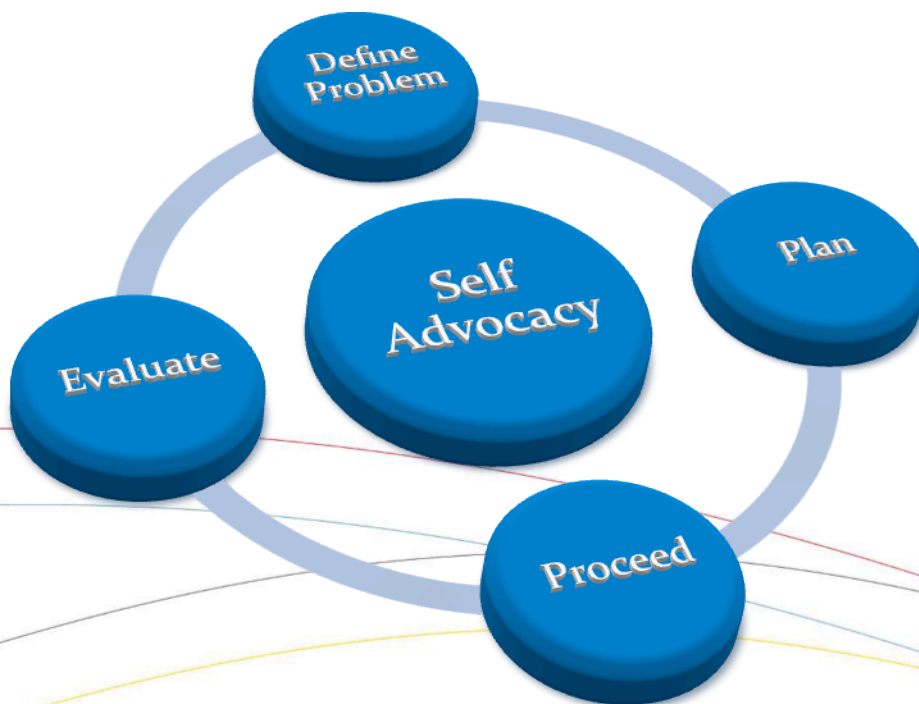


Advocacy Tool Kit

Muscular Dystrophy Canada



Self Advocacy – Overview

What is Self Advocacy?

Self Advocacy is understanding your strengths and needs, identifying your personal goals, knowing your legal rights and responsibilities and communicating these with others.¹

Self Advocacy is speaking up for yourself. It is letting people know how your needs can be better met. Often people get involved in self advocacy because they are directly affected by something in a negative way and see how people would benefit if things were changed. Until recently it was a concept used more for adults, but increasingly it is recognized as a skill that teens need to develop, too.

What you need to know about Self Advocacy

The most important thing you need to know about Self Advocacy is that **you are your greatest advocate.**

History of Self Advocacy

The Self Advocacy movement was started by people with disabilities, especially people who had been in institutions and state schools, because they wanted their basic rights like everybody else. But before they could exercise their rights, they had to fight for the right to be heard and to have choices in their lives. They had to find out what basic rights they had, and then they had to begin to teach others--other people with disabilities, parents, and service providers.¹

Purpose of this Tool

This Self Advocacy Tool was created to support people who are going through the process of making change. People with neuromuscular disorders have faced challenges when trying to participate in their communities, enter buildings, or deal with people who do not want to be accommodating to simple requests for minor changes to programs, schooling or services. The information in this Tool has been created to help you get what you need.

¹ <http://www.greatschools.org> Accessed on February 26, 2010.

² <http://thechp.syr.edu/thoughts.htm> Accessed on February 25, 2010.

Muscular Dystrophy Canada

Overview of Muscular Dystrophy Canada

Muscular Dystrophy Canada's dedicated volunteers and staff across the country raise funds and work hard to support the independence and full participation of Canadians with neuromuscular disorders, fund research to find a cure and improve the quality of life of people with neuromuscular disorders, assist our clients to participate in the decisions that affect them, and collaborate with others for social change.

