



WELCOME!

# Finding Your Voice: Self-Advocacy Skills for Youth

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# Territorial Acknowledgements



# Group Agreements



# What we will cover:

- Self-Advocacy – What is it?
  - Self-Advocacy – Why do it?
  - Self-Advocacy – Essential Skills for Success
  - Rights and Self-Advocacy (you can't have one without the other)
  - Practical Tips for Effective Advocacy
  - Putting it all Together
  - When to Ask for Help
- 

*What is advocacy?*

# Advocacy is:

Standing up for an idea or a cause.

Speaking up on behalf of someone else.

Standing up and speaking up for your rights and the rights of others.



*What is self-advocacy?*

# Self advocacy is:



Learning about  
your rights



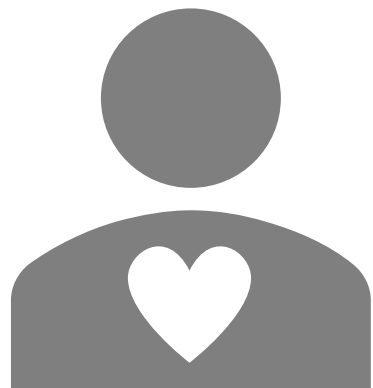
Speaking up for  
yourself so that  
you are heard  
by the right  
decision maker.



Taking control  
and making  
decisions about  
your own life



Accessing the  
information  
you need



Young people are experts in their own lives and should be involved in any decision that affects them.



# Advocates VS Self Advocates:



# What role does self-advocacy play in the lives of young people?

- When parents/caregivers aren't there, young people can speak for themselves.
- Young people can share with adults in their lives what is working or not working for them. This can be in school, with social workers, lawyers, and judges.
- Self-advocacy and self-determination are interdependent.
- Practicing self-advocacy with adults safeguards against negative influences (i.e. with peers).



# Why is self advocacy important?



# Benefits of self-advocacy:

- Improved self esteem
- Increased ability to communicate effectively
- Improved problem solving skills
- Becoming more assertive.

**CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER BENEFITS?**



# What can self-advocacy look like for young people?



## Elementary Aged Children

- Ask for help with something
- Tell others about their abilities and differences
- Use role play to teach problem solving
- Talk about their strengths
- Build self esteem

## Middle School Aged Children

- Know if they have a specific needs and talk about it
- Actively use problem solving skills
- Learn what they need to be successful
- Share their needs with others
- Demonstrate independence

## High School Aged Children

- Very good knowledge of their needs,
- Participate in planning meetings like IEPs
- Knowledge of their rights
- Can successfully ask for specific accommodations to meet their needs.

# CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

- Can you explain your needs and wants to others without difficulty?
- When you make your own decisions, do others respect them? Why not?
- Do you take responsibility for yourself and your actions?



# *Obstacles to Self-Advocacy*



Others?

# Important Self-Advocacy Messages

- Advocacy is something we do in everyday life, beginning when we are toddlers. As we grow, speaking up for ourselves is needed on many levels. We do it with friends, on the playground, when we are playing sports, with teachers at school, public transit, doctor's offices, neighbors, etc.
- Knowing how to advocate for yourself is a fact of life. We want to help you be the best self-advocate you can be!
- Self-advocacy means standing up for yourself and using your voice.

**WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR FRIENDS AND PEERS TO  
ENCOURAGE THEM TO SELF-ADVOCATE?**



# *Essentials for Self-Advocacy:*



Knowledge



Skills



Self-Awareness



Knowing who you are, using confident, calm, and simple language, listening to understand another's perspective, and being curious to learn and expand information, knowledge, and skills are essential!



# Knowledge is Power!

## What You Need to Know

Speak with the professionals in your lives and ask them to provide more information.

Look online –find someone to show you where to look for information.

Reach out to advocates at the Representative for Children and Youth or other organizations.

