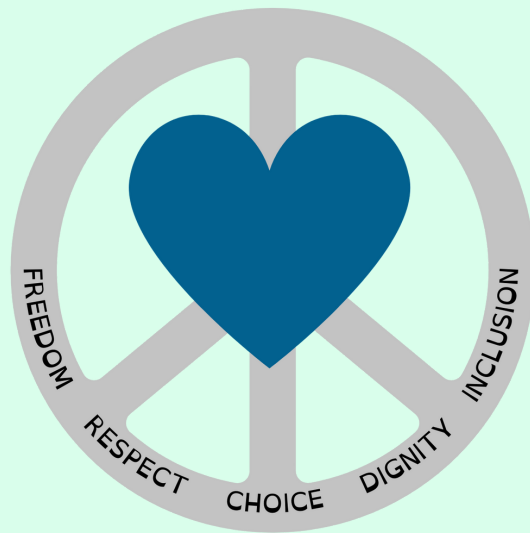


SELF-ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



By Self-Advocates For Self-Advocates

www.bcpeoplefirst.com

Made by BC People First Society

Have feedback?

Email us anytime at hello@bcpeoplefirst.com or
come to one of our events!



BC People First
www.bcpeoplefirst.com

Never Give Up

Change takes time, but every action you take moves
the fight forward!

One voice is strong, but many voices together are
unstoppable!

Nothing changes for us—without us.

Leadership means speaking up, not waiting for
permission.

It's okay to dream.

It's okay to rest.

It's okay to be fierce.

It's okay to be you.

#SelfAdvocatesUnite

We can share a hashtag (#) like this to
grow the self-advocacy movement and connect
with others on social media.

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What Is Self-Advocacy?

What Does Self-Advocacy Mean?

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself.

It's about knowing your rights and telling others what you need.

It also means making your own choices about your life.

Why Is Self-Advocacy Important?

People with disabilities deserve to have a voice in all decisions that affect us.

This includes schools, jobs, government, and the community.

When we speak up, things get better for everyone.

Working Together

Self-advocacy is also about working with other people to make change.

One voice is powerful. Many voices together are unstoppable.

Self-Advocacy = Leadership

Self-advocacy means speaking up, making change, and being a leader.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Setting An Advocacy Goal

What is my goal? What can I make happen?

Why is this important to me?

Steps to achieve it:

1.

2.

3.

Who can help me?

When will I meet my goal? How long will all the steps take?

How will I celebrate when I achieve my goal?

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



Meeting Preparation Checklist

What is the purpose of this meeting?

Who will I be meeting with?

What do I want to say?

What questions do I need to ask?

What information do I need to bring?

Advocacy Meeting Notes Suggestions

Meeting Date:

Meeting Time:

Meeting location:

Who attended this meeting?

What was this meeting about?

What did we agree to?

Who is responsible for following up?

What went well?

What do I need now?

Sample Advocacy Letter Template

[Your Name]

[Date]

[Subject]

Attn: [Recipient's Name and Title]

[Introduction: Why are you writing?]

[Key Points: What is the issue and what do you need?
What will solve the problem?]

[Closing: Thank you and how to follow up.]

Self-Advocacy Tips

Practice speaking up for yourself. Here are some advocacy statements to get started:

- “This is what I need.”
- “I don’t understand. Can you explain it another way?”
- “I need to take a break.”
- “Who can I ask for help?”
- “I need this accommodation to succeed.”
- “Can we go over the timeline again?”
- “Can we use plain language in this document?”
- “This is not working for me. Can we try another way?”
- “I have the right to make my own decisions.”
- “I have the right to be treated with respect.”
- “I have a support person I’d like to bring with me.”
- “Can we document this agreement in writing?”
- “Can I record this conversation for future reference?”
- “Under the Accessible Canada Act, I am entitled to accommodations.”
- “I would like to contact an advocate or legal advisor about this.”

Practice Speaking in Front of Others

- Rehearse your points with a friend or group before meeting officials.
- Practice staying calm and confident under pressure.

Self-Advocacy Tips

Handle Challenges with Care

- Stay calm and take deep breaths.
- Ask for time to think if you feel overwhelmed.
- Bring a trusted supporter if needed.

Contact Decision Makers or Government Officials

- Know who to contact.
- Know your goal.
- Gather key information before contacting them.
- Thank them for their time.
- Remind them of what you discussed.

Know the Laws That Protect You

- Research the UNCRPD and Accessible Canada Act (or other laws that apply to your issue).
- If you're advocating for disability rights, understand the BC Accessibility Act and BC Human Rights Code.
- Be ready to explain why your issue is about fairness and rights, not just personal preference.

Use Social Media to Get Attention

- Post updates about your advocacy.
- Use hashtags like #SelfAdvocatesUnite or #NothingAboutUsWithoutUs or #SelfAdvocacy
- Tag decision-makers to put public pressure on them.