Advocacy at Muscular Dystrophy Canada

Staff support clients and their families by helping individual clients and their families advocate for specific needs. Based on the client's needs staff write letters of support, make telephone calls and inquiries and support them through the process they are undertaking.

Muscular Dystrophy Canada provides supports for local and municipal advocacy:

Families and volunteers involved with Muscular Dystrophy Canada spearhead local and municipal advocacy initiatives. Staff develop tools and training materials to support the advocacy initiatives of our families and volunteers.

Muscular Dystrophy Canada advocates for systemic policy changes that have a direct impact on Canadians living with neuromuscular disorders. Staff and volunteers work with other interested groups to secure the resources required to influence national and provincial governments and institutions with respect to neuromuscular disorders.

To contact Muscular Dystrophy Canada or to find the Regional Office or Chapter nearest you, contact the National Office at:

2345 Yonge St, Suite 900
Toronto, Ontario M4P 2E5
Telephone: 416-488-0030 or 1-866-MUSCLE-8 (1-866-687-2538)
Fax: 1-416-488-7523
Email: info@muscle.ca
Web site: www.muscle.ca

Pour de l'aide en français, contactez :

1425 boul. Rene Levesque Ouest
Bureau 506
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1T7
Telephone: 514-397-3522 or 1-800-567-2236
Fax: 514-393-8113
Email: infoquebec@muscle.ca

Starting the Self Advocacy Process

Know Your Needs, Know How to Get What You Need

Self Advocacy is the ability to understand and effectively communicate your needs to others. A big part of learning to become an effective self advocate is educating the people around you.

There are three important pieces to becoming an effective self advocate:

1. know your needs
2. know how to get what you need
3. get what you need

Know Your Needs

It is important that you understand and are able to explain to others what you want or what you do or do not need to meet your specific needs. This understanding will help you communicate what you need and why. The more you know, the better you understand, and the easier it is to explain.

Know How to Get What You Need


In Canada, individuals with physical and/or hidden disabilities that significantly interfere with one or more major life activities (communicating, reading, physical movement, etc.) are guaranteed equal access and equal rights.

Understanding your rights and knowing how to clearly communicate with others in a constructive way is just as important as clearly communicating your needs. In other words, the better you understand your disability, needs, and rights, and the better you can communicate and document this information, the easier advocating for yourself becomes.

Educating yourself, effective communication, and maintaining a support system are an essential part in becoming an effective self advocate.

Get What You Need


Self Advocacy can be a long process so to be successful you have to plan, research, know when and who to ask for support, and, when it is all finished, be able to evaluate how it went. In addition, Self Advocacy involves knowing your legal rights and entitlements and what results you want to achieve. You can be creative by using technology, media, art, music, dance, fashion or writing to self advocate. However, don't lose sight of the issue or problem it is that you want resolved.



Most of all, we want to help people live the life they want with the support they need. We celebrate the strength of self-advocates. We take on the barriers that stand in the way.


The Riot, e-newsletter for Self-Advocates

Always keep in mind that Self Advocacy is a learning process and can be a very slow process. It isn't likely that everything will go as planned right away but don't let that stop you. Learn as you go, recognize your successes and take time to acknowledge that even the smallest changes toward your goal is a positive step forward. When Self Advocacy becomes difficult remind yourself that you are speaking up for yourself and working toward a goal.

 **Suggested Activity**
Consider if you need to develop skills in problem solving, listening, or oral and written communications to be a better self advocate.

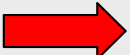
Identifying Supporters

It is very important to build your support system. You need to have people you can turn to, people who will help you out when you need it, then you won't feel so alone throughout the process of voicing your needs.


 **Suggested Activity**
Make a list of people who make up your support system so you have it ready when you start self advocating.

Clear communications are important to Self Advocacy

An important skill to develop is an assertive style of communication. When you begin self-advocating you do not need to be aggressive, demanding or confrontational. You don't want to be passive or timid either. You can stand up for your rights by being **assertive**. Being assertive is not passive or aggressive. It is acting polite, respectful, and prepared.

