

# 7 WAYS TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR RIGHTS IN FOSTER CARE

A good way to become an advocate is to start by advocating for yourself, your case plan goals, and what you want your life to look like.

» When something is wrong or you want something to change, take action!

1

## Know How to Effectively Get Your Message Across.

To make your message effective, it is not just about what you say, but how you say it. As angry as you might be about your situation, you are more likely to succeed in getting your message across if you are calm and clear when you speak to your Department of Child Safety (DCS) Case Specialist, lawyer, GAL or judge. The calm presentation of your complaint or request will help show your maturity.

2

**Call your DCS Case Specialist.** If you are unable to get through, leave a voicemail sharing your concern(s). It's important to keep records of the calls you made, the day(s) time(s) and outcome of the conversation if you spoke.



3

## Call Your Lawyer or GAL.

The job of your lawyer/ GAL is to make sure you are safe and that your needs are being met.



4

**Go Up The Chain of Command.** If you make several attempts to call and leave messages for your DCS Case Specialist and no one calls you back, you can go up the chain of command to reach someone. Chain of Command at the Arizona Department of Child Safety—Your DCS Case Specialist—Your DCS Case Specialist's Supervisor—Area Program Manager—DCS Deputy Director—DCS Director.

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## Plan For Court & Attend.

Court is one of the best places you can go to make sure you are heard. You can go with a statement or outline to read to the judge if that makes it easier. You can call your lawyer to help you prepare. You should take the opportunity to let the judge know how you feel.



5

## Write a Letter.

It is important to always make a record of your concerns and what you want to achieve. Writing letters to your DCS Case Specialist and lawyer/GAL shows you are serious and taking time to explain what is important to you. You can also write a letter to the judge and give it to him or her before or during a hearing. However, you should know other people involved in your case may have the right to also see it.

FOSTERING  
ADVOCATES  
ARIZONA

Youth. Speak. Change.

For more information or to get involved,  
contact us: 3030 N 3rd St., Suite 650,  
Phoenix, AZ 85012

- ✉ [fosteringadvocatesaz@gmail.com](mailto:fosteringadvocatesaz@gmail.com)
- 📌 [FosteringAdvocatesArizona](https://www.facebook.com/FosteringAdvocatesArizona)
- 📞 [@FosteringAdvAZ](https://www.instagram.com/FosteringAdvAZ) (602) 266-0707

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**File a Complaint/Grievance.** A complaint (or grievance) is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about services, actions or lack of actions or manner of treatment by the Arizona Department of Child Safety or its staff affecting you or your case. You can file a grievance with the **Arizona Department Of Child Safety Family Advocacy Office** at 1-877-527-0765 or 602-364-0777. Visit <https://dcs.az.gov/resources/resolve-complaint-or-disagreement>



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