

GOOSE & MOOSE

Learn it together.

PARENT & CAREGIVER COMPANION

Helping Your Child Understand Advocacy

A companion to Goose & Moose Introduce Effective Advocacy

CONCEPTS, NOT STATISTICS.

Built to teach how the system works — not this year's numbers or who holds office.

About This Companion

This handbook isn't homework. It's a companion for the grown-ups supporting a young learner. The Goose & Moose colouring book introduces big ideas in a kid-friendly way. This handbook gives parents and caregivers the additional context, terminology, and real-world information they may want when those little questions turn into big conversations.

Why this companion exists

Children pick up the word “advocacy” early: from the news, from school, from a grown-up’s phone call about something that isn’t working. Adults use it all the time without stopping to define it. The colouring book gives children a friendly, step-by-step picture of how a person can speak up for change: understand the problem, check the facts, find the right person, make a clear ask, and keep going.

This companion gives you the background underneath that picture. It helps you answer the follow-up questions (“Why can’t we just tell the person in charge?” “What if they say no?” “How do you know that’s true?”) and helps you decide how far you want to take the ideas together. It is written for parents, grandparents, foster and kinship caregivers, and any other adult supporting a young learner.

Learn it together

	Your child	You
The goal	Explore it, colour it, ask questions.	Understand it, add context, keep the conversation going.
What it looks like	Colouring, sorting, wondering out loud, asking “why?”	Reading a chapter when a question comes up. Answering with “here’s how it works” and “here’s what I think.”
What success is	Curiosity, confidence and a few new words.	Being a good conversation partner, not being the expert.

The colouring book is a good first picture, and this companion never treats it as wrong. Where the book simplifies, the companion adds the complexity underneath, gently. Think of the two as the child half and the adult half of one family learning program.

Where to go when

When this comes up...	Look here
Your child asks “What is advocacy?” or “Isn’t that just complaining?”	Chapter 1; Common Questions Children Ask
Your child is working on the fact, opinion or experience page	Chapter 3; the answer key in Talk About It Together
Your child asks “Who is in charge of that?”	Chapter 4
Your child has an idea and wants to “tell someone”	Chapters 4 and 5
You are planning a letter, an email or a meeting	Chapters 5 and 6
Someone said no, or nothing happened	Chapter 7
A story is headed online or to the media	Chapter 8, and “Whose story is it?” in Chapter 5

When this comes up...	Look here
You want to check an answer in the book	Talk About It Together
Someone says something about advocacy that sounds off	Things Adults Often Get Wrong

What this companion is, and isn't

It is...	It isn't...
Background for grown-ups supporting a young learner.	A guide for adults who "don't understand civics."
General Canadian information about how advocacy and government usually work.	Specific to one province, territory, city or community. Where rules differ, it says so and points you to local sources.
A set of ideas and habits you can use at home, at school and in the community.	A step-by-step manual for a particular dispute, complaint, appeal or legal matter.
Non-partisan. It explains how the system works and where the real debates are.	A guide to which parties, leaders or policies to support.

A note on real situations

If your family is dealing with a rights complaint, an appeal that has a deadline, or a legal question, this handbook can help you understand the landscape, but it isn't advice for your situation. Look for a professional, legal clinic or family-support organization in your area. Formal processes often have time limits, so it is worth asking early.

Facts and values: a Goose & Moose principle

Goose & Moose teach two phrases: **"that's how it works"** for a fact and **"that's what I think"** for an opinion. Advocacy is the place where the two meet. An advocate uses facts to describe a problem, and values to decide what should be done about it.

This matters because many advocacy questions are not settled by facts alone. How much governments should spend, and on what; who should pay; how to weigh one group's needs against another's; how much should be done by governments and how much by families and communities; which problem comes first. Those are **values questions**, and thoughtful people land in different places. This companion flags them in "Facts and values" boxes. Whenever you can, let your child hear more than one view and ask what they think.

A note on the three-box model and Indigenous governments

Please read this once

The colouring book (like most civics material) sorts government into three boxes: federal, provincial or territorial, and municipal. That is a useful starting point, and this companion uses it. It is not the whole picture. Indigenous governments may exercise their own governing authorities, and how those authorities work, and how they relate to federal, provincial and territorial governments, varies by nation and community. For First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities, the picture is different from the three boxes. If your issue involves an Indigenous community, start with that community's own government or organizations.