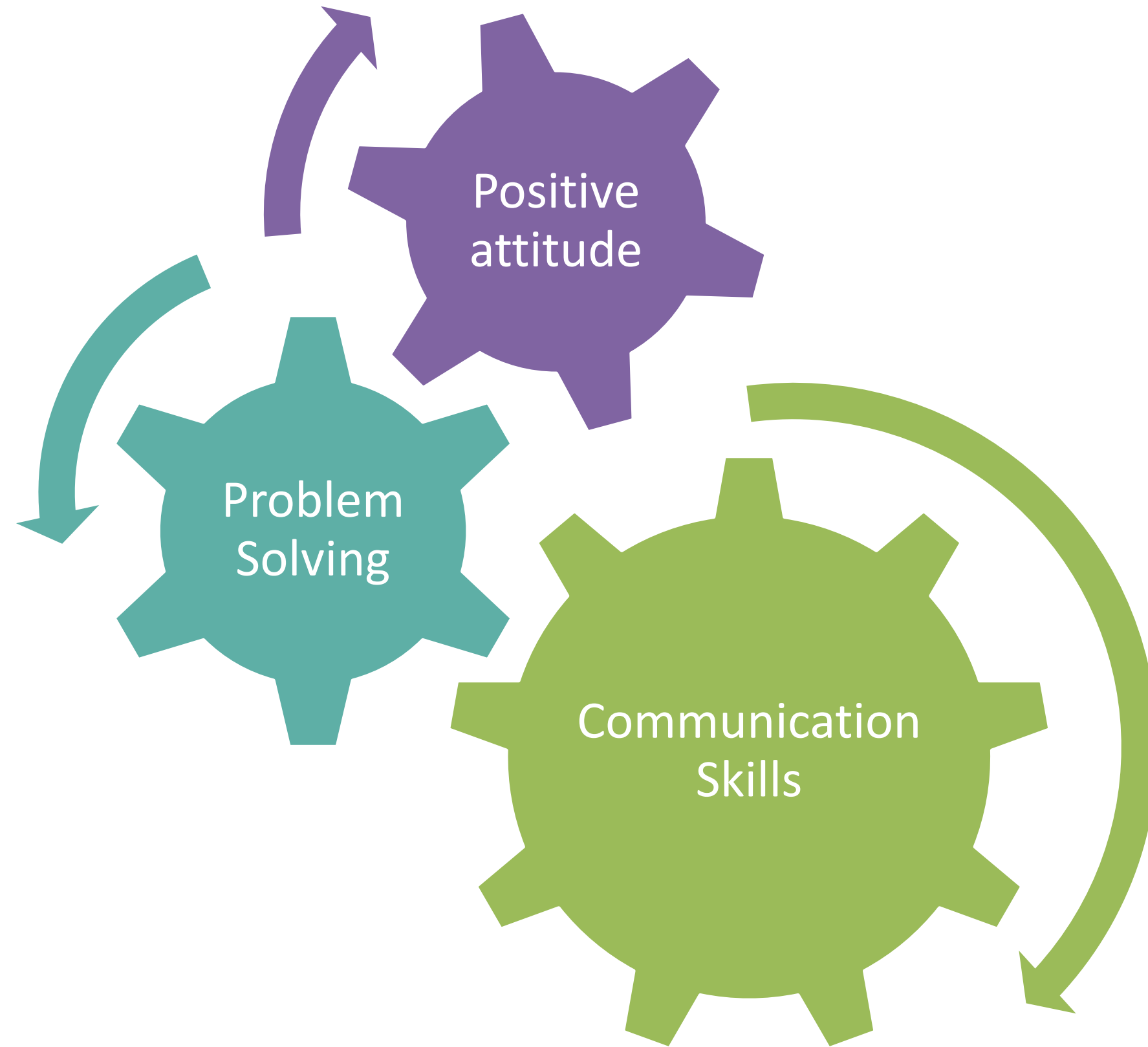
Service BC – provides information about Provincial Government programs and services.  
1-800-663-7867

Try your local library. Librarians can help you find information if you aren't sure how. That is their job!

School counselors and education workers can help you find the information you need.

Ensuring you know your rights and what you are entitled to is the basis of being a good self-advocate. If you understand your rights, you will feel more confident to say what you want.

