. To work on goals that you choose.

How self-advocacy and services relate:

You have the right and the responsibility to give agencies feedback and tell them how they can give you (and other people like you) the best possible service. The acts and rules you have read about in this step are there to help you give feedback to your service provider, all you need to do is tell people what you think and feel!



Step 4

Understanding What the Problem Is

In this step we will discuss:

- How to decide what you want to speak up about
- How to decide who can help you when you are self-advocating
- Goal setting

Sometimes there might be many things you would like to speak up about but if you try to do them all at once you might get confused or sidetracked. It is usually best to try to solve one problem at a time.

You need to get a clear idea of what the problem is. It is hard to solve a problem if it is too big or you are unsure about what you are trying to change. Think about what makes you angry, upset or sad. It is good to write down what the problem is so you can look back at it as you are planning what to do.

Activity 4.1: How to decide what you want to speak up about

Think of a problem you have that you would like to speak up about and then answer these questions.

<p>What is the problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it that I don't like? - What makes me angry, upset or sad? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>How do I feel when the problem happens?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do I get angry? - Do I get upset? - Do I get sad? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Why do I feel like that when the problem happens?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are my rights being protected? - Is it unfair? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Who is causing the problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it me? - Is it somebody else? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>When does the problem happen the most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does it happen when I am alone? - Does it happen when other people are around? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Where does the problem happen most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does it happen in one place? - Does it happen in a lot of places? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

It is important for you to know which people are best to help with your problem and, if you run into any problems, who to complain to. If you don't know the right people to contact, you might waste time being passed from one person to another without getting anything done. You can talk with your support people to think of all the people or agencies that might be able to help you or give you information about your problem.

You also need to find out all the information you can about your problem so you know what you can do to change it. Research to see what your rights are in relation to your problem.

- What solution can you expect to get?
- It is also important to find out what your responsibilities are.
- What might you have to do to get the change you hoping for?
- Are you prepared to do that?

It is sometimes good to discuss the problem with family and friends or a support worker who can support your Self-advocacy. You should write a list of the people who may be able to help you and then talk with them to see if they would be able to support you.

Activity 4.2: Who can help?

It is good to know all the people you can speak to about your problem and all the people who can give you more information that might help you.

Write a list of people you trust and feel comfortable talking to. You might like to talk to them and ask if they would be able to be your support person while you are speaking up for yourself.

The people I feel comfortable speaking to about my thoughts and feelings are:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Then you need to think about who you are going to speak up to and who could give you information that might help you. Think about the problem you decided to speak up about and list all the people you think could help.

Who is the person (or people) I need to speak-up to about my feelings?	
Who has information about this problem?	
Who could give me information about my rights?	
Who could give me information about my responsibilities?	

Goal setting: What do I want to change?

It is also good to write down the best solution you can think of for the problem. Sometimes self-advocacy can take a long time and it is easy to forget or get confused about what you are trying to do. If you write down what you want to do, you can look back at it along the way to check you are still on track. However, it is not always possible to achieve your ideal solution and you may need to make some compromises. It is good to write down other solutions to your problem which are acceptable but not ideal. You need to decide which areas you are willing to compromise on, and which areas you are not prepared to negotiate.

Activity 4.3: What do I want to change?

After you have decided what the problem is and who the best people to talk to about it are, you need to decide what you would like to happen. If you don't think about exactly how you would like things to change then you could speak up for yourself and get things to change in a way that you don't like.

<p>What needs to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is happening now that I don't like? • Have any other changes been tried? • What is the cause of the problem? • How does the problem make me feel? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Who needs to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does another person's behaviour need to change? Who? • Do many people's behaviours need to change? • Does my behaviour need to change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Where do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do things need to change in one place? Where? • Do things need to change in a lot of places? Where? • Do things need to change everywhere? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Why do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the way things are done now make you feel? • How would I like to feel? • How will I feel if things do not change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>When do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the problem need to change now? • Can the problem be changed slowly? • By what date do I want things to change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>How do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best way I can think of for things to change? • How would I like to feel? • What are some other ways I would like things to change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the way you feel and think about yourself. People with good self-esteem know that they do not have to be perfect or live up to anybody else's expectations. Good self-esteem helps you to be proud of yourself and the things you do. It gives you courage to try new things and believe in yourself even when you make mistakes. It helps you to know that you can make decisions for yourself.

Part of our self-esteem comes from the things other people say to us. When people are told they are not good at things all the time they sometimes start to believe it and they feel bad about themselves. The more decisions you make for yourself the more things you will learn you can do and the better you will feel about yourself.

To build up your self-esteem and feel better about yourself you should try to:

- Do things that you like and are good at; also try new things—you feel good when you improve at something
- Don't think about the way things should be done—just do it as best you can
- Be careful about comparing yourself to other people—you can't be the best at everything
- Think about times when you have done something good
- When you think bad things about yourself, stop and do something you enjoy

Self-Esteem - Activity A

It can sometimes take a long time to feel good about yourself, especially if you have been told for a long time that you are not good at things. There are some things you can do to remind yourself that it is ok to be you, and there are a lot of things that you are good at. Here is an activity that might help you think about all the good things about being you!

Personal Self-Esteem Evaluation

The following exercise allows you to evaluate your self-esteem using this scale:

5=Always
 4=Most of the time
 3=Sometimes 2=Rarely
 1=Never

- ___ 1. I feel successful in my present work/school activities
- ___ 2. I feel satisfied with my present work/school path
- ___ 3. I consider myself to be a risk taker
- ___ 4. I feel that continuing my education is important
- ___ 5. I consciously look for the good in others
- ___ 6. I can do most everything I put my mind to
- ___ 7. I am comfortable in new social situations
- ___ 8. I appreciate compliments from others
- ___ 9. I feel comfortable in new social situations
- ___ 10. I enjoy telling others of my success
- ___ 11. I am an optimistic person
- ___ 12. I am goal-oriented
- ___ 13. I am comfortable making decisions

- ___ 14. I am in good physical condition
- ___ 15. I am respected by others for who I am
- ___ 16. I project a positive self-image
- ___ 17. I am an active listener
- ___ 18. I like being responsible for projects
- ___ 19. I enjoy controversial discussions
- ___ 20. I find obstacles challenging
- ___ 21. I am able to ask for help without feeling guilty
- ___ 22. I can laugh at my own mistakes
- ___ 23. I am responsible for my thoughts and actions
- ___ 24. I am direct when I voice my feelings
- ___ 25. I am leading a balanced life
- ___ 26. I am an enthusiastic person
- ___ 27. I use eye contact when talking to others
- ___ 28. I genuinely like myself for who I am
- ___ 29. I take criticism well and learn from it
- ___ 30. I exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet

Add up your points and put the total here: _____

Your score indicates:

120-150 = Very high self-esteem
90-119 = Moderately high self-esteem
60-89 = Average self-esteem
31-59 = Moderately low self-esteem
0-30 = Low self-esteem

Self-Esteem - Activity B

Letting go of Negative Attitudes

We all experience negative attitudes and feelings at different times. It is when those feelings persist and affect your way of thinking and reacting that problems arise. Low self-esteem is accompanied by negative attitudes. Do any of the following “symptoms” apply to you?