 **Suggested Activity**
*Practice different styles of communication and compare what it feels like to talk in a **passive** (soft-spoken, apprehensive) voice, an **aggressive** (loud and demanding) voice, and an **assertive** (pleasant and polite) voice.*

Speaking up for yourself takes practice and can be difficult. It might be helpful to have a friend or member of your support group assist you through this process. This can help you keep focused on the problem or issue you are advocating for.

 ***Suggested Activity***
Role play a situation where you are speaking up for the problem or issue you are dealing with. This gives you an opportunity to become comfortable with speaking up for what you want.

Organization is an important part of Self Advocacy

To help yourself stay organized you might want to try the following:

1. Create a filing system, containing the records you may need (e.g. medical, educational records) for easy access and reference. Prepare a checklist of thoughts, questions and concerns regarding the issue or problem you are advocating for. You can also use a computer, camera or audio recorder to keep your records.
2. Keep a journal that includes a log of all phone calls and meetings including the date and time, who you spoke with and what was said.
3. Keep copies of all letters, emails, policies, procedures, by-laws and laws if they are relevant to your issue or problem. Keep a copy of all letters and emails you send to people and keep all original letters that you receive. Never send your only copy of something to someone else. Always send a duplicate. If someone is refusing to acknowledge that they are receiving your letters, send them by registered mail. Then there is a record of when it was sent and received.
4. If someone makes any kind of promise or decision regarding your issue ask them to put it in writing for you so you can keep it with your records. Also, you can write the individual a letter or email summarizing the conversation and commitment(s) or promise(s) made to ensure that the intent of the conversation is captured.

Carrying Out Self Advocacy

Four Steps to Successful Self Advocacy

*You must have a picture in your mind –
a vision of how the system should work.²*

Self-Advocate Leadership Network

The first step in learning how to self-advocate is the development of a **Self Advocacy Plan**. Through the process of writing a Self Advocacy Plan, you can begin to think about your individual needs. The plan can be used as a script to describe your needs to other people.

To help create a Self Advocacy strategy, use the following steps:

Step 1: Define the problem

Begin your work by **defining the problem** or issue and coming up with a clear, concise and accurate statement that tells people what the problem or issue is. This clear statement assists you in telling others about the problem and why it is important. Try to keep your statement as short as possible. Give enough information so the issue can be easily understood but not too much information. You don't want people to lose interest.

The following questions may assist you in defining the problem:

- Who can I turn to for guidance and advice?
- What resolution do I want to achieve?
- What are appropriate and reasonable accommodations?

Example

"I need to complete a co-op course to achieve my high school diploma. I am unable to access the front door of the building where I am to complete my co-op. The two steps at the front entrance require a ramp. To ensure that the building is accessible, I am requesting that a ramp (permanent or portable) be made available. I need to speak with my teacher and co-op placement."

² <http://www.hsri.org/leaders/curriculum.htm#1> Accessed on March 8, 2010.

Once you have defined your problem **decide on a solution**. When deciding what the solution should be the following questions can act as guidelines.

- Which solution do I prefer?
- How realistic is my solution? Could it be put into practice?
- How much work does my solution require?
- How much work am I willing to do?

Then think about what resources are available to you and who you should speak with about getting your problem resolved. Resources can include others who have faced the same problem or issue you are facing, community groups (health unit, Muscular Dystrophy Canada, religious organizations, support groups, committees, etc), or someone who has the power to decide whether or not your solution can be put into action.

Step 2: Develop a plan

Once you have defined the problem or issue **develop a plan** that will help you work to resolve it. Your plan should be put into steps and work toward a solution to your problem. Remember to keep your plan manageable. You may want to begin by doing some research to find out the choices and options available to you. This will help you set realistic goals that improve your chances of succeeding at achieving your objective.

It is **very important to find out where and with whom you should raise your issue** so you contact the most appropriate person right from the start. Usually it is helpful to begin with the decision maker closest to the issue. You may need to contact others who are further from the issue if it is not resolved by contacting the decision-maker closest to the issue. As you work your way up through the various levels of decision-making here are some more questions to ask yourself:

- What are the steps in my plan?
- Who will be involved in my plan?
- How will I carry out my plan and tell others about it?
- Who can I go to for guidance and advice?
- How much assistance do I need from other people?
- If you need to take your issue to someone at a higher level of authority, who should you take it to?

