



*California's Protection & Advocacy System
Toll-Free (800) 776-5746*

Tips for Effective Advocacy

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BE PREPARED

Before a meeting, be prepared with a list of questions you may have. If you have any supporting documentation, such as reports, assessments/evaluations, etc., that will assist you in your advocacy efforts, take them with you.

BE ASSERTIVE

You have the right to services and you have the right to advocate for them. There are advocacy organizations that can advise you and/or prepare you with trying to obtain these services.

ASK QUESTIONS

If you do not understand what is being said to you or what was given to you in writing, ask questions. You have the right to ask as many questions as you need to clearly understand what is happening.

SHARE INFORMATION

If you have information, reports, assessments, or records that will help in obtaining the services you need, it is important that you share that information with the relevant people or agencies. It is also important to keep a record of who you gave information to and what you gave them.

BE WILLING TO LISTEN

If you have asked for a service or asked a question, listen to the other party's response and what they have to say. Make sure they answer your questions. Ask for the reason for their decision. If they are citing policies or procedures, ask for a copy.

KEEP RECORDS

It is important that you keep records about your case, preferably in chronological order (by date). If you speak to someone, get the name and title of the person that you spoke to and the organization they work for. Follow up with a letter or e-mail about the conversation you had with them and what you spoke about. Ask for a response in writing; either in letter or email.

PRIMARY LANGUAGE

You have the right to receive information in your primary language. You have the right to request an interpreter in your primary language, including American Sign Language (ASL). If you have a disability you have the right to receive information in alternative format i.e., Large Print, Braille, etc.

GET HELP

If you do not feel comfortable going to a meeting alone, take someone with you. Take a friend, a family member or an advocate with you. You have the right to take someone with you, even if it's only for support. This person can help keep you focused. If you need representation, there are organizations, advocates, and attorneys that you can contact. Call Disability Rights California for referrals.

REVIEW INFORMATION

If you do not feel comfortable with what is being said or offered to you at the meeting or if you do not feel comfortable signing a document, do NOT agree to anything at that time. You have the right to review the documentation in its entirety. You can ask for a copy of what you are being asked to sign. Take it home to review it and return it within a couple of days. If possible, find someone to review it with. Sign only what you agree to and document what you disagree with on the same document.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Generally, you have the right to receive a notice of action in writing. You also have the right to know why you are being denied a service or why services are being reduced or terminated. You have the right to challenge a decision. You should always ask what the process is for challenging their decision and ask for it in writing.

Disability Rights California is funded by a variety of sources, for a complete list of funders, go to <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/Documents/ListofGrantsAndContracts.html>.