- finding something wrong in every situation
- being pessimistic about outcomes
- being unhappy because your expectations were not met
- believing that things will go wrong
- being unpleasant to be around
- complaining and finding fault
- believing your attitude is a legitimate of a negative situation
- believing that positive people are dreamers, Pollyanna’s, or fools

Exercise: Now you will gain the experience of changing your negative attitudes and responses to positive ones. Following the example below, change these negative situations into positive ones.

Example:	
Negative	Positive
Nothing ever goes my way!	Sometimes things go my way; sometimes they don’t.

1. People are not trustworthy. _____
2. You can’t get good service these days. _____
3. I can’t ever get ahead. _____
4. There’s no justice in this world. _____

Add some of your own statements below:

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Assertiveness

Assertive behaviour allows you to get your needs heard while taking into consideration other people's rights and feelings. In order to behave in an assertive way, you must state your requests clearly and politely and listen to and respect the other person's response. When you are behaving assertively you can express your thoughts, feelings, and opinions in an honest way.

It helps if you have done all your research and know your rights and responsibilities before talking with the other person(s) so you are aware of both you and the other person(s) rights and responsibilities.

Assertive listening is important for good self-advocacy because it lets the other person know you are interested in what they are saying and that you understand what is being said. You can show you are interested in the other person's point of view by paying attention and asking questions when you need to. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you are not sure of something, it is important everyone has a good understanding of what is being discussed.

It is important to be aware that your thoughts affect your behaviours.

Behavioural Components of Assertion and Exercises:

1. Eye contact and appropriate facial expressions are components of effective assertion. (Note: Trainers first briefly model this behaviour both negatively and positively. And then they introduce this exercise)
2. Body posture and appropriate hand movements are also desired components. (Note: Trainers briefly model being stoop-shouldered and “crumbled,” contrasting this with sitting with shoulders squared and head erect; they also model lack of hand movement and then model using appropriate gestures. Then ask the pairs to model)
3. Vocal tone and quality are additional desired components. (Note: Trainers model this vocal behavioural contrast, then have the pairs model “bad” and “good” behaviour twice, with a role reversal.)

Assertiveness Activity

Answer the following questions to see if you are assertive.

	YES	NO
When you disagree with somebody do you speak up and tell them?		
Do you say no if somebody asks you to do something you don't want to do or you do not feel comfortable about?		
Do you ask for help if you need it?		
Do you feel confident about yourself and what you think?		
Do you speak up and tell people what you think and feel?		
Do you try to find a solution that makes you happy?		
Do you try to be polite and respectful to other people?		
Do you listen and try to understand what other people are saying?		
Do you ask questions if you don't understand something?		

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions you are behaving assertively. Try to improve on any of the areas you have answered 'no' to.

Support Networking

It is important for you to have a person who you trust and feel comfortable talking with about your feelings because self-advocacy can sometimes be hard. Talking with someone about how you are feeling can help you to decide what you would like to speak about. Other people can also give you encouragement and support when you need it or help you think of solutions.

The person you chose to support you can also help you to write letters or speak in meetings if you need assistance.

It is important that the person you chose to support you, does not try to speak up for you. They should let you decide what you would like to do at every stage of the Self-advocacy process. It is up to you to make the decisions, the person you chose to support you, is just there to help you when you need it and give you encouragement and support.

Support Networking Activity

Think about the people you speak to if you are feeling angry or upset and the people who help you to decide what you would like to do if you are having a problem.

Speak to them about what you think you would like to speak up about and tell them a bit about what you might need them to do to help you. Ask them if they would like to help. Remember that it is ok for them to say no, they have the right to make decisions just like you do.



Step 5

Understanding How to Prepare for Self-Advocacy

In this step we will discuss:

- Information gathering: Collecting the information you need
- Problem solving: What can I do to change things?
- Planning the self-advocacy process: What do I do first?

Information Gathering: Collecting the Information You Need

It is important that you collect as much information as you can about your problem. In particular you need to know what your rights and responsibilities are so you know what things are reasonable to ask for and expect. If you do not get the right information you might be asking for something that is not possible and be upset when you can't get it. When you have the right information you know what to expect and you won't waste time trying to do something that is not possible.

Part of information gathering is collecting any documentation that supports your case. Depending on what it is you want to speak up about you might need documents that have your medical, migration or citizenship, financial, education, or residential information on them. It is good to have all the documents you need before you start so you can concentrate on speaking up for what you want. The more information you have the better prepared you will be.

Activity 5.1: What do I need to know?

After you have decided what the problem is, how you would like things to change, and who to go to for help and information, you need to decide what information you need.

<p>What are my rights in this situation?</p> <p>Are there rights to protect me in this situation? Are my rights being protected?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>What are my responsibilities in this situation?</p> <p>What do I need to do to make sure my rights are protected? What do I need to do to make the situation better for me?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Do I need any documentation to support what I am saying?</p> <p>Do I need identification papers? Do I need medical papers? Do I need immigration papers? Is there any other documentation that I may need?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Are there any policies or procedures that relate to this situation?</p> <p>Is there an existing complaints procedure where I will be speaking up for myself? What is it?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Do other people have the same or similar problems?</p> <p>Who are they? Are they willing to speak up about the problem together?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Problem Solving: What can I do to change things?

It is usually easier to solve problems if you break the whole problem up into small steps and try to solve one step at a time. You may be able to solve some steps by yourself but need help from your support network for others.

There are usually a few different ways to solve a problem. Some solutions you think of might fix the problem now, but make things worse later on. Others might take a long time to fix but work really well in the long term, while some solutions might fix the problem in some situations but not others. You might hear about a way somebody else has solved the same problem but think it might not work for you. You need to think about what might happen for all of your solutions then decide which solution you think is best for you. If it helps, you might like to write a list of all the solutions you can think of starting from the one you like best and going through to the one you like least.