Why there are no numbers or names

You won't find dollar amounts, statistics, dates or the names of current office-holders in this handbook. Figures and office-holders change, and a handbook that quotes them is out of date almost immediately. It also teaches the wrong lesson: that civics is a list of facts to memorize. This companion teaches how the system works and how to think about it. Where a figure matters (a deadline, an eligibility rule, a fee) the handbook says so and points you to the official source, because the answer is set by law or policy and could change.

Your 60-Second Cheat Sheet

The key terms in one place. You do not need to know all of this before reading the colouring book with your child. Skim it now or come back when a question lands.

The words

Term	In plain words
Advocacy	Using your voice, facts and relationships to help create change.
Advocate	Anyone who does this: for themselves, for someone else, or for a cause.
Self-advocacy	Speaking up for your own needs and choices.
Lived experience	What a person knows from living through something.
Stakeholder	A person or group affected by an issue, or with a role in it.
Decision-maker	The person or group with the authority to make a particular change.

Fact, opinion or experience?

Type	What it means
Fact	Something that can be checked against evidence.
Opinion	What someone thinks or believes. Reasonable people can differ.
Experience	Something someone has lived through or personally knows. Real and important, but personal.

The levers of change

Lever	What it is
Law	The main legal rule, passed by a legislature, Parliament or a council.
Regulation	Legally binding details made under the authority of a law.
Policy	The broad rules and guidelines that shape what a government or organization does.
Procedure	The steps for how something is done.
Funding	The money and resources available to make something happen.
Training	What the people doing the work are taught.
Practice	What actually happens day to day.

Who's who in government

Group	What they do
Elected officials	Represent the public, debate, vote and set political direction.
Ministries and departments	Support ministers, develop policy and run programs.
Public servants	Non-partisan professionals who give advice and deliver services.
Agencies and boards	Specialized bodies: regulatory, advisory, research or service-focused.
Committees	Small groups that study issues, hear from the public and report.

The advocacy path: Problem → Research → Solution → Decision-maker → Ask → Action → Follow-up. Each step is explained in the Big Picture chapter.

Ways to speak up: email, meeting, letter, petition, committee, delegation, media and public education. Most efforts use more than one.

What Your Child Is Learning

The colouring book moves in a clear arc: from “what is advocacy?” through understanding a problem, checking the facts, finding the right person, making a clear ask, doing a meeting well, handling a no, and getting the word out. It ends with a plan your child can fill in. Here is how the book’s sections map to the big ideas and to the chapters of this companion.

In the book	The big idea	Chapter
Meet the Team; What Is Advocacy?; Your Voice Matters	Advocacy means using your voice. You don’t have to be an expert. You just have to care.	1
Start With the Problem; Who Is Affected?; Listen Before You Lead	Understand the problem, and the people it touches, before you try to fix it.	2
Facts Matter; Fact, Opinion, or Experience?; Find Good Sources; Check It Twice	Facts, opinions and experiences are different things. Check before you share.	3
What Actually Needs to Change?; Who Can Change It?; Federal, Provincial, or Municipal?; Government Isn’t Just Politicians; Find the Decision-Maker; Who Else Matters?	Different problems need different changes, and different people can make them.	4
Build Your Evidence; Don’t Just Bring a Problem; Is Your Solution Realistic?; Make a Clear Ask; One Big Ask; Tell the Story; Evidence + Story	A strong case has a problem, evidence, lived experience and a realistic solution, plus one clear ask.	5
Different Ways to Advocate; Getting a Meeting; Prepare for the Meeting; At the Table; Ask Questions Too; Write It Down; Follow Up	Advocacy takes many forms. Preparing, listening, taking notes and following up make them work.	6
When They Say No; Change the Strategy, Not the Goal; Disagreement Is Not Failure; Keep the Door Open; Build Allies	A no is information, not the end. Stay respectful, stay flexible and don’t go it alone.	7
Working With Media; Social Media Is a Tool; Know Your Audience; Be Accurate; Correct Mistakes	Share your message clearly and honestly, and fix errors when you find them.	8
How Change Actually Happens; Build Your Own Advocacy Plan; the activity pages	Change is a process with steps. Small steps add up.	9

After finishing the book, your child can probably say...

