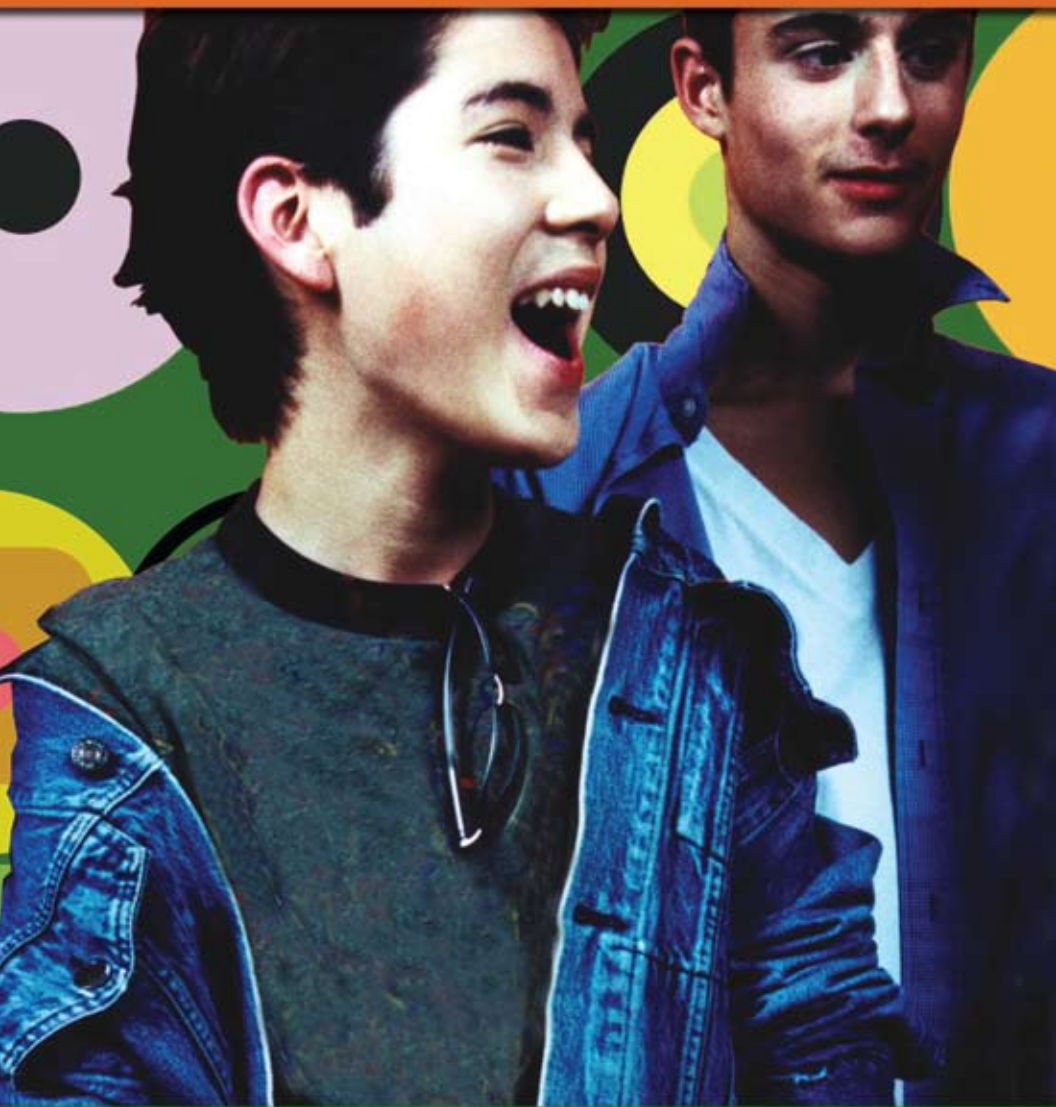


# SPEAK UP!


using what you've got to get what you want



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Family and Youth Services Bureau


**Do you know what you want but need help getting it?**

**Do you just want adults to listen to you?**



**Well,  
SPEAK UP!**

**Why speak up?**



**Speaking up for yourself will help you:**

- **Solve problems** with family and friends
- Get **better service** from doctors, social workers, and others
- **Settle disputes** with employers and **gain their respect**
- Get the **education, housing, and health care** you need

**Plus:**

- You'll feel proud of yourself.
- You'll prove you can do things on your own.
- You'll increase your chances of getting what you want, when you want it.