Activity 5.2: Coming up with solutions that will solve the problems

After you have gathered all the information you can about your problem, you need to think about what you can do to solve the problem. It is good to think about as many different solutions as you can so you can find the one that would be best for you. You need to remember that you might need to change some things as well as other people. Look at the information you have gathered about your problem and try to think of solutions.

It is a good idea to speak to other people because they might think about solutions you haven't. Get together with your support person (or people) and try to think about as many solutions as you can. Write them all down on a blank sheet of paper as you think about them, even if you don't really think they will work.

When you can't think of any more solutions sort the ones you have into three groups. The three groups should be: BEST, OK, and BAD.

BEST	OK	BAD

Planning the Self-Advocacy Process: What do I do first?

When you have decided which solution is best for you, then you need to think about how to achieve that solution. You need to think about whether a letter, phone call, meeting, or government lobbying would be best way.

Activity 5.3: Planning the self-advocacy process

All the things you have done so far have been helping you plan your self-advocacy so now all you have to do is speak up for yourself! There are four ways you can speak up for yourself:

- Informally, like Mary is doing at home with her parents
- Telephone
- Letter
- Meeting

You just need to decide what is the best way to start speaking up for yourself is, which will depend on how you like to communicate with people and what you are speaking up about.

After you have decided what the first thing is that you are going to do, it is time to do it! It can sometimes be scary to speak up for yourself. You might be worried you will forget what you are saying or that people might have trouble understanding what you are saying. One of the best ways to become more confident about what you are saying is to practice. You can ask your support person to help you practice what you need to say until you feel comfortable with actually phoning the person or going to the meeting.

Your support person should pretend to be the person you need to talk to. They should talk about the problem with you and some of the things that you think might come up. You should talk about your thoughts and feelings, ask all the questions you need to, write notes, practice communicating and listening well, make sure you relax and stay focused on what you want just like you would need to if you were speaking to a real person. You can keep practicing like this until you feel that you are comfortable doing it for real.

Communication

Good communication makes a person feel comfortable telling another person about their thoughts and feelings and makes them feel like they are being listened to. People from different cultures have different ways of talking about their thoughts and feelings and showing they are listening because they learn to communicate in different ways. When you communicate with somebody you need to think about how you like to talk about things and how you show people you are listening to them. You also need to think about how the person you are communicating with might like to do it.

It can sometimes be hard to feel comfortable talking with somebody who does not show they are paying attention and listening the same way as you do. If you don't feel comfortable talking about your thoughts and feelings and so you might not speak up about what you want.

Good communication means:

- Knowing what you want
If you don't know what it is you want or what it is you are asking for, it can be hard for other people to help because they don't know what they have to change.
- Talking about what you want or asking for what you want
Think about the way you feel most comfortable telling them about your problem (i.e. telephone, letter, or talk with them in person).
- Listening to what the other person has to say
You also have a responsibility to listen to the other person when they are responding or telling you about their thoughts and feelings.
- Making sure you both understand what is being said
Repeat important parts of what they are saying and ask questions to make sure you understand what has been said.

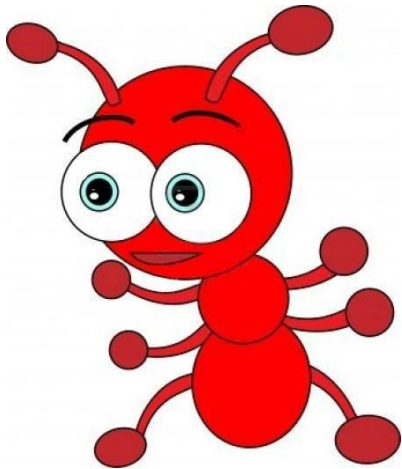
Communication Activity

Option 1: If you are working with an individual, this option may be more beneficial or easier to execute.

Draw a bug that has:

- A long, thin body: One large circle for the head, a smaller circle for the top half of the body, and a slightly larger oval for the bottom half of the body
- Six legs, three on the left and three on the right; each with circle hands
- Two large eyes in the middle of his head, with eyebrows above
- A small mouth.
- Two antennas on the top of his head

Does your bug look like this



Why not? What is different?

Even though both bugs were drawn using the same instructions they probably look very different. That is because everybody is different and they all interpret the things they hear differently. The bugs might look different because of what you thought of in your mind when you heard the word 'bug', they might look different because they are different sizes, they might look different because you drew a scary bug and the other was friendly and cute.

The bug drawings show that it can sometimes be difficult to communicate an idea or thought or feeling because the other person might see things differently. Think about some ways that might have made it easier to draw similar bugs.

Would it have helped if you were given more information? Would it have helped if you were allowed to ask questions

Option 2: When working with two or more individuals, have one describe the house they see; while the other listens attentively to the description and tries to draw what the other person is communicating to them.



Good communication is difficult because everybody interprets things differently but it helps if you keep an open mind, ask and give a lot of information and ask questions if you don't understand something.

Listening

Have you ever thought you heard somebody say something when they actually said something else? That is probably because there is a difference between hearing somebody speak and listening to them. When you LISTEN to somebody speak you HEAR the words they are saying but you also pay attention to the way they say it, how they act, and what you have heard them say before. Listening helps you to UNDERSTAND what the other person is saying because you pay attention to what the other person is thinking, feeling, and wanting. If you do not listen properly mistakes are easy to make because you do not check you have understood what the other person is saying.

It is important to check that you have correctly understood what the other person is saying when you speak up for yourself. You can check that you have understood what the other person is saying by asking questions and repeating what you think they are trying to tell you. The other person is then able to correct you if you are wrong and everyone understands what is being discussed. This is called REFLECTIVE LISTENING.

There are four stages of reflective listening. They are:

1. Attention: always pay complete attention to what the other person is saying
2. Silence: people will usually say more if you are silent and let them speak
3. Response: try to show the other person that you are listening to them
4. Reflecting: repeat what you think the person is saying to check you have understood them correctly

Listening Activity

To be a good listener you have to check you have understood the other person correctly by asking questions and repeating what you think they are saying. You might be used to HEARING people rather than LISTENING to them so you may need to practice your listening skills.

You can practice listening properly with your family and friends every day. When you are talking with them, try to pay attention to what they are saying, and then check that you have understood correctly by asking one of these questions followed by what they are saying:

“So, what you are saying is...” “You feel angry because...”

“You seem to be worried because ...”

“You think it would be good to...”