Step 3: Carry out the plan

Putting the plan into action will likely be the most difficult and stressful part of self advocating. It means putting your issue forward and getting people to listen to you. As well, it means listening to others and negotiating with them to resolve your issue or problem. It is important to be aware of how you communicate with people and how you approach them. While you are carrying out your plan remain open to new ideas and approaches, flexible and calm at all times.

Carrying out your plan may be stressful, so try to identify in advance who you may turn to for support.

Initially, speak to someone close to the situation who has decision-making power and be prepared for the person you are speaking with to tell you that you need to speak with someone else. Sometimes you have to talk to a number of people before getting to the person who can help you with your issue. Sometimes you agree with the other party and come to a decision quickly. Other times, you may disagree and reaching a decision will require more time and effort. You may experience frustration and negative feelings while trying to resolve your issue. But try to stay positive and remember to treat others like you would want to be treated. Always try to keep your objective in mind.

The following questions may help you carry out your plan:

- Have you documented your actions and made copies of important paperwork?
- Have you recorded the names and contact information of people you have spoken with and the date you spoke?
- Have you maintained records of what others have said or committed to?
- Are you clear about the next steps and who is responsible for doing specific tasks?

Step 4: Evaluate the results

Now **look back on your plan**. Ask yourself what did and did not work. Evaluating your plan can provide you with important information that you can use if you need to self advocate again. While evaluating your experience you can ask these questions:

1. Did I achieve the outcome I wanted?
2. What worked well?
3. What didn't work well?
4. How do I feel about the outcome?
5. Should I stop my efforts or continue?

Skills and Ideas to Help You Self Advocate

Using Written Information to Support Your Advocacy Goals

Developing the ability to advocate for yourself usually requires good oral and written communication skills. Letters and emails can be helpful in conveying information to others. Using written instead of oral communication is better if you need to create a paper trail, which provides a record of events that have occurred and requests that you have made.

There are two important skills involved in using the written word to support your advocacy goals. The first area involves the use of **letter writing** to make your needs and concerns known. The second involves **record keeping**, so you can access important papers that can help document your need for services and/or accommodations.


Writing Letters

The following information on letter writing was adapted from the 12 Rules for Writing Great Letters article. A complete copy of this article is available at: http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/12rules_letters.htm.

Letter writing is a useful life skill. You write letters to:

- (1) make a request
- (2) clarify an event
- (3) decline a request
- (4) express appreciation
- (5) create a paper trail

Some letters have more than one purpose. It is important to learn how to write a letter so you can express your message clearly and concisely.



Suggested Activity
Develop your letter writing skills by writing a letter using the activity below.

Select one of the reasons for writing a letter that is described above (1-5). Decide what this issue is and who you are going to write to (your city councilor, your Member of Parliament, etc.)

1. Before you write a letter ask yourself these questions.

- Why am I writing?
- What am I trying to accomplish?
- What do I want?
- What are my goals?

2. Get three blank sheets of paper.
 1. On the first sheet write “**WHY?**
Why am I writing this letter?”
 2. On the second sheet write “**WHAT?**
What are my goals in writing this letter?”
 3. On the third sheet write “**Other Thoughts.**”

Your goal is to unload thoughts from your brain onto these sheets of paper. Write down any additional ideas and thoughts on the third sheet of paper. It doesn't need to take a long time for you to write down all your important thoughts. Do not spend time on details. Don't worry about spelling, writing in sentences or prioritizing your thoughts or ideas. You should focus on your issue or problem on the whole.

3. Write your **first draft**. Tell your story chronologically, remembering to include the facts, and keeping your opinions to a minimum. Make your letter clear and easy to understand. Then, **put it away for a few days**. Many times letters are written in anger, and require a cooling down and revision time.
4. Read your letter out loud. Ask yourself if your letter is:
 - brief?
 - clear?
 - interesting?
 - accurate?
 - appropriate for your audience?

When you are done make the necessary edits.

