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# Steps to Being an Effective Self-Advocate

- ❖ **You have rights. Believe in yourself.** You are worth the effort it takes to protect your interests and your rights. You can do it!
- ❖ **Have a plan outlining your concerns.** Use communication skills. Stay calm and express yourself clearly. Be willing to listen because what you hear may be as important as what you say.
- ❖ **Problem solve by gathering all the information.** Get the facts in writing. Ask for the policies, rules or the regulations that are being cited to you. Sometimes people settle for a quick verbal decision that may not be accurate. Hold agencies accountable for the decisions they make.
- ❖ **Use the agency's chain of command** to make sure a supervisor or someone else with authority has an opportunity to work with you on the problem and resolution if you first cannot work it out with a service provider.
- ❖ **Ask for help.** Connect with advocacy organizations such as The Advocacy Alliance, The ARC, Pennsylvania Protection and Advocacy. Don't give up. Be assertive, persistent and remember to thank people along the way.
- ❖ **Know your appeals rights.** Request written information on your appeal process. Find out what your next step is if you are dissatisfied and want to challenge a decision.