Step 6

Understanding How to Do Self-Advocacy

In this step we will discuss:

- Documentation and what documents I need?
- Phone Calls: How and when to make a phone call
- Letters or Emails: How and when to write a letter
- Meetings: How and when to prepare for a meeting
- What you should do if you still are not happy

Documentation

It is important to have a record of the self-advocacy process. A record helps you remember what has been decided so far and what needs to happen next. You also need to keep all other information that is relevant to the case. This may include birth certificates, passports, immigration details, doctor's notes and certificates, employment contracts, pay slips, bank details, and letters from various agencies. This information may support your case and fast-track any action that will occur. If possible you should have both the originals and at least one set of photocopies to give out.

Activity 6.1: What documents do I need to keep?

When you are speaking up for yourself it is important to keep everything written down on paper so you know what you have already done, what has been decided, and what needs to happen next.

Check that you have copies of everything on this list in your self-advocacy file:

What is the problem?	
Who can help me?	
What do I want to change?	
What do I need to know?	
What can I do to change things?	
What do I do first?	
Documents (birth certificate, medical records, immigration papers)	
Letters about your case	

Phone calls: How and when you make a phone call

After deciding which person or agency is most able to help with your problem, it is usually best to begin with a phone call explaining what your problem is. It is important you keep a record of everything you say to the other party and what they say to you. It can be difficult to remember all those details so it helps to have a record sheet for you to write them down. You need to record who you spoke to, when you spoke to them, what you said to them, and what they said to you.

It can be difficult to remember everything you want to say so it may be a good idea to write notes on what you want before the phone call starts. That way you can jog your memory and only need to concentrate on writing down the other person's details and what they say. Be polite but firm and remember to thank the person when you have finished.

If you or the other person agree to do anything, it is useful to send a letter or email outlining what agreements have been made after the phone call. Keep track of what arrangements have been made and follow up if no action is taken in the agreed time.

Activity 6.2: Making the phone call

You should usually use a phone call to speak up for yourself if the issue you want to speak up about is relatively simple. It is also good to use a phone call if the person you need to speak to about your problem is somebody you have met before but don't know very well (worker, doctor, OT, teacher) or an agency which you have had a lot to do with.

It is important to keep a record of the phone call and what was discussed so it is a good idea to write notes while you are speaking to the other person. It can be hard to concentrate on writing AND listening at the same time so you can save time by writing the questions you want to ask on a piece of paper before you start the phone call. You can then write notes about the answers you are given during the phone call. You can also include with the questions you are going to ask, three suggestions for solutions to the problem so you have them ready. Sometimes the person you speak to will agree to your best solution.

The following can be used while you are making the phone call. The first form can be used for the questions you have and could be filled out before making the phone call. The chart allows you to keep track of all the solutions and which would be the most helpful.

Before the Phone Call:

Date:

Agency:

Name of the person you speak to:

The problem is: _____

How do you feel about the problem: _____

The problem needs to change because: _____

During the Phone Call:

	YOUR SOLUTIONS	THEIR SUGGESTIONS
BEST		
2nd BEST		
3rd BEST		
4th BEST		

Letters/Emails: How and when to write a letter/email

You can write letters or emails for many different reasons, such as:

- To get information
- To express your opinion
- To request assistance
- To request follow-up
- To avoid telephone tag
- To speak up for yourself if the issue needs to be explained or is complex
- If you have trouble communicating verbally
- If you are unsure which person at an agency you need to speak to about your problem

It is sometimes hard to know what to write in a letter or email so don't be afraid to write a draft or practice one. It might help to get your support person to help you write the letter or email especially if you have trouble writing.

Keep copies of all letters you send and receive. It can also be useful to send copies of the letter or email to your support team so they are aware of the problem.

Activity 6.3: Writing a letter/email

There are some sample letters and emails to help you write your letter if that is how you would like to speak up for yourself. One of your responsibilities when you are self-advocating is to respect the people you are speaking up to and to be polite. One way of showing your respect is to thank people when they have helped you address one of your concerns.

The first sample can be used to raise a problem for the first time or to gather information about a problem. The second sample can be used to thank the people who have helped you to speak up for yourself or those who have listened to you when you were self-advocating.

Read through the samples then practice writing a letter that will help you in your self-advocacy process. You might like to get someone to assist you. Even if you don't get someone to help you write the letter or email it is a good idea to show someone else before sending it to check that it says what you want it to.

Activity 6.3: Writing a letter/email

SAMPLE OUTLINE

Name of business or agency

Address of business (street, city, province, postal code)

Date

Dear Mr. or Mrs.

(if you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, write "To Whom It May Concern").

Step One:

Why are you writing?

What is the problem?

Step Two:

Why does the problem need to change?

Are there any rules that say this problem needs to change?

Step Three:

What is the best solution you can think of to the problem

Are there any other solutions?

Have any solutions been tried already? Why are they not suitable?

Step Four:

Thank you for taking the time to consider this problem

Would you like to talk with the person more about the problem?

How can they contact you?

Sincerely,

Your name

Cc. this is where you write the names of anyone else you have sent the letter to because they are interested in your problem or might be able to help you.

Activity 6.3: Writing a letter CONT'

SAMPLE THANK--YOU

Name of business or agency

Address of business (street, city, province, postal code)

Date

Dear Mr. or Mrs.

(if you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, write "To Whom It May Concern").

Step One:

What has happened?

What needed to change?



Step Two:

How has changing the problem helped you?

Has it helped anyone else?



Step Three:

Thank any specific people who helped you to change the problem

Thank the business or agency as a whole



Sincerely,

Your name

Cc. this is where you write the names of anyone else you have sent the letter to because they are interested in your problem or might be able to help you

Meetings: How and when to prepare for a meeting

You would usually choose to speak up for yourself in a meeting if you are not happy with the answers and solutions you have from your phone calls or letters. Meetings are a good place to negotiate with the other person to find a solution that you are both happy with. It is good to arrange a meeting if the problem is very complex or if there are legal issues involved.

