

# How To Self Advocate

11 things to remember when you are looking for help from any agency.

- **You did not fail if you are unable to get the service that you deserve.** The system is not perfect. There are many challenges and sometimes even the people who created or work for the “system” don’t understand it.
- **The negative stereotypes and judgments that others have of you have nothing to do with your worth as a human being.** Don’t let other peoples uninformed assumptions about you keep you from standing up for your rights.
- **Ask lots of questions!** You have every right to expect staff to explain and/or answer your questions and concerns. Ask more questions!
- **When someone says an emphatic *no*, make sure that you are explained to why you are being denied the service(s).**
- **If you need answers, research.** Your local library is a good place to start. Computers are available for no fee. Ask agencies for booklets or handouts that explain services.
- **Keep notes-write it down.** Keep a record of what you have done to get what you need. Be sure to put down dates, times, and peoples names.
- **Find out who is “in charge” of the agency.** Sometimes you will find crabby, rude or overwhelmed staff members. Talking to a supervisor can get you immediate results.
- **You have the right to ask about the agency’s “grievance process” if you were treated in an unjust way, use it!** Most social service agencies have a written statement on how to write your complaint.
- **Give yourself praise for having courage and persistence to find the services that you need.**
- **You have every right to expect to be treated in a respectful way.** If you were not seeking services, these workers wouldn’t have jobs!
- **Find support and give support to others.** The system is not made for you to get through it smoothly- it’s a rocky road. You are the driver- ask for directions. You have the right to ask for help. Check in with a supportive friend and be a supportive friend to other folks on the road to survival. Share your information- pass it on. “Knowledge is power!”