# How can I speak up?



**1**

**WRITE DOWN YOUR PERSONAL GOALS AND THE STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE TO REACH THEM.**

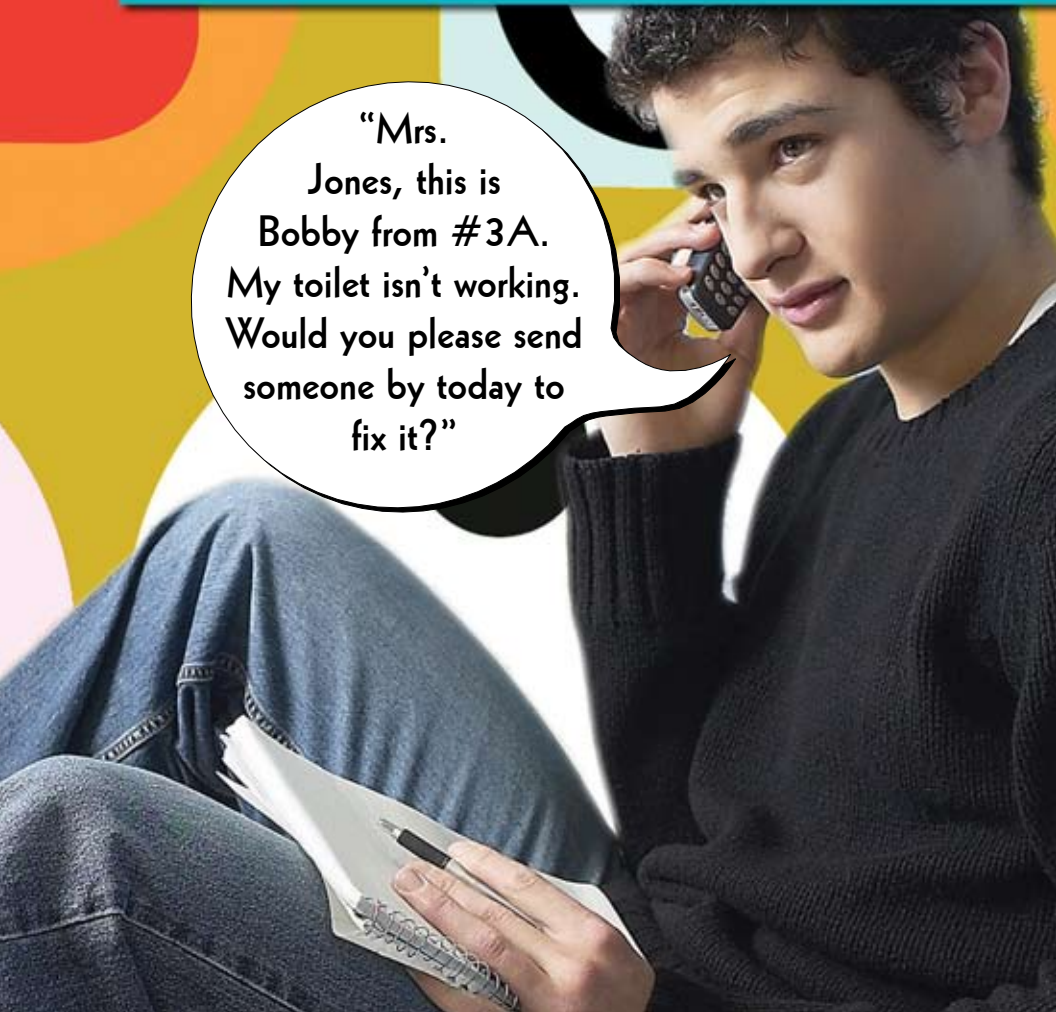
Identifying your personal goals means knowing what you want. Do you want to pass your math test? Get your driver's license? Become a doctor?

In each case, it helps to plan out how you will reach your goal. For instance, to pass math, you need to study. You might get a study partner or a tutor to help you.

## 2

### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

What do we mean by rights and responsibilities? For example, when you rent an apartment, you have the right to ask your landlord to repair things that are broken. You also have the responsibility to pay your rent on time and take good care of the place. How do you find out about your rights and responsibilities? Turn the page!



**“Mrs.  
Jones, this is  
Bobby from #3A.  
My toilet isn’t working.  
Would you please send  
someone by today to  
fix it?”**



**3**

**REMEMBER, THERE'S  
NO SUCH THING AS A  
DUMB QUESTION.**

Getting the right information is an important part of speaking up for yourself. Ask a teacher or counselor, talk to friends, or check the Internet if you have questions.

In fact, even if you don't have questions, talk to helpful people anyway. You may learn something you didn't even think to ask.


You may find people who have gone through the same thing you're going through. They can tell you about their experiences.

Ask as many questions as you need to. If the person's response doesn't answer your question, ask more questions!

# 4

## BE RESPECTFUL.

Speaking up is not just about speaking. Listening is important too. If you listen to others and respect their points of view, they'll listen to what **you** have to say. When it's your turn, be friendly but also be firm. Assert yourself, but don't get angry. Keep trying, but don't be pushy. You may want to rehearse what you will say. Is someone you're dealing with being a jerk? Keep your cool by counting to ten or telling yourself "I can do this." Then, refocus on why you're there and explain what you want clearly, firmly, and politely.



"The same thing happened to me last week! Here's what I did ..."



**5**

## GET HELP.

Say you're going to the department of motor vehicles or the doctor's office. You hate the lines and the waiting. You don't know what documents you need to have.

Well, you don't have to go alone. Take a friend or a family member with you. And before you go, ask them if they can tell you what the visit will be like.





There are other times you should ask for help.  
Here are some examples:

- Having trouble with a class? Talk to your teacher.
- Not sure how to deal with an argument with your parents? Talk to a counselor or case manager.
- Not feeling well? Talk to a doctor.



**6**

## **BE ORGANIZED.**

Sometimes, speaking up for yourself means keeping track of a lot of different information.

You may need to collect documentation that supports your case. The more information you have, the better prepared you will be, and the easier it will be for people to help you.

You might need documents that have your medical, financial, education, or residential information on them. Put each kind of document in a different folder.

Also, use a calendar to keep track of appointments. Mark the date and time of each appointment, and take notes about what will happen. Is there anything you need to do to prepare?

Keep track of phone calls and note the date and the name of the person you spoke to. And if you communicate by e-mail, file messages so you can find them easily.

It may feel scary at first, but speaking up just means knowing what you want and why you want it and getting other people to help you. The more you practice, the easier it will be.



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