Important things to remember when you are speaking up for yourself before, during and after a meeting are:

Before

- Prepare for the meeting
- Plan an agenda
- Collect all the documents needed
- Find out where the meeting is taking place and make sure you are familiar with how to get there
- Arrive at the meeting 10 minutes early

During

- Relax and stay calm
- You can have a person there to support you and take notes while you talk, or they can take over if you become too emotional
- Present your issues as clearly as possible
- Pay attention and listen to what the other people are saying
- At the end of the meeting repeat the solutions and the dates they should start/finish – so everyone is clear and on the same page

After

- Express your feelings with the person you have chosen to support you; you may feel upset, worried, or angry
- Discuss what you would like to do next

Activity 6.4: Preparing for a meeting

Ask someone – your support person, a friend, or someone in your family - to role play a meeting. They should pretend they are the person you will be meeting with and you should practice speaking up for yourself. Make sure you prepare for the meeting:

- An agenda or list of things you want to talk about
- All the documents you need
- Your self-advocacy file

What you should do if you still are not happy

If you are not happy with the results of the meeting or you feel that the action that was agreed on at the meeting is not being done or the progress is too slow, there are several steps you could take:

1. Take your dissatisfaction to more senior people in the organization—These people might be in a better position to help you

If the problem is still not resolved...

2. Ask someone to advocate on your behalf—Your support person would be a great resource, or there are also agencies that provide advocacy services

If the problem is still not resolved...

3. Make a formal complaint about how you have been treated by the organization when you took your problem to them—Ask your service provider for a copy of the agency's Complaints Form and Procedures

If the problem is still not resolved...

4. Inform your local member of parliament or a cabinet minister

Stress Management

Having a plan can help you reduce stress by eliminating potential problems before they occur. You should make a list of all the steps you need to do so that you can reach your goal. You can update this list along the way as you think of additional things which need to be done. However, even if you are as prepared as you can be, things may still go wrong and you might still feel nervous or stressed. These are a few techniques to learn which may help calm and relax you.

Imagery: Sometimes you are not able to change or leave the place which is making you tense and nervous, such as when you are waiting for an important meeting. You can help yourself relax by simply imagining you are in a more enjoyable place. When you imagine you are more calm and relaxed, you begin to feel more relaxed. You can also help prepare yourself for a meeting or presentation by imagining the event beforehand. If you 'rehearse' the meeting beforehand you can think of solutions and be prepared for them. When you imagine the meeting going along with your plan, you give yourself confidence to keep going towards your goal.

Physical Relaxation: When you feel stressed your body prepares itself by increasing muscle tension and because your body is focused on being tense it can be difficult to think clearly. By reducing muscle tension you can help yourself think more clearly under pressure. You can do this by breathing deeply and slowly, and concentrating on tensing and relaxing your muscles.

Stress Management Activity

1. Close your eyes. Think of a place where you are happiest. Try to remember the sounds, sights, smells and the feelings you have when you are there. Whenever you are feeling stressed, angry or upset, go to this place and remember the feeling of calm you have when you are there.
2. Close your eyes. Imagine the big meeting you have planned has just begun. Go through what you will say first, and then try to think of what the other person will say. 'Rehearse' the meeting in your head as many times as you like imagining all types of scenarios.
3. Close your eyes. Concentrate on breathing in deeply and feel your lungs expand. Hold the breath for a second then concentrate on breathing out slowly until you have no air left in your lungs. Repeat this breathing until you feel calmer.
4. Close your eyes. Tense the muscles in your feet hold it then relax them. Then tense the muscles in your calves then relax. Continue tensing then relaxing up the body until the head. Finally tense all your muscles at once, hold, and then relax.

Make a list of some of your own stress elevating activities or thoughts to refer back to when you feel overwhelmed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Preventing Conflict

1. **Planning:** being prepared is the best way to stop conflict arising. If you know what you want, what they want and some possible solutions before then you are more able to stay calm and focus on getting a solution you are both happy with.
2. **Timing:** arrange to speak at a time that is convenient for both parties. Conflict often occurs when there is not enough time given to discuss things.
3. **Control your emotions:** sometimes it can be hard to stop yourself getting upset or angry when you are not being listened to or when there seems like there is no good solution. If you feel yourself getting upset or angry, try to use some simple relaxation techniques. They can help you to calm down and clear your mind so you can concentrate better (find these skills in the stress management section). If you still cannot calm down don't be afraid to ask for a break but express that you would like to continue the discussion later. Go for a walk and try to unwind or talk with your support person about what to do now.
4. **Speaking:** make sure you give as much information as you can about how you feel, why you feel that way, and how you would like things to change. Do not blame the other person, and try to understand their point of view but make sure you speak about your feelings and what you want.
5. **Listening:** listen to what the other person is saying to you. Repeat back what they have said to make sure you are understanding them properly (find these skills in the listening section).
6. **Discuss:** calmly discuss the different solutions both parties have raised. Try to focus on the common solutions between parties.
7. **Evaluate:** decide on an option, agree to trial it for a period of time then meet to discuss if it is working.

Preventing Conflict Activity

When you prepare for a meeting or a phone call that might involve conflict, make sure you have the following checklist in your self-advocacy file.

<p>Step 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop • Relax • Focus on the problem 	
<p>Step 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take turns talking about how you feel and what you think. • Remember to listen 	
<p>Step 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of how you both feel • List what you both need 	
<p>Step 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm all the solutions you can both think of 	
<p>Step 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the solution that you are both happiest with 	
<p>Step 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a plan about how long you will trial the solution for • Decide when you will next meet to discuss if the solution is working 	

Negotiation

Self-advocacy is about speaking up for yourself, asking for what you want and making decisions about your life. To do this you might have to negotiate with somebody else. You need to negotiate when what you want is different to what the other people involved want. Negotiation is when two people (or groups of people) who want different things work together to find a solution that will make them both happy. It is sometimes called a win-win approach because people try to find an answer that is best for them AND the person they are negotiating with.

To find a win-win answer, you might not always be able to get EXACTLY what you want because that might be opposite to what the other person wants. To find an answer that will make you both happy, you might both need to give up some of the things you want. BUT you can't give up everything you want because then you will not be able to find an answer that will make you both happy. It is important to know exactly what you want and to think about what the other person wants. When you know what you both want you can then think of what you are prepared to do to get what you want and what the other person would like for them to give you what you want.

Negotiation Activity

Before starting to negotiate, it can help to try and think about what both people want and what each person might be prepared to give up. It can sometimes be difficult to decide what another person (or group of people) wants and what they might be prepared to give up, but the more things you think of the better prepared you will be. Answer these questions to be better prepared to negotiate:

What do I want?	
What do I think they want?	
What am I prepared to give up?	
What do I think they might be prepared to give up?	



Conclusion

You have just finished speaking up for yourself about something that is important to you. Hopefully you were able to change things for the better but if you haven't, don't give up. The next time you speak up for yourself it might be better!

