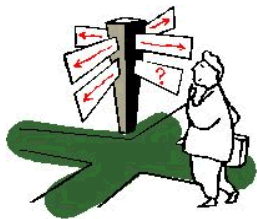


A GUIDE TO SELF-ADVOCACY**GETTING ORGANIZED, BEING PREPARED, TAKING ACTION,
AND GETTING RESULTS**

Self-Advocacy means being able to speak up for yourself so that you can get what you need and handle any problems and make sure you get satisfactory results.

Evictions, credit problems, problems with social service agencies, and utility shut-offs are a few examples of serious legal problems faced by many people. Self-advocacy allows you to know what needs to be done to take care of these legal problems yourself and many other problems before they become too serious.

There are four easy steps to becoming a self-advocate:

Step 1: Be Organized

- Make sure you keep all important papers and emails
- Keep a record of all important phone calls including the name of the person you talked with and the date
- Keep your papers and records organized

Step 2: Develop a Plan for Action

- Identify the problem
- What are possible solutions to the problem?
- Choose the best solution that will get you the results you need

Step 3: Take Action

- **Be Prepared!**
- Focus on why you are taking action and what you need from the person you are contacting
- have the important papers and records with you in order to help resolve your problem
- know what your next step will be if the person you contact cannot get you the results you need
- **Listen and Remain Calm!** A good conversation will help. Angry words may only annoy the person you are requesting help from and can make it more difficult to get what you need. You should also be treated with respect - be assertive.
- **Don't Give Up!** Present your information and problem and ask questions. If you are not getting the results you need, ask to speak to a supervisor, or, if necessary, the supervisor's supervisor. If appropriate, ask for a decision in writing.

Step 4: Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help

- Seek support from family, friends, church and community organizations
- Find out about community resources that can help you. Check your phone book, call your MP's or MPP's office or local social service agency
- The Volunteer & Information Quinte provides information about available resources in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties.
 - Phone Number: 613-969-8862. Toll Free: 1-866-340-0899.
- You can also call 211 Ontario to get information on social, community, and health services 24/7.
- "Community Key" and "Where to Turn" are reference materials published by these offices respectively and are available in most libraries
- Call the community legal clinic for help or referral if you don't know how to handle your legal problem

(Adapted from a similar publication by Statewide Legal Services, in Connecticut, USA)