# Skills for Success!

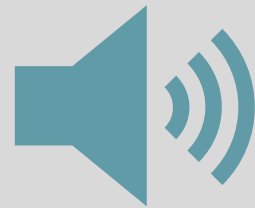


# Skills for Success!

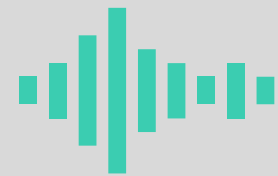
## Communication!



Pace



Volume



Tone



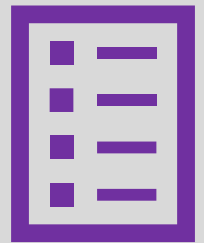
Body Language



Respectful



Clear



Concise



Listening is one of the most important communication skills. After speaking up for our needs, we need to listen to hear the response to achieve the goal. Listen with purpose, listen to learn, listen to ask questions, listen to make sure that they understand you!

# *Skills for Success!*

## Problem Solving

One way to think about needs: Needs are made up of the problem or problems that are being experienced, the impact these problems are having and what you want to change.

My problem is \_\_\_\_\_

It makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_

The effect on me/my wellbeing is \_\_\_\_\_

What has helped me before is \_\_\_\_\_

The things that haven't helped are \_\_\_\_\_

I would like it if \_\_\_\_\_

# Learn

Start with the 5 Ws:

**Who** - Who can help? Who makes the decision?

**What** What are my choices? What rights are being violated?

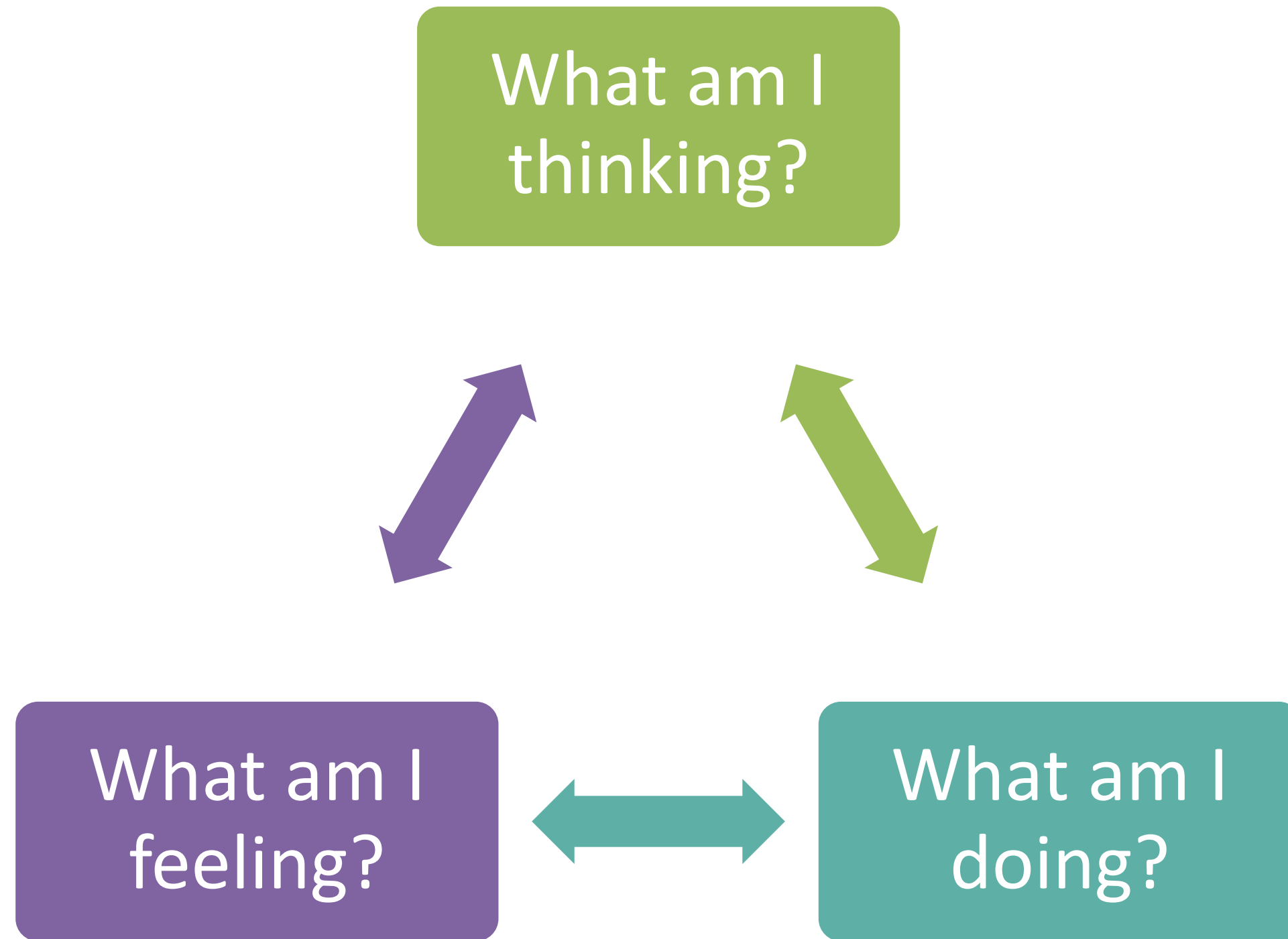
**When** - When will I be heard? When will the decision take place?