Self-advocacy can change all areas of your life for the better: it can give you the freedom and independence to make choices about your life so you can live the way that best suits YOU. If there is something that is making you upset or angry or something you would like to change, don't be afraid to speak up and tell someone how you are feeling. It is up to you to change the things in your life that you are not happy with!

You can use the steps in this manual over and over again when you use self-advocacy in all areas of your life. Go back and practice the skills that you feel you need to improve as many times as you like. Sometimes the self-advocacy process can be tough, but it is worth all the hard effort you put in. Self-advocacy helps you to create the life YOU want to live.

Resources



Since 1974, CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario / Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario) has developed clear, accurate, and practical legal rights information to help people who have low incomes or face other barriers, such as language or literacy, to understand and exercise their legal rights.

For more information go to <http://www.cleo.on.ca/en> or call: 416-408-4420



211 is the source Canadians trust when seeking information and services to deal with life's challenges. 211's award-winning telephone help line (2-1-1) and website provide a gateway to community, social, non-clinical health and related government services. 211 helps to navigate the complex network of human services quickly and easily, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 100 languages.

211 connects people to the right information and services, strengthens Canada's health and human services, and helps Canadians to become more engaged with their communities.

For more information go to <http://www.211.ca/homepage> or call 2-1-1

Mini Tool Kit – To Promote Self-Advocacy

The tool kit is designed to be an “in the moment” quick reference to assist Catulpa staff to help persons we support to process issues that are problematic; and to help them develop the skills to become successful self-advocates.

Steps to Self-Advocacy

1. What is the problem?

- What is it you don't like?
- How do you feel when the problem happens?
- Why do you feel like that when the problem happens? Are your rights protected? Is it unfair?
- Who is causing the problem?
- When does the problem happen most?
- Where does the problem happen most?

2. Who can help?

- Who has the most information about the problem?
- Who are you comfortable talking to about your thoughts and feelings?
- Who can give you information about your rights?
- Who can give you information about your responsibilities?

3. What do you want to change?

- What needs to change?
- Who needs to change?
- Where do things need to change?
- Why do things need to change?
- When do things need to change?
- How do things need to change?

4. What do you need to know about solving the problem?

- What are your rights?
- What are your responsibilities?
- Do you need any documentation?
- Do other people have similar problems? (family, friends, and professionals):

5. Ranking solutions to the problem: BEST, OK, and BAD?

- Think of as many solutions as possible to find the one that is most suitable for you.
- Sort all the solutions into Best, OK and Bad columns.

6. Planning to resolve the problem?

- Call the person you would like to meet with, tell them your problem, and ask if they could meet with you to discuss it further.
- Set a date, time and place. Let them know if you are bringing any support people to the meeting and ask if they will have other people coming to the meeting.

7. Prepare for the discussion

- Write what you want to talk about, an agenda.
- Gather the all the documents you might need for the meeting.

8. Negotiating: Effective Compromise

- What do you want?
- What do you think they want, Or what do you think they will say?
- What are you prepared to give up?
- What do you think they might be prepared to give up?
- Revisit Best, OK and Bad rankings.

How to prevent conflict/problem solving in a meeting:

- If you are meeting with someone, arrive early to the meeting.
- Stop, relax and focus on the problem.
- During the discussion:
 - Take turns talking about how you feel and take turns listening to what others are saying.
 - Ask someone to take notes for you.
 - Brainstorm and review all the solutions you can both think of.
 - Choose the solution that you are both happiest with.
 - Make a plan for how long you will try out the solution.
 - Decide if you would like another discussion to talk about whether the solution is working.

9. Following the meeting:

- Talk things over with the support person. Discuss what you would like to do next.

10. What to do if you are not happy following the meeting:

- Take your dissatisfaction to more senior people at the agency/business.
- Ask someone to advocate on your behalf.
- Make a formal complaint and ask for the agency's/business Complaints Form and procedures.
- If the problem is still not resolved inform your local MPP/MP/Chamber of Commerce

Activity 1.1: Understanding Self-advocacy

In your own words answer these questions. Your answers do not need to be perfect; this is just to help you to understand what Self-advocacy is. (Note: the presenter may decide to introduce this activity to the group as a whole)

What is Self-advocacy?

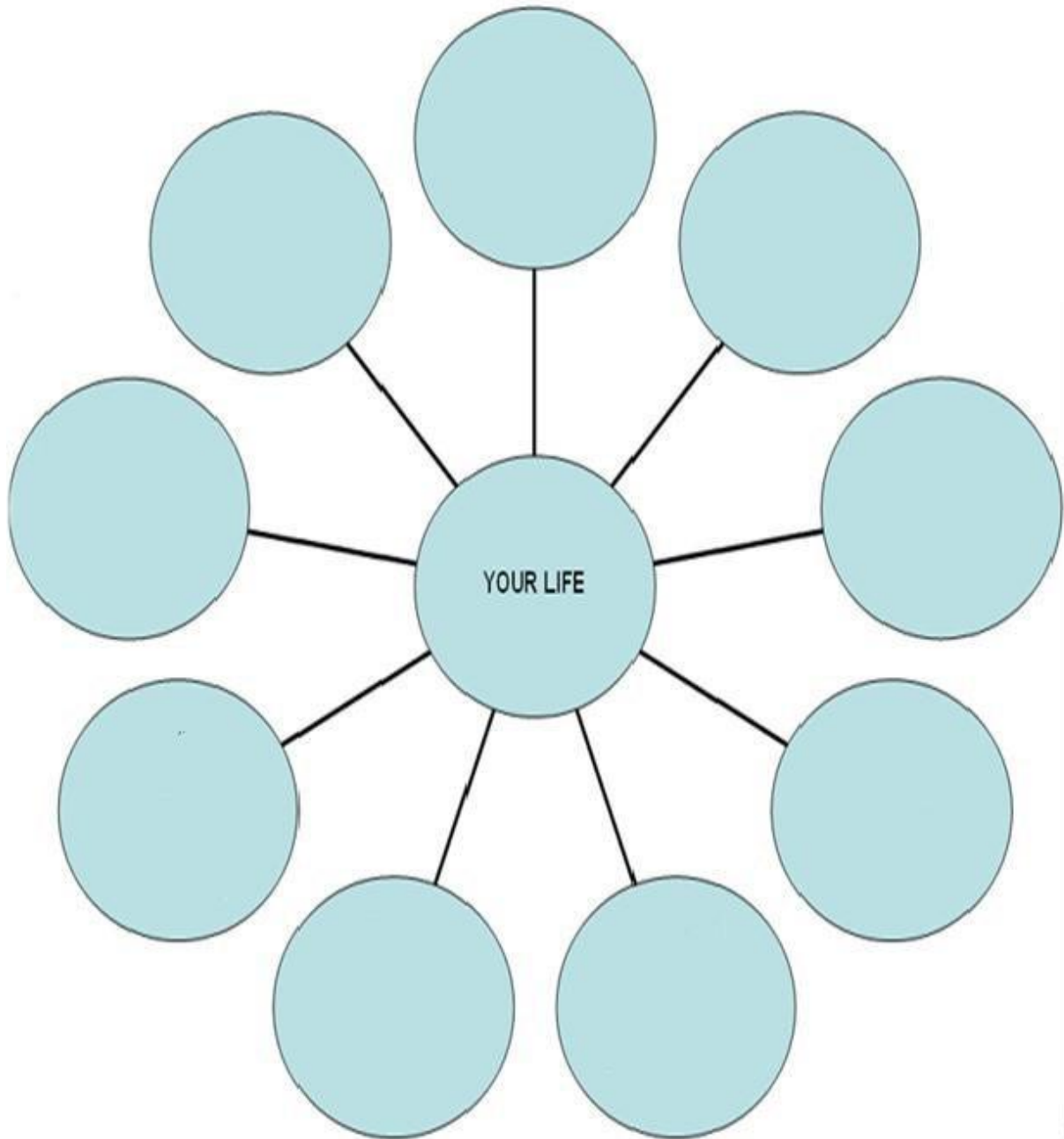
Why is Self-advocacy important?