- “Advocacy means using your voice, and you don’t have to be an expert.”
- “First I figure out exactly what the problem is and who it affects.”
- “A fact can be checked. An opinion is what someone thinks. An experience is something someone has lived.”
- “Different problems need different kinds of change: a law, a rule, money, training, or just how things are done.”
- “I have to find the person or group who can actually make the change.”
- “Don’t just bring a problem. Bring an idea, and make a clear ask.”
- “If someone says no, I can find out why and try a different route.”
- “I can disagree and still be respectful.”
- “If I get something wrong, I fix it and thank the person who told me.”
- “Change takes time, and it usually takes a team.”

Words your child may start using

Word	What they probably mean
Advocate	Someone who speaks up to help create change.
Evidence	Facts, research or records that back up a claim.
Source	Where information comes from.
Decision-maker	The person or group who can say yes.
Stakeholder	Anyone affected by, or involved in, the issue.
Lived experience	What you know from living it.
The ask	The specific thing you’re asking someone to do.
Follow-up	Checking back after a meeting or message.
Ally	Someone who works alongside you for the same goal.
Misinformation	Wrong information that gets passed around.

Adult tip: be Goose and Moose

Goose asks the big questions and always wants to know “why?” Moose finds the facts and explains patiently. You don’t have to be Moose. When your child asks something you can’t answer, be Goose: “Great question. Let’s fact-find.” When you do know, be Moose, and say which parts are fact and which parts are your opinion.

The Adult Version: The Big Picture

What advocacy is, for grown-ups

Advocacy is any effort to influence a decision that affects people, for yourself, for someone else, or for a cause, using your voice, information and relationships rather than force. It can be as small as asking a school to explain a rule and as large as helping shape a national law. It is done by individuals, families, volunteer groups, organizations and coalitions, and it does not require any special standing. The book's five verbs describe it well: raise awareness, share facts, bring people together, influence decisions, and help create positive change.

Kinds of advocacy

The book mostly shows advocacy that aims to change a rule, program or practice. In real life, several kinds sit side by side, and it helps to know which one you are doing.

Kind	What it looks like	Good to know
Self-advocacy	A person speaks up for their own needs, choices and rights.	The most natural place for children to begin, and a skill worth building at every age.
Individual advocacy	Someone helps one person get what they need from a system, such as a parent supporting a child's plan.	Wins here help one person. They can also reveal patterns.
Systems advocacy	People work to change the rules, programs or practices that affect many people.	Usually slower. It needs evidence, allies and a clear ask.
Community advocacy	Neighbours or groups work to change something local, such as an event, a space or a service.	Can provide opportunities to see how local decisions are made and to practise advocacy skills.

How advocacy works, start to finish

The book's process page describes seven steps. Here is the same path with a little of what happens in real life.

Step	What it means	What's underneath
Problem	Identify the issue and why it matters.	Describe what is happening and who is affected, not just how it feels. Separate the problem from your favourite solution.
Research	Gather facts, evidence and real-life experiences.	Look for reliable sources and for the voices of people affected. Notice what you don't yet know.
Solution	Develop realistic, practical options.	Ask who would do it, what it would take and what rules are involved. You don't need a perfect plan, but you do need a direction.
Decision-maker	Bring it to the right people at the right level.	Authority is often spread across several people and bodies. Finding the right door takes homework.
Ask	Clearly state what you are asking for.	A specific, realistic request that fits the person's role is much easier to say yes to.
Action	Turn the ask into real steps.	A yes is not the finish line. Someone has to do the work, and that takes time.
Follow-up	Stay engaged until change happens.	Check in, share new information and be patient and persistent. Most of the work happens here.

In practice these steps loop. New research changes the solution. A no changes the ask. Learning who decides changes the problem you decide to tackle. That is normal, and Chapter 9 says more.

Friendly simplifications, and what's underneath

The book is a good first picture, and simplifying is what a colouring book should do. Here are places where the adult version adds more.

