

Support Persons and Advocates

When you make a human rights complaint or file a civil lawsuit, you could be representing yourself. This can be scary and stressful. You might want to bring someone with you to help and support you during meetings.

Before the meeting, check with the facilitator to see if bringing someone along is okay. Contact them ahead of time to ask for permission. They will tell you what to do next.

What is a support person?

A support person is someone you trust who helps you during this process. They can quietly assist by keeping things organized, taking notes, and helping you feel less nervous.

What can a support person do and not do

A support person can:

- Take notes
- Help organize and hand documents to you
- Quietly make suggestions to you (like whispering or notes)
- Provide emotional support
- Do other tasks approved by the meeting facilitator

A support person cannot:

- Give legal advice
- Talk to the group during meetings or hearings
- Be a witness in the case
- Have a personal agenda or grudge

The support person might need to agree on the rules and their role.

Tips for how to choose a Support Person

- Make sure your support person can attend all meetings. It's easier if you don't need to ask for permission each time. Talk with your support person about how long the process will take.
- Choose someone you know or who understands the case. They might have already helped you prepare, given emotional support, or helped with problem-solving.
- Pick someone you trust with your personal information. You should feel comfortable sharing details with them.
- Avoid asking a family member. The case details might affect your relationship with them.
- Find someone who complements your strengths. For example, if you are good at speaking but have trouble focusing, a support person who can help with focus might be useful.

The National Self-Representing Litigants Project has great resources about Support Persons in courtrooms. These resources are also helpful for Commission meetings and tribunal hearings. [You can find more information here.](#)

Can a support person speak for me during the proceedings?

Usually, a support person cannot talk for you or speak to the Commission unless they have permission.

The permission can come from The Commissioners or the Human Rights Officer. They might need to talk to your support person for certain reasons.

You can give written permission for your support person to speak for you. But, it's a good idea to contact the Commission first to find out how this works, as the rules might change.

What is an advocate?

An advocate is someone allowed by the Human Rights Commission (either Canadian or Nova Scotian) to speak on your behalf and work with the commission.

This usually happens if the person harassed or discriminated against is a minor or cannot represent themselves due to accessibility issues.

An advocate could be a lawyer, someone experienced with human rights complaints or a family member.

To get permission for an advocate to help, represent, or speak for you, you must ask the Human Rights Commission in writing. Contact the commission you plan to file with for more details.

Other Information

[National Self-Represented Litigants Project Resource Library](#)

[The McKenzie Friend: Choosing and Presenting a Courtroom Companion](#)