Where are some places where you could self-advocate? List 3 places.

When would you self-advocate? List 3 situations.

Activity 2.1: Where you could use Self-advocacy

Using the following diagram, identify where you can use Self-advocacy in your life.



Activity 2.2: Skills Required to Speak up for Yourself

What are some examples of skills that would be useful when speaking up for yourself?

Skills I Have



Skills I Need to Improve



Activity 2.3: Helping others to let me speak up for myself

What are some examples of skills that would be useful when helping others to let you speak up for yourself?

Skills I Have

Skills I Need to Improve

Activity 4.1: How to decide what you want to speak up about

Think of a problem you have that you would like to speak up about and then answer these questions.

<p>What is the problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it that I don't like? - What makes me angry, upset or sad? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>How do I feel when the problem happens?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do I get angry? - Do I get upset? - Do I get sad? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Why do I feel like that when the problem happens?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are my rights being protected? - Is it unfair? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Who is causing the problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it me? - Is it somebody else? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>When does the problem happen the most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does it happen when I am alone? - Does it happen when other people are around? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Where does the problem happen most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does it happen in one place? - Does it happen in a lot of places? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Activity 4.2: Who can help?

It is good to know all the people you can speak to about your problem and all the people who can give you more information that might help you.

Write a list of people you trust and feel comfortable talking to. You might like to talk to them and ask if they would be able to be your support person while you are speaking up for yourself.

The people I feel comfortable speaking to about my thoughts and feelings are:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Then you need to think about who you are going to speak up to and who could give you information that might help you. Think about the problem you decided to speak up about and list all the people you think could help.

Who is the person (or people) I need to speak-up to about my feelings?	
Who has information about this problem?	
Who could give me information about my rights?	
Who could give me information about my responsibilities?	

Activity 4.3: What do I want to change?

After you have decided what the problem is and who the best people to talk to about it are, you need to decide what you would you like to happen. If you don't think about exactly how you would like things to change then you could speak up for yourself and get things to change in a way that you don't like.

<p>What needs to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is happening now that I don't like? • Have any other changes been tried? • What is the cause of the problem? • How does the problem make me feel? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Who needs to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does another person's behaviour need to change? Who? • Do many people's behaviours need to change? • Does my behaviour need to change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Where do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do things need to change in one place? Where? • Do things need to change in a lot of places? Where? • Do things need to change everywhere? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Why do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the way things are done now make you feel? • How would I like to feel? • How will I feel if things do not change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>When do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the problem need to change now? • Can the problem be changed slowly? • By what date do I want things to change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>How do things need to change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best way I can think of for things to change? • How would I like to feel? • What are some other ways I would like things to change? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Self-Esteem Activity A — Personal Self-Esteem Post Evaluation

Personal Self-Esteem Evaluation

The following exercise allows you to evaluate your self-esteem using this scale: 5=Always

4=Most of the time

3=Sometimes 2=Rarely

1=Never

___ 1. I feel successful in my present work/school activities

___ 2. I feel satisfied with my present work/school path

___ 3. I consider myself to be a risk taker

___ 4. I feel that continuing my education is important

___ 5. I consciously look for the good in others

___ 6. I can do most everything I put my mind to

___ 7. I am comfortable in new social situations

___ 8. I appreciate compliments from others

___ 9. I feel comfortable in new social situations

___ 10. I enjoy telling others of my success

___ 11. I am an optimistic person

___ 12. I am goal-oriented

___ 13. I am comfortable making decisions

___ 14. I am in good physical condition

___ 15. I am respected by others for who I am

___ 16. I project a positive self-image

___ 17. I am an active listener

___ 18. I like being responsible for projects

- ___ 19. I enjoy controversial discussions
- ___ 20. I find obstacles challenging
- ___ 21. I am able to ask for help without feeling guilty
- ___ 22. I can laugh at my own mistakes
- ___ 23. I am responsible for my thoughts and actions
- ___ 24. I am direct when I voice my feelings
- ___ 25. I am leading a balanced life
- ___ 26. I am an enthusiastic person
- ___ 27. I use eye contact when talking to others
- ___ 28. I genuinely like myself for who I am
- ___ 29. I take criticism well and learn from it
- ___ 30. I exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet

Add up your points and put the total here: _____

Your score indicates:

- 120-150 = Very high self-esteem
- 90-119 = Moderately high self-esteem
- 60-89 = Average self-esteem
- 31-59 = Moderately low self-esteem
- 0-30 = Low self-esteem

Self-Esteem Activity B

Letting go of Negative Attitudes

We all experience negative attitudes and feelings at different times. It is when those feelings persist and affect your way of thinking and reacting that problems arise. Low self-esteem is accompanied by negative attitudes. Do any of the following “symptoms” apply to you?