The book says...	The adult version
Find the decision-maker. A minister is shown as the one who can make the change.	Decisions are spread out. Legislatures pass laws. Cabinet and ministers decide policy within those laws. Public servants run programs and make many day-to-day decisions. Boards, agencies and tribunals decide some matters independently. Councils and school boards decide locally. Sometimes several people share a decision, and sometimes no single person holds it.
Sometimes it's federal! Sometimes provincial! Sometimes municipal!	A useful starting sort. Many issues involve more than one government, and Indigenous governments may exercise their own governing authorities. Some local decisions belong to bodies such as school boards, which are created under provincial or territorial law.
The emergency alerting system (Alert Ready) is listed as a federal example.	It is a partnership among federal, provincial and territorial governments, local authorities and broadcasters. Provinces, territories and authorized local bodies issue alerts in their areas. Alerts and community safety are covered separately in the series.
Your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) is who to contact for provincial issues.	The title depends on where you live: MLA in most provinces and territories, MPP in Ontario, MNA in Quebec and MHA in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The book says...	The adult version
A shadow minister (Opposition) is someone you can contact.	Opposition parties assign “critics” (some legislatures say shadow ministers) to follow particular subjects. They hold the government to account but, while in opposition, do not make government decisions. That matters when deciding whom to approach.
A petition shows broad public support. Many voices give your message more weight.	Formal legislative petitions follow the rules of the particular legislature, including rules about sponsorship or presentation. Presenting a petition is not the same as endorsing it, and it doesn't oblige anyone to change course. A petition on a private website is not an official petition.
Evidence + Story: the example uses a made-up figure and a made-up community.	Real advocacy uses verified figures with named sources, and real stories shared with consent. The book's example shows the structure, not the facts.
Government isn't just politicians. Public servants are non-partisan professionals.	Correct. They serve whichever government is in office and give advice. They can explain programs and processes, but they don't decide political questions.
One person can make a difference.	One person can start a conversation, identify a problem or bring forward an idea. Broader change often involves other people, decision-makers and time.

1. What Advocacy Is (and Isn't)

In the colouring book

Goose and Moose introduce themselves as advocacy explorers. Goose is the curious one who asks “why?” Moose is the knowledgeable one who finds the facts. Advocacy is shown as using your voice, with a checklist: raise awareness, share facts, bring people together, influence decisions and help create positive change. The message is that you don’t have to be an expert. You just have to care.

The adult version

Caring and knowing

Advocacy sits where caring meets knowing. Caring gets you started, and knowing keeps you credible. Goose without Moose can be loud and wrong. Moose without Goose can be right and silent. The book gives each character a job because advocacy needs both.

Advocacy and its neighbours

People use “advocacy” for many things, and the word overlaps with several others. It helps to know the differences, especially when you are talking with a child who has heard a word on the news.

Word	What it usually means	How it relates to advocacy
Advocacy	Speaking up and working to influence decisions, using information and relationships.	The umbrella idea in the book.
Lobbying	Communicating with public office holders to influence decisions, often for pay or on behalf of an organization or client. Regulated in many places.	Overlaps with advocacy but is not the same thing. Registration rules vary by jurisdiction, so if you are paid to advocate or you speak for an organization, check the rules and registry where you live.
Activism and protest	Public action to draw attention to a cause, such as rallies and campaigns.	One tool advocates may use. It is protected in law within limits.
Complaints and legal action	Using a complaint process, tribunal or court to resolve a specific dispute or challenge a decision.	A separate, formal track with its own rules and deadlines. Sometimes used alongside advocacy.
Partisan politics	Working to elect or support a party or candidate.	Different from advocacy, which can be non-partisan. Registered charities can take part in public-policy dialogue that furthers their charitable purposes, but they cannot directly or indirectly support or oppose a party or candidate. Some workplaces have their own rules too, so check before you act.
Volunteering and service	Directly providing help.	Often builds the knowledge advocacy relies on.

Advocacy begins at home

Every child has already practised advocacy. Asking a teacher for a quiet place to reset, suggesting a rule change to a sports team, asking a restaurant for a different option, helping a parent explain to a clinic why

an appointment time doesn't work: each of these involves noticing a need, saying it clearly, listening and following up.

Self-advocacy is a skill that grows with practice. For many children, including children with disabilities or different learning needs, learning to describe what helps them and to ask for it is one of the most useful skills they can build. Some children need support to do this, and helping them is advocacy too.

Being heard, not being burdened

Canada has signed international agreements affirming that children have the right to express their views on matters that affect them, with those views given weight according to age and maturity, and that people with disabilities have the right to take part in decisions that affect them. You don't need the details to use the idea: children's views deserve a hearing. Hearing a child out is different from handing them adult-sized problems to carry.