**Where** - What areas of my life will be impacted?

**Why** - Why is this important to me? Why was this decision made?



# Self-Awareness!



# Self-Awareness!

## Knowing Yourself

<b>My Strengths</b> I am good at.. I find it easy to.. I have been able too..	<b>My Challenges</b> I find it hard to... It is difficult for me to... I sometimes react...
<b>My Community</b> I like going to... My local services are... My community groups are...	<b>My Supporters</b> My personal supporters are... My health supporters are... My support services are...

# *Self-Awareness!*

## Speaking Up Can be Difficult

I find speaking up difficult because...

I struggle to speak up to... because...

The things that have helped before are...

I can prepare for these challenges by...

Who can I ask for help?

*Self-advocacy fosters self-confidence!*

# Circle of Self-Advocacy - Bringing it all Together



What are some things you say  
advocate for yourself?

Why is knowing about your  
rights important?



# WHY: *Rights Education for Children and Youth?*



# *Needs and Rights*

A human rights-based approach requires an understanding of the difference between a 'need' and a 'right'

A '**need**' has specific characteristics:

- An aspiration that may be valid or imperfectly and paternalistically perceived by others
- Lacks an obligation on the part of government to provide or protect it
- Satisfaction of a need can't be enforced

A '**right**' has specific other characteristics:

- Entitlement arises solely from being a person
- Enables every person to live with dignity and be treated with respect
- Can be enforced and entails an obligation by government to honour it and provide for its implementation

# *What is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?*



Every child has the right to survival, protection and education.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

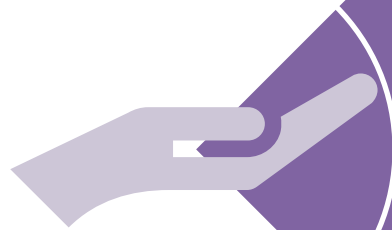
# *What are children's rights?*



All children have human rights; these are known as children's rights. Children do not have more rights than adults: they have the same human rights.



Children, like some other groups, need particular attention to make sure their rights are respected properly: children's rights provide this additional support.



Children involved in foster care have been recognized as requiring special care and attention in order for their rights to be respected.



# United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



# *Rights of Children and Youth:*

These are summarized themes from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



# Child, Family and Community Act

## Section 70 Rights



### BE SAFE

- Have your rights explained to you.
- Be properly fed, clothed and cared for the same as other kids in your placement.
- Be protected from all kinds of abuse, neglect and discrimination.
- Be told about the rules and what will happen if they are not followed.
- Reasonable privacy and personal belongings.



### BE HEALTHY

- Be involved in social and recreational activities.
- Medical and dental care.



### BE YOURSELF

- You have the right to reasonable privacy and to have your own personal belongings.
- Practice your religion and receive religious guidance.
- Maintain and explore your cultural heritage and have help to do so.



### BE HEARD

- You have the right to be told about and involved in your plan of care.
- Have your views heard and considered and participate in decisions that affect you.
- Be informed about the role of the RCY and the Ombudsperson and help to contact them.
- Have an interpreter if you need one.
- Private discussions with a lawyer, someone from the RCY, the Ombudsperson, your local member of government.
- Private discussions with your family, unless a court order says you can't.