5. Give your letter to at least one other person to read, preferably someone in your support network who will tell you the truth. Ask the person who is reading your letter to comment on what they find and if the letter is clear or if you need to change the tone of your letter. Ask the person if they understand:
 - what you are trying to accomplish.
 - what you want.
 - what your goals are.

If you haven't expressed yourself clearly and you find yourself explaining the purpose of the letter to the reader, write down the explanation, and place this information into your letter.

As well, you can use letter writing for the purpose of advocating for yourself or systems. This can include:

- supporting disability or other legislation
- filing a grievance/complaint

Attending Meetings

If a meeting or meetings are part of your self advocacy process consider the following:

Be prepared. Before attending your next meeting you should:

- Review the meeting agenda, if it is available
- Bring necessary materials to address agenda topics, i.e. costs analysis or letters of support

During the meeting:

- Request clarification if you don't understand something.
- Get answers to the list of questions you prepared, if appropriate.
- If you disagree with some of the statements made about you, present your point of view. No one can represent you better than you.
- If you don't agree with the final decision made at the meeting, ask if you can review the decision and discuss your concerns in more detail at a later date.

Remember to record meetings, communications and interactions in a journal and keep copies of all letters, emails, policies, and procedures. This is a good way to provide information if you have difficulty getting your issue or problem addressed, and need to file a complaint.

Starting a Committee

You may want to create a committee to advocate for your issue. First, you need to start talking to people to ask them if your issue is an issue for them. Second, you need to hold an initial information meeting to see how much interest there is in your issue. Remember to try to find a meeting place that is easily accessible to many people. Churches, community centres, schools and community groups sometimes provide free meeting space. To let people know about the meeting use social media (Facebook or Twitter), the community calendar section in local newspapers and radio stations or ask a local service provider to disseminate information to their clients and key stakeholders. At that meeting be a good listener. Get a feel for how other people see your issue and what their skills and experiences are. If people are interested in helping, set out a plan that includes who will do what tasks and when they will do them. Agree to a meeting schedule.

Appeals

If you are unable to convince the person who has the authority to make a decision on your issue to settle the issue you are advocating for, consider your options. Find out if there is an appeal or review process and find out how it works. Fill out and submit appeal or review forms, if they exist. If there is no appeal process decide whether you should take the matter up with a supervisor or manager, make a formal complaint, let it go, or try to get support or advocacy groups involved.

When you are dealing with an organization that does not have an appeal process you may want to consider contacting an outside agency such as the Human Rights Commission or the Ombudsman. These organizations have the power to enforce laws and make changes.

Increasing the Profile of your Issue

If you feel that you are not making progress, you might want to try raising the profile of your problem. Organizing a **letter campaign** or talking to the media is a good way to do this. For a letter campaign, you can either have a form letter that people fill out, or give out sheets with the details of important points that should be included in letters individuals write. The more people who participate and write letters the better your chance of success.

Involve the **media** when you need to be more persuasive. If everyone you talk to keeps redirecting you to someone else, involving the media can be a good way to apply a little pressure. If you use the media, make sure you coordinate everyone who is or may speak with the media. It improves your credibility when the media gets only one story from everyone.

Documentation is important when you deal with the media. If you have thorough record keeping (See *Organization is an Important Part of Self Advocacy* on page 5.), it makes it easier for the media to accurately represent your story. However, you must be careful because the media can have their own agenda, which may not be the same as yours. Once the media is involved they may take the issue over so it becomes their issue and you have little say in how the media portrays it.

Using Web Sites to Support Self Advocacy

The Internet can be a powerful tool for Self Advocacy. This is because a person can research information about an issue or problem and how others who have had the same issue or problem might deal with it. You can use the Internet to become better informed on a variety of issues surrounding health and disabilities. You can create your own web page to provide knowledge about illnesses and build support communities. You can also use different forms of social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Always use the information from an Internet site with caution. Find who created the website because the information may be biased or inaccurate.

Finding your Federal, Provincial and Local Representatives

Members of Parliament and Members of Members of the Legislative Assembly/Provincial Parliament have set days in which they meet with their constituents. You can make an appointment to discuss the problem you are facing if you think they can be of help.

