

## HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?

You are encouraged to try and work out any complaint you may have on your own. This is not always possible nor desirable in certain situations and the Office of the Ombudsman is available to assist when necessary. However, if you seek to resolve the complaint you have on your own please, **consider the following recommendations when communicating with others:**

1. Try to remain calm and objective about your situation. When you feel someone else is the cause of the circumstances you are faced with, it is not usually helpful when your initial attempts for a resolution is to blame or find fault. Doing so usually puts others on the defensive resulting in either an immediate and negative reaction or an attempt to avoid dealing with you. Rather, it is usually helpful to look at the situation as a problem that needs to be solved and focus on how you are going to accomplish that.
2. Be prepared to listen to the other person's point of view or perspective about the situation. Let them know you understand how that person sees the matter. Remember, understanding does not necessarily mean that you are in agreement. When others feel understood they are more prepared to listen to you and to better understand your perspective.
3. When presenting your own point of view use "I" as much as possible rather than "You". Speak about your needs and concerns and mention what you hope to achieve. This will help you to present your situation without appearing aggressive or adversarial. However, when it comes to exploring options for a resolution, the word "we" is usually effective because it evokes a conflict partnership approach to a collaborative resolution.
4. Be pleasant and courteous in your discussions. Remember that you need the person you are speaking with to help you with the situation. Being rude or offensive will only serve to push the person away or encourage that person's own offensive behaviour.
5. Once you have a full understanding of the situation try to develop options that will not only satisfy your own needs and concerns but the needs and concerns of the other person as well. Encourage the other person to be creative and to think of options. Avoid evaluating the options until you are finished generating as many options as you both can think of. Only review the options to see which ones might work for you once you have exhausted your creativity in coming up with alternatives no matter how silly.
6. Never interrupt the other person. If you have something to say wait until the other person is finished. Expect the same behaviour from the other person as well. If you are afraid you will forget, simply ensure you have pen and paper with you so that you can make a note to remind you.
7. Most of the people you will encounter are interested in helping you if they are given a chance to do so. If they are not able to assist you immediately, recognize they may have other pressing matters to be dealt with at that time. Be patient and ask when you may return so that they will have time to help you. If that person is not able to help ask if they know who else might do so.

**Our very best wishes for success with your efforts. If you need help, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of the Ombudsman for assistance.**