# *Recognizing Children's Rights*

Can you think of some real-life examples where your rights, or other young people's rights have been infringed upon or violated in some way?

Think about them in terms of:

- How are young people supported and provided for?
- How are young people protected?
- How young people participate in wider society?

Discuss how these rights might be restored.

# *Children's Rights in British Columbia*



# *Examples of rights concerns:*

## Voices of young people

"I miss my family.  
I don't ever get to  
see them or talk  
to them."

"When I went to live with my  
foster parents, I was not told  
by my social worker that my  
siblings would not be moving  
there with me."

"When I lived in a group  
home, staff would lock the  
cupboards and we were not  
able to access food when  
we were hungry."

"I don't have any privacy. I  
have to share a room with  
my caregiver's children."

**What happens if your self-advocacy efforts are not successful, or the issues are bigger than you can handle?**

**WHO CAN YOU CALL?**

# What is the Representative for Children and Youth?

We help children and youth 0 to 19 access the services they need from MCFD

We help young adults 19 to 27 access Community Living BC services, Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and the Tuition Waiver Program

**We provide individual advocacy services to young people involved with certain government services.**

My Social Worker is not listening to me!

I don't feel safe in my foster home.

I want to learn how to be independent.

My brother lives in a different home and I don't get to see him!

Help! My AYA was just cancelled. What do I do?