Not the same as complaining

A complaint says "this is wrong." Advocacy adds four things: here is what is happening, here is who is affected, here is what could change, and here is who can make that happen. Complaining isn't bad. It is often the first honest signal that something is off. But advocacy takes the next step, and that is what the book means when it says advocacy is not only complaining.

You don't have to be an expert

Lived experience is real knowledge. It tells decision-makers what a policy feels like from the inside, which reports often miss. Credibility grows when lived experience is paired with checked facts, and Chapters 3 and 5 show how. No one has to do everything either. Experts, organizations and families each bring something different, and a good effort uses all three.

Facts and values

"This is a problem" can be a fact (something measurable) or a value judgment (something one believes matters most). Advocacy usually includes both. Saying which is which, as in "here is what is happening, and here is why I think it matters," builds trust with the people you are trying to reach.

Advocacy isn't partisan

A family can ask an elected official of any party for help with an issue, and can thank or push back on any government. Choosing a party is a separate decision, and this handbook stays out of it.

Keep it kid-sized

If your family's advocacy comes from a hard situation, your child may already sense a lot. It is fine for the colouring book to be lighter than real life. Let your child explore the skills (asking questions, checking facts, being kind and clear) and decide for yourself how much of the adult situation to share.

Try saying

"Advocacy means speaking up to help make things better for people, and using facts so that what we say is true."

"You don't have to be an expert. You just have to care and be willing to learn."

2. Start With the Problem

In the colouring book

Start With the Problem asks seven questions (what, who, when, where, why, how often and what is the impact) and stacks up reports, news, data and real stories as places to look. Who Is Affected? shows different groups (children and youth, schools and educators, communities, first responders, governments and policy makers, service providers and the public) who see the same problem differently. Listen Before You Lead shows a circle of people sharing different experiences, with a good-listening checklist.

The adult version

A clear problem is half the work

A clear problem statement says what is happening, to whom, where, and what it causes. It does not smuggle in a solution. “We need a new program” is a solution, not a problem, and if a problem is described as the absence of one particular fix, other fixes disappear from view. Compare these.

Vague	Clearer
“The system doesn’t work.”	“Families are given conflicting instructions about how to apply, and can’t tell which set is right.”
“There’s nothing for kids like mine.”	“There is no quiet space at community events, so children who find crowds overwhelming often leave early.”
“Nobody listens.”	“Requests sent to the office go unanswered, and there is no way to find out who is responsible.”
“It’s unfair.”	“The same rule is applied differently depending on which office or person handles the case.”

Symptoms and causes

Goose’s favourite question is a powerful advocacy tool. Ask “why?” a few times. A long wait might come from too few staff, from a confusing process, or from a rule that sends everyone to the same place. The visible problem is often a symptom, and the right fix depends on the cause. You may not be able to find every cause yourself, but asking the question helps you avoid solving the wrong problem.

Where facts come from

The book stacks up reports, news, data and real stories. Each has a job. Reports and data show scale. News shows what is in public view. Real stories show what it is like. Official documents show what the rules say. Look at more than one kind, and notice what is missing, such as whose voice isn’t in the news or which group the data doesn’t count.

Who is affected: more than one picture

The book’s bubbles show that one problem looks different depending on who experiences it. Adults call people affected by, responsible for, or interested in an issue **stakeholders**. A fix that helps one group can change life for another: more paperwork for staff, a different cost to the public, fewer options for someone else. Thinking about that early leads to better, more realistic asks.

Listen before you lead

The book’s checklist is a good habit for any age: be open-minded, respect different experiences, ask questions, learn something new, include many voices and look for common goals. A few adult additions.

- **People most affected should be part of the conversation.** A well-known principle in the disability community says it plainly: “nothing about us without us.” It applies well beyond disability.
- **Ask before you speak for others.** Good intentions can still get it wrong. If you are advocating for someone, find out what they want, in their own words where possible.
- **A group is not one voice.** Families in the same situation may want different things. Listen for the range.
- **Children are affected by many adult decisions.** Asking a child what they notice, and taking the answer seriously, is a form of listening the book models on this page.

Facts and values

Two people can look at the same facts and see different problems. A long wait is a problem for the person waiting, a budget question for a department and a staffing question for a manager. None of them is wrong. Understanding a view is not the same as agreeing with it, and it usually makes your own ask stronger.

