

What is an advocate?

An advocate is someone who can help you speak up so that your needs are heard, your rights are understood and your problems are resolved. Advocates may be employed with a community organization, volunteer with an agency, or community members who want to provide assistance.

It is important that you understand what an advocate CAN and CANNOT do.

Advocates are NOT lawyers. They cannot practice law or give legal advice.

What can an advocate do?

- An Advocate can play a variety of roles, including:
 - Speak for you and represent your views when you feel unable to do this yourself.
 - Provide information and guidance.
 - Prepare written communication or legal submissions.
 - Attend meetings, hearings or appointments.
 - Clarify processes and procedures.
 - Negotiate, mediate or otherwise assist in alternative dispute resolution.
 - Gather and organize information and documentation.

How do I find an advocate?

To find an advocate, go to www.Povnet.org and click on the map of BC. You can search by location and the types of services provided.

How do I choose an advocate?

Be realistic about your abilities and ask yourself: “What do I need?” Clearly communicate what you need when looking for an advocate. Before you choose an Advocate, try to determine what roles you need an advocate to fill.

- Do you just need information?
- Are you confident that you can resolve the issue yourself with a little guidance?
- Do you need full representation at a hearing?
- Does the advocate have the range of experience to best suit your needs?
- Do you have confidence in the advocate and / or the organization?

How can I prepare to see an advocate?

- Be as prepared as possible for your appointments (bring any paperwork you have).
- Bring someone for support, make sure that they are aware of what you need them to do and that they are going to help and not hinder the process.
- End each meeting with a clear plan of what your advocate is going to do and what you are going to do. Make sure you both have this plan in writing.

You can also complete the form below before speaking with your advocate. On a separate sheet of paper, provide:

- INFORMATION ABOUT YOU
 - Include your name, telephone number, current address and date of birth.
- WHAT HAPPENED?
 - Write down what happened in order. Include dates, times, locations, names.
- OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED
 - Write down the names, telephone numbers and addresses of the other party and any witnesses.
- DOCUMENTS
 - On a separate piece of paper, list all of the documents you have relating to the incident. Use the following headings and bring the documents to your meeting:

Date	Description of document	Received from	Addressed to

What if I don't speak or understand English?

If needed, you should arrange for an interpreter to be there. This can be a friend, family member or contact the Society of Translators & Interpreters of BC: 604-684-2940 or www.STIBC.org.