

## How to Have a Self-Advocacy Telephone Conversation:

### The Benefits:

- Having your self-advocacy interaction by phone means that it is happening in real time and this has the potential to lead to a quicker response for you.

### The Process:

- If possible, ensure that you have the right name and contact details for the person that you need to speak with;
- If possible make arrangements for the phone call to occur on a set day and time to ensure that the person you need to speak with will be available when you ring;
- Before the phone call plan what are the most important things to say and prepare notes to guide you through the conversation;
- During the phone call:
  - Start by introducing yourself and explaining the reason for your call. This is the time to talk about whatever it is that hasn't been ok for you and how it has been impacting you. You can also refer to any evidence or documentation you may have to clarify your claims, and mention whether you have made any other attempts to resolve the issue;
  - Then discuss your thoughts on how the situation could be resolved or improved. This will likely lead to a back and forth conversation about what is achievable for any potential outcome. It's important to be assertive in this part of the conversation and be clear about your needs;
  - When a potential resolution is being agreed upon it is important to be very clear about who is responsible for any follow up actions and when these will occur. This ensures accountability and gives you the ability to follow up with clear expectations if things don't happen as discussed;
  - At the end of the phone call, even if it hasn't been an easy conversation, thank the person for their time. It is likely that you will have some ongoing interactions as the situation is resolved and this process is made easier by maintaining positive regard and respect for the other people involved.

### Things to Remember:

- It can be easy to be overcome by emotions such as anger and frustration during phone calls, particularly when they are about something very important to you. Try to remember that the person on the other end of the phone is a human being just like you and that they would be negatively impacted by an unpleasant phone call. They will be in a calmer and more focused frame of mind to help if you are able to stay respectful;
- Sometimes getting in touch with the right person may involve a lot of patience and may include steps like going through pre-recorded phone menus and speaking with people who aren't able to help you before you finally get through to the right area;

- Listen to what the other person is saying so that you are prepared to engage in effective conversation. Don't expect to just say what you have to and then have the other person agree. It is likely that the interaction will require some cooperative brainstorming and problem solving to come up with an appropriate and achievable solution;
- Be assertive in your communication, remember you are there to speak up for yourself;
- Go over your notes after the call has ended to ensure you wrote down everything important.