Try saying

“Let’s figure out exactly what is happening first. Who does it affect? What would they tell us?”

“What would Moose want to find out before deciding what to do?”

3. Facts, Opinions and Experience

In the colouring book

Facts Matter shows Goose hearing a claim and Moose checking it. Fact, Opinion, or Experience? defines the three words and gives twelve statements to cut out and sort. Find Good Sources lists government documents, legislation, research, reports, statistics and lived experience, with a checklist for spotting reliable sources. Check It Twice shows comparing several sources before trusting one.

The adult version

Three kinds of statement, not two

Many of us learned “fact versus opinion.” The book adds a third word, **experience**, and that is worth noticing. An experience is neither a fact you can look up nor an opinion you can shrug off. It is something a person has lived. It tells you something real about what can happen, and evidence tells you how often it happens. Good advocacy honours both.

Type	The test	An example	How to treat it
Fact	Could it be checked against a record, a measurement or a reliable source?	“The library closes at a set time on weekends.”	Check it. Correct it if it's wrong.
Opinion	Is it a judgment, preference or belief? Watch for words like best, should and better.	“The library should stay open later.”	Ask what it rests on. Other views are legitimate.
Experience	Is it something the speaker lived through or saw first-hand?	“I couldn't get in after work last week.”	Listen. Believe the person about their own experience. Look for patterns.

Statements are often a blend

Real statements mix the three. “This program is helping” might rest on a fact (people are using it), an experience (it helped me) and an opinion (it's worth the cost). Words like “always,” “never,” “everyone” and “nobody” are clues that a statement may be stretching. A simple habit for any age: ask, “How would we check that?”

What makes a source reliable

The book's list of sources is a good start. Here is what each is good for, and what to watch for.

Source	Good for	Watch for
Government documents and legislation	What the rules and programs actually say.	They can be out of date. Plain-language summaries may leave things out.
Official statistics and data	How big or how common something is.	Definitions matter, figures change, and the date matters.
Research and reports	Evidence about what works and why.	Who paid for it, how it was done and whether it was independently reviewed.
News reports	What has happened, and a range of voices.	Headlines simplify. Opinion pieces are opinions.
Organizations and advocacy groups	Expertise and real-world experience.	Every group has a viewpoint. Look for the sources behind their claims.
Lived experience	What it is really like, and what data can miss.	One story is not a pattern. Get consent before sharing someone's story.
Social media	Leads worth following up.	Anything can be posted. Verify elsewhere before you rely on it.

Checking it twice

The book's "good questions" are the right ones: who wrote this, when was it published, is it up to date, can we find the same information somewhere else, is it trustworthy? A few adult refinements.

- **Independent confirmation matters.** Three websites repeating one press release are one source, not three.
- **Read sideways.** Instead of digging deeper into a page, leave it and see what other sources say about the page's author or organization.
- **Check the date.** "Official" does not mean "current." A statement that was accurate once may not be now.
- **Find the original.** Screenshots, quotes and summaries often lose context. Look for the source they came from.
- **Notice who benefits.** That doesn't make a claim false, but it tells you where to look harder.

When the source is you

Once you start advocating, you become a source. Keep track of where your facts came from, and be clear with listeners about which parts are checked facts, which are your experience and which are your opinion. That clarity is a big part of what makes an advocate believable.

A four-question routine to try with a child

- **What exactly is being claimed?** Say it in one sentence.
- **Who says so, and how would they know?**
- **Can we find it somewhere else,** ideally from a different kind of source?
- **Is anything missing,** such as a date, a place or the other side of the story?

Facts and values

Facts can tell us what is happening and what a policy is likely to do. They can't tell us what we should care about most. Once the facts are as clear as they can be, the disagreement that remains is often about values, and that is a conversation rather than a fact-check.

Try saying

“Is that something we could check? How would we do it?”

“That’s your experience, and it matters. Let’s also see what the research says about how common it is.”

“That’s what I think. Here’s the part that’s a fact.”

4. Finding the Right Lever and the Right Door

In the colouring book

What Actually Needs to Change? shows seven levers: law, regulation, policy, procedure, funding, training and practice. Who Can Change It? shows federal, provincial or territorial, and municipal governments with examples of what each does. Federal, Provincial, or Municipal? is a matching activity. Government Isn't Just Politicians introduces five groups. Find the Decision-Maker contrasts Goose shouting at everyone with Moose finding the person who has the authority. Who Else Matters? maps the people around an issue.

