EPILEPSY NEW ZEALAND
Kia titiro ki te tangata | See the person

Self-advocacy



Put simply, self-advocacy means being able to speak up for yourself and make your own decisions. Self-advocacy is important for ensuring that you are listened to, assessed appropriately, have complaints heard, and are able to contribute to the development of your own healthcare and other plans.

There are many places and situations where you may want to exert self-advocacy. You may want to self-advocate when speaking with doctors and health care professionals, in hospitals, at schools, with government bodies, and in the community.

Some people can find self-advocacy intimidating, as it means standing up for yourself with others. However, self-advocacy is important to ensure that your needs, goals and aspirations are being heard.

If you are unsure about how to self-advocate and prepare for situations where you want your needs met, the following tips may be helpful:

- Be an active participant in the process, to the best of your ability
- Get enough information to make informed choices
- Have some ideas about what you would like to get out of the process, or what you would like the healthcare professionals to help with
- Clearly express what your needs are
- Set realistic goals for what you hope to achieve
- If necessary, have an advocate, family member, or friend at meetings
- If your request is not responded to in a timely manner, ask to speak to a more senior person
- Consider writing a letter or email, containing any concerns you have, if you feel that you are not being listened to during meetings
- Keep a folder of all materials, plans, and correspondence so that you can refer to these in the

future

- Take notes when you attend meetings and document all phone calls
- Ensure that any agreed upon plan is put in writing.

In addition to self-advocating there are a number of services that can respond to issues related to human rights (your dignity and value), services and disability issues.

Human Rights Commission

People First

Ombudsman

Office of Disability Issues

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