Extra Tools to Make Your Advocacy Stronger

Create an "Advocacy Tracker"

- Keep notes on who you contacted, when, and what they said.
- This can help track progress and hold others accountable.

Partner with another Self-Advocate, family member, or friend. Advocacy is stronger together. Having someone in your corner helps you stay confident and safe.

- They can help you prepare for meetings.
- They can join you in meetings for support.
- They can help take notes and help you remember next steps.

Keep A “Know Your Rights” Pocket Guide

- A small printed booklet that explains basic disability rights in Canada (BC Human Rights Code, Accessible Canada Act, etc.) in plain language.

Create a Personal Introduction Card (or Self-Advocate Business Card). Helps you introduce yourself easily at meetings, events, or conferences.

- Name
- Pronouns (optional)
- Email or contact
- Short statement about what you advocate for

Self-Advocacy Storytelling Guide

Personal stories can create change! Stories help others understand our issues so they want to listen to us.

Story Template

Who I Am: (Introduction)

The Challenge I Faced: (What was the issue?)

How I Took Action: (Steps taken to advocate)

What Happened Next? (Results and lessons learned)

What I Want Others to Know or Do: (Final message)

Getting Officials To Take Action

Ask for a Clear Commitment

- Government officials are busy and may forget what you asked.
- Ask: "What action will you take after this meeting?"
- If they don't commit, ask: "Who can I talk to that has the power to fix this?"

Get It in Writing

- If they agree to something, ask them to send an email confirming their commitment.
- If they don't send one, send a follow-up email yourself (so there's a record of the conversation).

Find Other Ways to Apply Pressure

- If an official won't act, go public! You can:
 - Speak to media (local news, disability blogs, social media)
 - Gather community support (petitions, rallies, social media campaigns)

What to Do If They Say No

If they say "We don't have the budget"

- Ask: "What would it take to make this happen?"
- Offer solutions (example: "Can you start with a small pilot project?")

If they say "This isn't a priority"

- Say: "This affects real people. How do you decide what IS a priority?"

Keeping Yourself Motivated For Success

Celebrate every win. Even small ones.

Fighting for human rights takes time, so don't wait for huge changes to celebrate.

- Did you speak up in a meeting? That's a win.
- Did someone finally respond to your email? That's a win.
- Did you teach someone something new about disability rights? BIG win.

Make a "Victory Jar"—write down your wins on slips of paper and read them when you feel discouraged.

Music can help shift your energy when you're feeling worn out.

Create a hype playlist with songs that make you feel strong, seen, and ready to keep going. Include songs like:

- "Fight Song" – Rachel Platten
- "Roar" – Katy Perry
- "It's the Climb" – Miley Cyrus
- "We Are the Champions" – Queen
- "Let's Get Loud" – Jennifer Lopez
- "Happy" – Pharrell Williams
- "Just the Way You Are" – Bruno Mars
- And add YOUR personal anthems!

Pro tip: Play your songs before or after big advocacy meetings to remind yourself: "I deserve to be heard."

Skills Self-Advocates Need

Being a self-advocate takes many different skills. You don't have to know everything right away – you can learn as you go! Here are some important skills that help with self-advocacy:

Speaking Up

- Saying what you want and need, sharing your ideas
- Asking questions when something is not clear

Writing Skills

- Writing emails or letters to people in charge
- Sharing your story, writing posts for social media

Communication Skills

- Talking in meetings
- Making videos or doing public speaking
- Marketing your message, telling your story so more people will listen

Technology Skills

- Using email, Zoom, or social media
- Making posters or slides to share your message
- Recording videos or making podcasts

Problem-Solving

- Finding solutions when things are not fair
- Helping others understand your point of view
- Thinking of new ideas to help your community

Skills Self-Advocates Need

Teamwork

- Working with other self-advocates
- Asking for help when you need it
- Supporting each other to stay strong

Leadership

- Planning meetings
- Helping groups stay on track
- Speaking to people in charge, like government leaders or community leaders

Marketing and Advocacy

- Sharing your story in ways that get attention
- Making posters, videos, or social media posts
- Helping others understand why your issue matters

How to Learn New Skills

Nobody knows everything at the start. You can grow your skills by:

- Taking classes (online or in-person)
- Asking a friend or mentor to help
- Watching videos on YouTube
- Joining self-advocate groups
- Practicing with others
- Trying new things, even if you're nervous

Learning is part of being a leader. Every time you try something new, you get stronger.

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Daily Affirmation Ideas For Self-Advocates

I believe in
my ability
to change
the world
with the
work that
I do.

I use obstacles to motivate
myself to learn and grow.

TRY ONE
OF THESE OR
MAKE YOUR
OWN!

I belong
in this
world.

I am an
unstoppable
force of
nature.

I am a confident
advocate for myself.

I am
deserving
of
respect.

A “daily affirmation” is a positive statement you say to yourself at least once a day – to challenge negativity.