

Self-Advocacy Planner

Let's go!!

This section of the web site comprises of several steps designed to assist you plan and implement your own advocacy campaign. Though the plan is not specific to any particular type of advocacy, the following techniques are based on educating rather than directing. Work through each step as they are presented before moving on to the next one. There is also a summary at the end of this guide that will run you through some of the more important things to remember when self-advocating so you don't have to worry about trying to remember them all. Remember, this is a guide only so use your best judgement when planning to self-advocate. So let's go...!!

Overview

The following self-advocacy plan is presented in the following format:

- Step #1. What do you want to advocate about?
- Step #2. Who should you advocate to?
- Step #3. What do I say?
- Step #4. What if I need someone else to assist me to advocate?
- Step #5. How do I make contact?
- Step #6. How do I tell if it's working?
- Step #7. Where can I receive help with this process?

Step #1.

The first step in this process is to clearly identify what your goals are. You may have more than one goal; however it is important to remember that all your goals should be specific around the issue you are advocating. Make sure you write down things as you go so that you don't forget anything and you remain focused on your task. Having a goal is essential when you are self-advocating so that you have something to work towards. It also means that you have a sense of achievement once you reach that goal (and so you should!!).

So now you have set your goal(s), but if you are going plan effectively you may need some more information. It may also be beneficial for you to have a strategy and some evidence. A strategy is a list of details related specifically to how you will achieve that goal or desired outcome. Evidence relates to the information or proof that will let you know you have actually achieved that goal or outcome. This format for planning not only gives you a comprehensive tool for self-advocating, but also the best chance at being able to achieve your goals. Don't forget to check off each goal as you complete it. See below for an example of how a plan might look:

| Goal | Strategy | Evidence | Completed |
|--|---|---|-----------|
| To receive ongoing in-home services from Blue Care. | Call Blue Care, register with their service, and make a time for them to come out and complete an assessment. | Blue Care completed in-home assessment and have confirmed they will provide ongoing services. | Yes |
| To receive legal support after the accident I had at work. | Contact a lawyer I am happy with, tell them my story, and have them accept my case. | Completed a meeting with lawyers and received written confirmation that they will accept my case. | No |

Another step that may be useful is to gather as much information about the issue as possible (this may be paperwork, notes, receipts, or other general documents). This will not only help you keep focused and motivated on your goal(s), but may be useful during the advocacy process. Again, make sure that any information or documents you have are specific to the issue you are self-advocating about. You may want to read through the information again to make sure you are familiar with it.

Step #2.

Who you actually need to talk to in resolving an issue can sometimes be very confusing. If the reason you are advocating is because of a particular organisation, then you should contact that organisation first to start the resolution process. Remember, you must always give the service provider or organisation a reasonable opportunity to resolve the issue. It will be helpful to become familiar with the referral process of the organisation you are dealing with.

In some cases you may not have been previously dealing with a service or organisation. The issue in this instance may be that you are not able to organise a vital service, or you have not received some information that you really need. You may have to contact a Government Department or an independent organisation (such as a Union or specific Advocacy group). If you are not sure who to contact, please click here to view a list of contact details in specific categories to assist you in finding the most appropriate service. If the people you call can't assist you, make sure you ask them if they know of anyone who can.

Always remember to make notes of the names of people you speak with, what you spoke about, and the date you spoke with them. Keep these notes somewhere safe along with any other information you may have gathered.

Step #3.

What you say or write to an organisation or service provider is very important as it may influence how long the advocacy process takes. Make sure that you focus on your goal and are as specific as possible. If you are going to speak with someone on the phone about your issue, it may be helpful to write down what you are going to say before hand. If you are going to write a letter or an email, make sure you read through it a few times to make sure it is clear and to the point. [Click here](#) if you are unsure about what to say and require some assistance.

State clearly the issue you are talking about and indicate what action you think should be taken to resolve it. Make it clear that you are giving the service provider or organisation a chance to fix a mistake or omission if that is the issue.

It is important to remember that although you may be upset, you should always be polite and keep your cool. State your case calmly, clearly and confidently. If you find that the situation is becoming too much, calmly tell the person you are speaking with that you will call them back later and hang up.

Always remember to ask if you are unsure about anything (or you need something clarified), there are never any stupid questions!!

Step #4.

You are here to self-advocate (of course), so why would you need anyone else to speak on your behalf? Depending on the issue you are dealing with, you may need a professional to communicate your views to the organisation you are dealing with, or assist you to organise a service. For example, if a medical issue is involved, a doctor may have to write a letter or speak with someone directly for the advocacy process to continue or for a service to be implemented. Don't ever feel bad if you wanted to advocate purely on you own and you had to involve someone else, sometimes it is the only way to resolve an issue; it in no way means that you have failed.

Getting assistance from a family member or close friend is another good way to self-advocate if you are having trouble getting your point across. Your family and friends often know your situation well and they can work with you to achieve your goal.

Step #5.

There are several different methods you can use to self-advocate; phone, email, letter, fax, or the media. Choose the method that best suits you, or the one you feel most comfortable with. Remember that the way you raise your issue will be different from place to place. Some organisations will only accept letters. Please [click here](#) to receive more information about the ways you can make contact with organisations or services. There are also some examples available if you are not sure what to write or say.

Step #6.

Hopefully after Step #1 you have completed a plan of how you are going to self-advocate i.e., your strategy, evidence, and goals . The best way to evaluate how you are going with the advocacy process is to take some time and review your plan. If (for a specific goal) you have completed the strategy and you now have your evidence, then you should have completed your goal, congratulations!! If you feel that your goal is completed, make sure you check it off your list. This will not only give you a sense of achievement, but also prevent you from doing any additional, unnecessary work.

You may however, not feel as though the goal has been completed, even if you have done the strategy just as you outlined. If this is the case, then you should go back and review the strategy, evidence, and goals you have set yourself. It may be a matter (especially after you have now had some experience) of redefining some of your strategies or evidence to better suit the goal you have. You might have found that the strategy you identified does not work or is not practical and you may need to make some changes. Additionally, you may find that the goals you have previously set are too big or too broad . If this is the case, you may need to re-evaluate your goal and break it up into smaller, more manageable goals. The benefit of this is that you have a more realistic idea of how you are progressing, and you should know a lot earlier if things are not going according to your plan.

Step #7.

There are several ways you can receive assistance with the self-advocacy planning, or with any or any other topic on this web site:

- Go to our Feedback section and let us know what your issue is;
- Go to our Service Directory for organisation contacts;
- Go to our Other Links page for details on other general/advocacy organisations;
- Go to our Help Me page;
- Go to our Contact Us page and call us or send us an email.

This is the end of the self-advocacy plan. Now that you are an expert in the matter of self-advocacy and planning, use the left navigation bar to access different areas of Nexus.