# RCY: Mandate

0-18



Children and Youth With Support Needs



Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Services



Permanency Planning/Adoption



Child Protection and Family Support



Youth Services



Youth Justice



Early Childhood Development and Child Care Services

19-27



Agreements with Young Adults



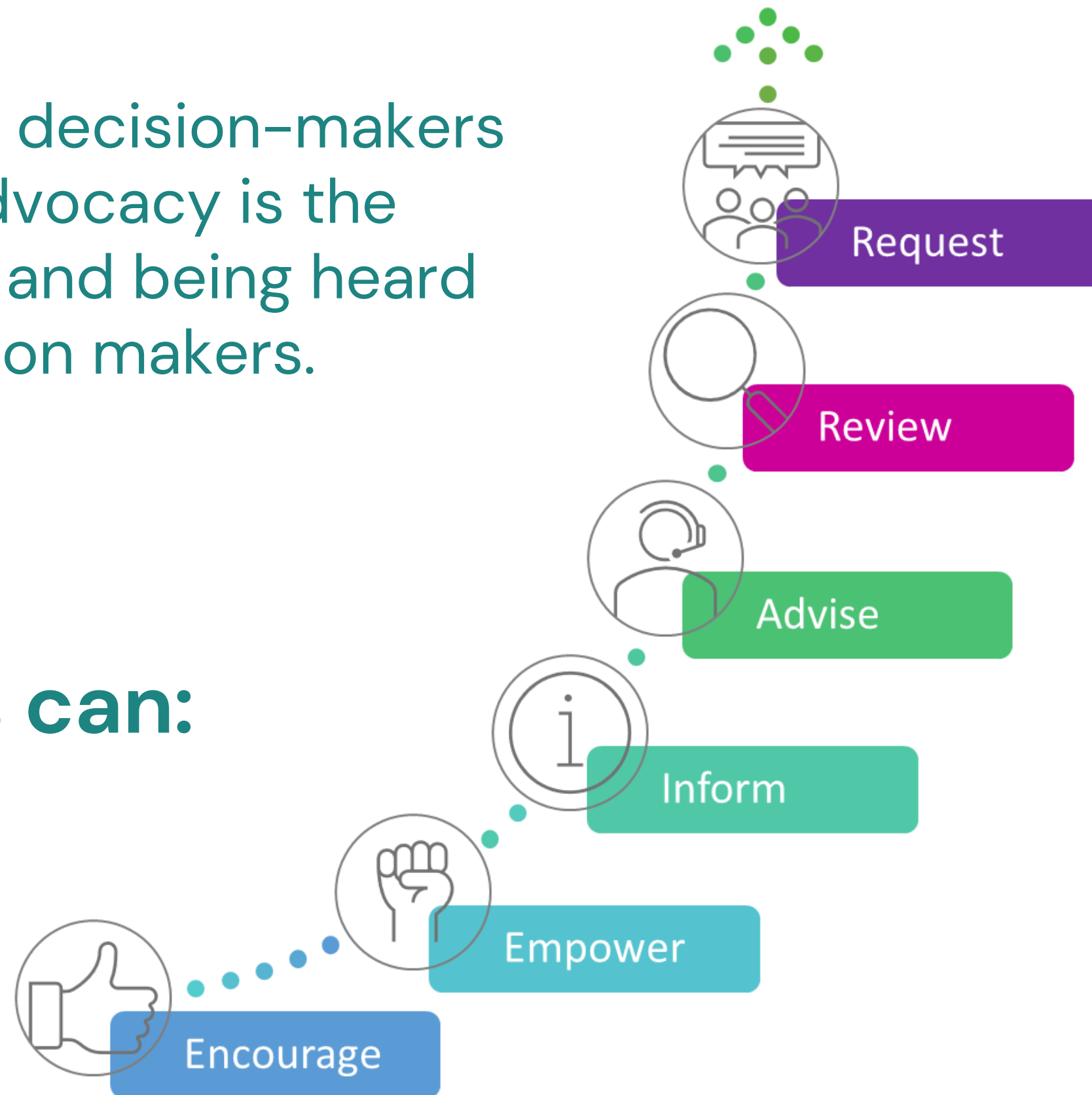
Provincial Tuition Waiver Program

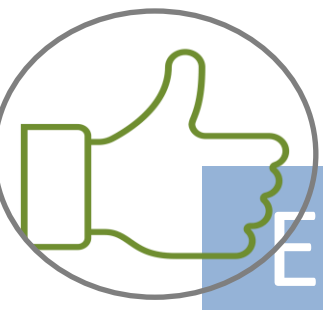


Community Living BC Services for Young Adults

While Advocates are not decision-makers or case managers, advocacy is the process of speaking up and being heard by the right decision makers.

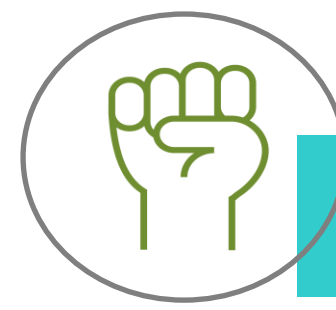
## RCY Advocates can:





## Encourage

- Supporting young people to advocate for themselves. This includes asking for help in a positive way.
- Helping young people to overcome negative experiences they may have had in the past and increasing self-confidence.
- Listening and helping young people understand their strengths and know their wants and needs.
- Supporting young people to listen and consider the perspectives of others.
- Teaching young people to ask questions – if you are unsure, ask, if you are uncomfortable with a decision, ask for more details – research before making a decision or agreeing to one.



## Empower

- Asking young people what is important and unimportant to them.
- Including youth in decision making processes – and letting them know their voice matters.
- Coaching and mentoring young people to do the work, letting them try different things.
- Letting young people know that they have some control over their response to situations.
- Helping young people prepare for meetings, conversations with social workers or others in situations where they may be involved in planning.
- Ensuring that young people know that their experience, values, needs, wants, goals are taken into consideration.



## Inform

- Rights Education.
- Skill development.
- Helping young people prepare and organize themselves – Self-advocacy requires being informed and organized.
- Making sure young people know all the facts.
- Providing information about government systems and how to voice concerns about those systems.



## Advise

- Providing information about provincial systems, different routes that could be taken to meet goals and objectives and sharing possible outcomes.

# RCY: *Advocacy Model* (Say Model)



The SAY Model is the work of the decommissioned Ontario Child Advocate (2008-2018).



# Contact Process: *Youth/ Young Adults*

When children, youth, or young adults contact our office they will be connected with an Intake Advocate almost immediately.



