

FAMILY TIPSHEET: Speaking Up

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Advocating for yourself or your family can include:

- sharing suggestions;
- voicing concerns;
- asking questions; and
- making requests.

There are times when we need to tell someone about a problem or make a suggestion about something when we have a concern.

Some people do not like to complain and do not feel comfortable making suggestions. Advocacy is a skill and it takes courage, but it gets easier the more you practice. When you have to speak up, you need to get your thoughts together. Plan what you want to say so that people understand your opinions, what you are feeling, and what you need. Your voice matters, and speaking up provides an opportunity to work together and improve the situation for you, your family, and other families.

Try these tips when sharing feedback:

1. Show respect to the person you are speaking to about your problem. When you show respect, you will get the chance to speak. People will then show you respect in return.
2. Calmly give your reasons for your suggestion, request, or concern. If you are calm, people will listen carefully.
3. Stay to the point: use 3 to 4 points to explain your concerns. Do not get distracted, and stay on topic. For example, trying saying something like:

“I would like to suggest...

“I would like to request...

“I am concerned about...

because of

What do you think?”

4. Be sensitive or use some humour when advocating for your family. There will be a better chance that what you say will be heard without anger or resentment.
5. Be part of the solution. Suggest ways to solve the problem. Explain how this will help your situation.
6. Ask how your request can be looked after. Take your turn to listen. Be open to the other person’s thoughts, and invite discussion with that person.
7. It is a good strategy to include the person involved, if it makes sense and if you are comfortable with his or her presence. Remember to stay focused and calm.
8. Thank the person you are talking with for his or her time and help.
9. End the conversation by confirming next steps or the plan, and asking for a date and time when you will hear back from him or her.

Remember: As an advocate for yourself or your family, treat people the way you and your family member would want to be treated.

*Last updated April 2018 by a Client and Family Relations Facilitator
and a Family Support Specialist*