The adult version

Start with the lever

Before asking who can change something, ask what kind of change is needed. The book's seven levers are the right list. Each has its own decision-makers and its own pace.

Lever	What it is	Who usually sets it	An everyday picture
Law	Rules passed by Parliament, a legislature or (for bylaws) a council. Binding on everyone they cover.	Elected bodies	A law that sets out who is eligible for a program.
Regulation	Detailed legal rules made under the authority of a law.	Cabinet, a minister or an agency, as the law allows	The forms, definitions and standards that spell out how that law works.
Policy	Guidelines that shape decisions. Some carry legal weight and some do not, depending on how the law is written.	Departments, ministers, boards, organizations	A department's guide to how cases are assessed.
Procedure	The steps for how something is done.	Program managers, organizations	Which form goes where, and who reviews it next.
Funding	Money and resources.	Governments through budgets; organizations	Whether there are enough staff or spaces.
Training	What the people doing the work learn.	Employers, departments, professional bodies	Whether staff know how to support a child overwhelmed by noise.
Practice	What really happens day to day.	The people doing the work, shaped by everything above	Two offices following the same rule differently.

Same problem, different levers

A child's support plan isn't followed consistently across classrooms. The cause could be unclear rights (law), missing guidance (policy), no way to share the plan with new staff (procedure), too few support staff (funding), staff who aren't sure what to do (training), or simply habit (practice). Each points to a different ask and a different person. Asking a legislature for a new law when the real gap is staff training wastes everyone's effort. Not every problem needs a new law, and the quickest changes are often to procedure, training or practice, made by someone close to the ground.

Orders of government: a starting map

The book sorts government into three boxes. Here is the adult version of each.

- **Federal:** matters that concern the country as a whole, such as defence, criminal law, citizenship and national programs, along with funding arrangements that support others.
- **Provincial and territorial:** many of the services closest to daily life, such as health-care delivery, education, social services and the arrangements for policing.
- **Municipal:** local services and rules, such as roads, transit, parks, waste collection, land-use planning and local emergency services. Municipalities are created by provincial or territorial law and have the powers those laws give them.

Territorial governments differ from provincial ones. Their powers come from federal law, and the arrangements have changed over time and vary from territory to territory.

Adults often say “orders of government” instead of “levels.” The word “levels” suggests a chain of command, and federal and provincial or territorial governments each have their own responsibilities under the Constitution. The book uses “levels” because it is the child-friendly word, and that’s fine. The adult version just adds a small refinement.

Rule-maker, funder, deliverer

Three questions untangle many issues: **Who makes the rules? Who pays? Who does the work?**

These can be three different governments. In health care, for example, provinces and territories run and manage services, while the federal government contributes funding and sets some national conditions. In schools, a province or territory sets the framework and much of the funding, a school board (where there is one) runs schools locally, and the school applies the rules. If you know which of the three your problem lives in, you know where to start.

The three-box model has limits

Indigenous governments may exercise their own governing authorities, and how those authorities work, and how they relate to federal, provincial and territorial governments, varies by nation and community. For First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities, the picture is different from the three boxes. If your issue involves an Indigenous community, start with that community’s own government or organizations.

Shared and overlapping

The book labels some items “(shared)” for good reason. Housing, environmental protection, health, immigration and many other areas involve more than one order of government. Overlap is a normal feature of Canada’s system of government, not a mistake, but it can make it hard to know where to begin. When several governments are involved, a good place to start is the one that delivers the service or is closest to the day-to-day problem. Ask them who else is involved.

Facts and values

Who currently holds a responsibility is a fact you can look up. Whether it should be that way, or how much government should do at all, are values questions with a long history of debate. It is worth letting children hear that both exist.

Government isn’t just politicians

The book’s five groups are a good map. Here is what each does and what is useful to know when you are trying to be heard.