The contact information for your Member of Parliament is listed on webinfo.parl.gc.ca.

To find your provincial or local elected officials' names and contact information, visit your province or municipality's website.

For example: The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia's website is www.leg.bc.ca. On that site is a page called "MLA finder" which will help you to find the contact details for your Member.

You can also look up your Member in the blue pages in the telephone book.

Managing disagreements

While you are going through the self advocacy process conflict may arise. The conflict can often be something small – a minor disagreement or a personality clash. However, if left unresolved the issue can impact on your ability to achieve your goal.

Here are tips³ to help prevent and resolve any disagreements that may arise:

Give people the chance for their differing views to be heard.

Show respect for other's right to a view, even if you oppose that view.

As well as listening, try to understand why people hold the view they do.

Understand what their needs are and what they want addressed. Be clear about what exactly their concerns and worries are.

Look for a way forward that addresses both sets of concerns.

Seek out common ground and then isolate the exact points where you do disagree.

Avoid inflammatory language.

Be assertive in stating your own case, but avoid accusations and anger. Don't lose your temper or finger-point. Acknowledge that you understand why the other person might disagree or be angry, but don't add fuel to the fire.

³ Tips source: http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/business/view_article.jsp?articleId=857

Be courteous and respectful.

People are more inclined to be helpful if they are treated as part of the solution rather than the reason for the problem.

Play the problem, not the person.

Tackle the differences but avoid making the argument about personalities.

Open up the discussion rather than close it down.

If someone says something is impossible, don't be defeatist and agree. Instead, ask what can make it possible. If they say something can't work, instead of asking "Why not?" ask what can be done to make it work.

If necessary, break the problem into smaller parts and remove the areas of disagreement.

What is left won't seem as difficult to overcome.

When you come to an agreement, ensure that it is clear and understood by all.

Summing up

Effective communication, good planning, and maintaining a support system are key to becoming an effective self advocate. Set achievable goals, keep good records along the way, ask for help when you need it, get the right information to the right people and keep going. Self advocacy is a learning process so not everything will go as planned. Don't let that stop you.

Case Studies

What does Self Advocacy look like? Here are some examples, just to get you thinking:

- Emily is a 35 year old woman with a significant physical disability. She does not use words to speak. She receives attendant care services during the day to assist her with bathing, dressing, and going on outings. Emily assists her family in choosing who they will hire as an attendant. She is included in the interview process, and her family watches her non-verbal communication closely to determine her preferences of the applicants. Emily is practicing Self Advocacy.
- David is a 16 year old young man with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. David receives support with his services through his local school district. David participates in all of his school and health planning meetings. He assists in determining his course selection, and tells the committee what kinds of supports he feels he needs or can benefit from. He is included in the discussion of personal educational goals and is held accountable for his role in trying to meet those goals.
- Matt is a 14 year old with a neuromuscular disorder. He uses a wheelchair. His English teacher unwittingly uses demeaning language that Matt finds offensive, like “handicapped” or “confined to a wheel chair.” Matt writes his teacher a polite letter explaining his feelings and includes a “people first language” brochure.
- Kendra is a 12 year old with physical disabilities. She receives physical and occupational therapy but dislikes her therapist intensely. After discussing her feelings with her parents, she schedules a meeting with her principal and her parents to discuss what can be done to change the situation.
- Candace is a 45 year old woman with significant physical disabilities; she uses a manual wheelchair and a letter board to communicate. Candace believes she could use a power wheelchair and an augmentative communication device, but her therapist tells her there is “no way.” Candace asks to see another, outside therapist for a second opinion.
- Michael is a 18 year old with Friedreich’s Ataxia. He has been repeatedly bullied (name-calling and ridiculing) by another student at the high school and finally tells his parents. Rather than going to the principal for him, Michael’s parents encourage Michael to make a report to the high school principal himself or to a teacher that he trusts. They teach him the steps he can take to eliminate the problem and support him to take those steps himself.

