



PROBLEM SOLVING

How can you solve a problem on your own?

Conflict and disagreement in life are inevitable. Most conflicts with others can be resolved by taking the time to talk and listen.

Strategies and suggestions for problem solving

Gather your information

Before you contact the department or agency with your complaint, gather all of the relevant information you need including dates, times, names, and other details. Use this information to create a list of questions that you will ask. It may be helpful to write your questions down. Also be clear about what you want as a result of your complaint. For example, are you seeking an apology, a change in policy, a service that you believe should have been provided but was not, or something else?

Be calm and courteous

The old saying goes “you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.” When you are making a complaint, explain that you have a problem or concern and that you need assistance in solving it. If you are calm and courteous, you can expect the same treatment in return. If the entire complaint process takes longer than expected and sometimes leaves you feeling frustrated, be patient and give the organization time to resolve your issue.

Talk to the right people

If the first person that you talk to about your problem cannot resolve the matter, ask to talk to their supervisor. If you do not feel that the supervisor is adequately addressing your concerns, ask to speak to the person who oversees them. Persist until you feel that you are being understood and taken seriously.

Ask questions, and ask for action

Ask for clarification when you do not understand a policy or procedure. Some policies and procedures are quite complex, and you are not expected to be an expert or understand everything right away. Ask employees to identify the rules, policies, or laws that guided their actions and politely ask for copies of these. Ask them how

long it will take to deal with your concern, and if nothing happens, call them back to check on any progress. If there is a degree of urgency involved, let them know and explain why.

Keep written records

We all know that some complaints can be very complicated and involve lots of information. Take notes, make copies of letters and e-mail messages you have sent and received, and keep track of the names of people you have spoken to, when you spoke to them, and the outcome of each conversation.

Appeal rules and deadlines

Read all of the letters and information that you receive about your complaint very carefully because some decisions can be formally appealed. Pay attention to appeal procedures and deadlines. If you do appeal a decision, be sure to show up on time and be prepared for your appeal.

If you cannot solve the problem on your own, what is your next step?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) Is my concern about a provincial department, agency, board, commission, or municipality?
- 2) Is my problem about a matter related to how I have been treated by the government, or an action or decision that I think was unfair?
- 3) Have I done everything that I can to resolve this matter myself?

If you have answered yes to these three questions, it is time to write or call our office:

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Phone: (204) 982-9130 or 1-800-665-0531
Fax: (204) 942-7803

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More information: www.ombudsman.mb.ca