**TEXT**



**PHONE**



**WRITE**



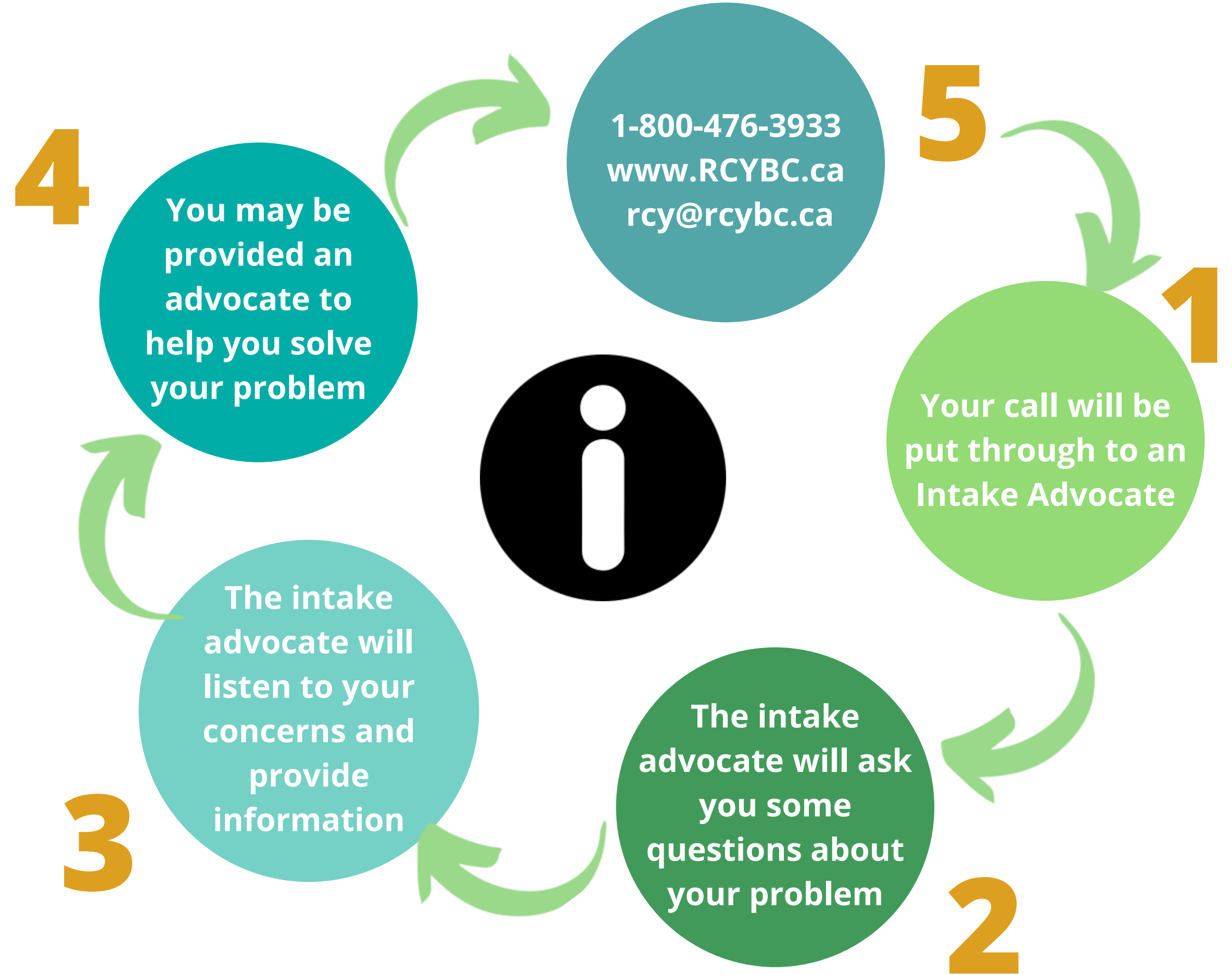
**CHAT**



**EMAIL**



What to  
expect when  
you call the  
RCY.





**TEXT**

1-778-404-7161



**PHONE**

1-800-476-3933



**WRITE**

Victoria/Prince George



**CHAT**

[www.rcybc.ca](http://www.rcybc.ca)



**EMAIL**

[rcy@rcybc.ca](mailto:rcy@rcybc.ca)

# Contact Us!



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BC's Representative for Children and Youth  
and RCYBC Youth



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