Sample Letter:

Date

Ms. Smith

Job Title

Agency or Business

Street

City, Province, Postal Code

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing you because I need your help. I would like to attend a class offered in your building. Unfortunately, I am unable to enter the building because there are stairs at the entrance to the building. I use a wheelchair and there is no ramp available.

In order for the building to be accessible to people who use wheelchairs there must be a ramp to the entrance. Please authorize and encourage the property manager to install a ramp.

Thank you in advance for your help. If you wish to speak with me, I can be reached at 123-4567 or email@web.ca. If I have not heard from you within two weeks, I will contact you by phone to discuss the progress on the ramp.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your address

Your phone number (optional)

Your email (optional)

Sample Letter to Government - Generic

[Your name]
[Street address]
[City, Province, Postal Code]

[Date]

[The Honorable (full name)]
[Title]
[Department]
[Street address]
[City, Province, Postal Code]

Dear [recipient name]:

- *Introduce yourself. Insert a short paragraph explaining who you are.*

Sample: For the past xxx months/ xxx years I have been living with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, which is a serious type of neuromuscular disorder that affects my muscles.

- *State your reason for writing. Share your story. Clarify your position.*

Sample: Currently, I am being treated with some traditional therapies which hopefully will work. I have recently learned about some additional treatment options that will increase my chances of survival. I also learned, that for reasons I cannot fully comprehend, this therapy is not available universally in Canada. I am asking that you fund (*insert therapy that applies to you here*) in the province of (*insert your province here*). Unfortunately for me, it is not available in our province. I urge you to take the necessary progressive steps to ensure that all Canadians have equal access to lifesaving drugs.

- *Summarize and reiterate your position/request. Request a reply.*

Sample: My quality of life will be prolonged and enhanced if this drug is available to me. I would like the same opportunities afforded to me, as it is to my fellow Canadians. I would like equal and accessible access to life. I look forward to hearing back from you in the coming weeks.

Sincerely

Sample Advocacy Letter to Provincial Government

<p>Date</p> <p>Name (Government officials are called “The Honourable”) Title Address</p> <p>Dear:</p>	<p>John Smith 123 Evergreen Terrace Calgary, AB T5T P9P</p>
<p>State your concern/ opportunity</p>	<p>I encourage you to increase investment in the provincial sport system for people with a physical disability as it will create an abundance of distinct opportunities and benefits for the citizens of Alberta.</p>
<p>Important facts supporting the cause</p>	<p>Studies done by the Alberta Health department show that the most common types of cancer (prostate, breast, and colorectal) have the strongest preventative links with physical activity. A research conducted by the Canadian Centre of Ethics in Sport show that 92% of Canadians believe that community level sports can have a positive influence on the personal and moral development of youth. Furthermore, the average family in Alberta spends \$2,136 on sports related events and equipment each year contributing a total of approximately \$1.32 billion to the provincial economy.</p>
<p>How politician can make a personal difference</p>	<p>By increasing investment to accessible sport, recreation, and physical education, the Government of Alberta could potentially lower health care expenses, create better communities, aid in the growth and development of youth, and fuel the provincial economy.</p>
<p>Closing remarks and contact information</p>	<p>I hope you seriously consider the benefits that investing in the provincial sport system will bring. Thank you for your time, and I can be reached at (403) 585-XXXX or you can email me at john@smith.net.</p>
<p>Sincerely, John Smith</p>	

SELF-ADVOCACY - TOOL

DEFINE THE PROBLEM AND IDENTIFY THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Before you can start to advocate for yourself or for anyone else, it is important to know exactly what the problem is that you are trying to resolve. Just saying "I can't stand it" or "I can't deal with this anymore" won't help to find a resolution.

1. What exactly is the problem?

2. How often does the problem occur?

3. Have I tried to resolve this problem before, and what was the result?

4. Do other people share my problem?

5. Has anybody else tried to solve a similar problem?

6. What has worked in the past?

7. What has not worked in the past?

8. What are the laws that would address my problems?

9. Do I know: Who, What, Where, When, Why?

Who:

What:

Where:

When:

Why:

10. Who are some contacts and/or resources that could help me?

11. How does the system work?



September 2010