- ___ finding something wrong in every situation
- ___ being pessimistic about outcomes
- ___ being unhappy because your expectations were not met
- ___ believing that things will go wrong
- ___ being unpleasant to be around
- ___ complaining and finding fault
- ___ believing your attitude is a legitimate of a negative situation
- ___ believing that positive people are dreamers, Pollyanna’s, or fools

Exercise: Now you will gain the experience of changing your negative attitudes and responses to positive ones. Following the example below, change these negative situations into positive ones.

Example:		
Negative		Positive
Nothing ever goes my way!		Sometimes things go my way; sometimes they don’t.

1. People are not trustworthy. _____
2. You can’t get good service these days. _____
3. I can’t ever get ahead. _____
4. There’s no justice in this world. _____

Add some of your own statements below:

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Assertiveness Activity

Answer the following questions to see if you are assertive.

	YES	NO
When you disagree with somebody do you speak up and tell them?		
Do you say no if somebody asks you to do something you don't want to do or you do not feel comfortable about?		
Do you ask for help if you need it?		
Do you feel confident about yourself and what you think?		
Do you speak up and tell people what you think and feel?		
Do you try to find a solution that makes you happy?		
Do you try to be polite and respectful to other people?		
Do you listen and try to understand what other people are saying?		
Do you ask questions if you don't understand something?		

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions you are behaving assertively. Try to improve on any of the areas you have answered 'no' to.

Activity 5.1: What do I need to know?

After you have decided what the problem is, how you would like things to change, and who to go to for help and information, you need to decide what information you need.

<p>What are my rights in this situation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are there rights to protect me in this situation? <input type="checkbox"/> Are my rights being protected? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>What are my responsibilities in this situation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What do I need to do to make sure my rights are protected? <input type="checkbox"/> What do I need to do to make the situation better for me? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Do I need any documentation to support what I am saying?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Do I need identification papers? <input type="checkbox"/> Do I need medical papers? <input type="checkbox"/> Do I need immigration papers? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there any other documentation that I may need? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Are there any policies or procedures that relate to this situation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Is there an existing complaints procedure where I will be speaking up for myself? <input type="checkbox"/> What is it? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Do other people have the same or similar problems?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Who are they? <input type="checkbox"/> Are they willing to speak up about the problem together? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

When you have decided what information you need to speak up for yourself, you can think of questions you need to ask the people on your list from Activity 4.2 on page 20. You might like to take notes while you are asking the questions.

Activity 5.2: Coming up with solutions that will solve the problems

After you have gathered all the information you can about your problem, you need to think about what you can do to solve the problem. It is good to think about as many different solutions as you can so you can find the one that would be best for you. You need to remember that you might need to change some things as well as other people. Look at the information you have gathered about your problem and try to think of solutions.

It is a good idea to speak to other people because they might think about solutions you haven't. Get together with your support person (or people) and try to think about as many solutions as you can. Write them all down on a blank sheet of paper as you think about them, even if you don't really think they will work.

When you can't think of any more solutions sort the ones you have into three groups. The three groups should be: BEST, OK, and BAD.

BEST	OK	BAD

Activity 6.1: What documents do I need to keep?

When you are speaking up for yourself it is important to keep everything written down on paper so you know what you have already done, what has been decided, and what needs to happen next.

Check that you have copies of everything on this list in your self-advocacy file:

What is the problem?	
Who can help me?	
What do I want to change?	
What do I need to know?	
What can I do to change things?	
What do I do first?	
Documents (birth certificate, medical records, immigration papers)	
Letters about your case	

Before the Phone Call:

Date:

Agency:

Name of the person you speak to:

The problem is: _____

How do you feel about the problem: _____

The problem needs to change because: _____

During the Phone Call:

	YOUR SOLUTIONS	THEIR SUGGESTIONS
BEST		
2nd BEST		
3rd BEST		
4th BEST		

Activity 6.3: Writing a letter/email

SAMPLE OUTLINE

Your name

Address (street, city, province, postal code)

Name of business or agency

Address of business (street, city, province, postal code)

Date

Dear Mr. or Mrs.

(if you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, write "To Whom It May Concern").

Step One:

- Why are you writing?
- What is the problem?

Step Two:

- Why does the problem need to change?
- Are there any rules that say this problem needs to change?

Step Three:

- What is the best solution you can think of to the problem
- Are there any other solutions?
- Have any solutions been tried already? Why are they not suitable?

Step Four:

- Thank you for taking the time to consider this problem
- Would you like to talk with the person more about the problem?
- How can they contact you?

Sincerely,

Your name

Cc. this is where you write the names of anyone else you have sent the letter to because they are interested in your problem or might be able to help you.

Activity 6.3: Writing a letter/email

SAMPLE THANK--YOU

Your name

Address (street, city, province, postal code)

Name of business or agency

Address of business (street, city, province, postal code)

Date

Dear Mr. or Mrs.

(if you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, write "To Whom It May Concern").

Step One:

- What has happened?
- What needed to change?

Step Two:

- How has changing the problem helped you?
- Has it helped anyone else?

Step Three:

- Thank any specific people who helped you to change the problem
- Thank the business or agency as a whole

Sincerely,

Your name

Cc. this is where you write the names of anyone else you have sent the letter to because they are interested in your problem or might be able to help you

Stress Management Activity

Make a list of some of your own stress elevating activities or thoughts to refer back to when you feel overwhelmed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Preventing Conflict Activity

When you prepare for a meeting or a phone call that might involve conflict, make sure you have the following checklist in your self-advocacy file.

Step 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop • Relax • Focus on the problem 	
Step 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take turns talking about how you feel and what you think. • Remember to listen 	
Step 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of how you both feel • List what you both need 	
Step 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm all the solutions you can both think of 	
Step 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the solution that you are both happiest with 	
Step 6: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a plan about how long you will trial the solution for • Decide when you will next meet to discuss if the solution is working 	

If you think that conflict is developing when you are self-advocating take a moment to pause and try to relax. Go through your self-advocacy file and find the conflict prevention checklist sheet. You can then look at the sheet to remind you what you need to do to help stop conflict from occurring or getting worse. Ask the person you are speaking with to stop talking for a moment while you both calm down. When you have both calmed down go through the steps on the checklist as you try to find a solution to the problem.

Negotiation Activity

Before starting to negotiate, it can help to try and think about what both people want and what each person might be prepared to give up. It can sometimes be difficult to decide what another person (or group of people) wants and what they might be prepared to give up, but the more things you think of the better prepared you will be. Answer these questions to be better prepared to negotiate:

What do I want?	
What do I think they want?	
What am I prepared to give up?	
What do I think they might be prepared to give up?	