Group	What they do	Good to know
Elected officials	Represent the public, debate and vote. Some form the government. Others sit in opposition and question it.	Your own representative is a logical place to start. Being elected doesn't mean one member can change a decision alone.
Ministers and Cabinet	Elected members who lead departments and make policy decisions within the law.	Ministers have small offices and heavy schedules. Requests often go through their office.
Ministries and public servants	Give advice, develop policy, run programs and deliver services.	They serve whichever government is in office. They can explain how things work, but they do not decide political questions.
Political staff	Work in offices of ministers and members, coordinating and advising.	Often the practical way in. They are different from public servants.
Agencies, boards and tribunals	Specialized bodies. Some regulate, advise or research, and some decide individual cases.	Find out whether the body is independent of the minister. Decisions may have set appeal routes.
Committees	Small groups of members that study issues and bills, hear from the public and report.	Many accept written briefs from the public. Watch for calls for input.
Local councils and school boards	Elected local bodies with authority under provincial or territorial law.	Often the most accessible. Many let residents make short presentations.

“By convention”

Canada's system of responsible government includes conventions about ministerial responsibility: ministers are answerable to the legislature for what their departments do. Public servants are expected to serve the government of the day in a non-partisan way, and those expectations are also reflected in laws, policies and codes that govern the public service. Some constitutional rules come from law, while others come from long-established practices about how government is expected to work. Those practices are called conventions. With children, you can say it this way: some rules are written down as laws, and some are long-standing practices about how government is expected to work.

Other doors: independent oversight

Many provinces and territories have independent offices that look at how the system treated a person or how well a program works. Examples include ombudsperson offices, child and youth advocates or representatives, auditors general, human rights commissions and tribunals, and information and privacy commissioners. They are separate from the departments they review. They generally look into how something was handled rather than changing policy on request, and their names, powers and mandates vary by province and territory. Not every office can investigate every kind of complaint. If you feel stuck inside a process, it is worth finding out which of these exist where you live.

Finding the decision-maker

The book contrasts Goose shouting at everyone with Moose learning who has the authority. It's a good contrast, and it is worth adding that the people Goose shouts at are usually doing exactly what the book says: applying rules made somewhere else. Front-line workers are often allies, and treating them as such pays off.

- **Ask three questions:** Who decides? Who influences the decision? Who can help me find out?
- **Start where the problem is.** The person closest to the problem, such as a principal, a manager or

an event organizer, can often fix an individual situation quickly. If the real problem is a rule, they may know who owns it.

- **Move up in steps and put things in writing.** Escalate one step at a time, and keep a record.
- **The top of the chart isn't always the right door.** The most senior person may send you back down to the person who actually handles it.

The referral runaround

If you are passed from person to person, keep a list of who you spoke to, when, and what they said. Ask each person, "Who would you suggest I contact next?" and "Is there someone whose job it is to decide this?" Chapter 6 says more about keeping notes.

Who else matters: the stakeholder map

The book's map (people affected, experts, organizations, government officials, community members, service providers, media, business and employers, educators and others) is a practical way to see who is around an issue. Adults can sort them with three questions: Who is affected? Who has influence? Who has expertise? Some will be allies, some neutral and some opposed. People who disagree usually have reasons, such as costs, competing priorities or constraints you may not see. Understanding those reasons helps you shape a better ask, and doesn't require you to agree.

Try saying

"That person may not be able to change the rule, but they might know who can. Let's ask who decides."

"What kind of change do we need: a rule, some money, some training, or a different way of doing things?"

5. Building Your Case

In the colouring book

Build Your Evidence shows four building blocks: problem, evidence, lived experience and solution. Don't Just Bring a Problem pairs "here's what's wrong" with "here's what could fix it." Is Your Solution Realistic? offers six questions to ask. Make a Clear Ask contrasts vague and specific requests and leaves room to write one. One Big Ask, Three Supporting Points shows a simple briefing-note layout. Tell the Story and Evidence + Story = Stronger Advocacy show why facts and lived experience work best together.

The adult version

Four building blocks

Block	What it does	A common slip
Problem	Names what is wrong and for whom.	Too general, or a solution disguised as a problem.
Evidence	Shows the problem is real and how big it is.	Out of date, unsourced or picked to fit.
Lived experience	Shows what the problem is like from the inside.	Shared without consent, or one story presented as the whole picture.
Solution	Shows a way forward.	Too vague, ignores cost and rules, or the only option offered.

Bring solutions, without needing the perfect one

"Don't just bring a problem" is good advice, because officials and staff can do much more with "here is what is happening and here is a good outcome" than with "this is unfair." It doesn't mean you must arrive with a finished policy design. If you don't have the whole solution, describe the problem, describe the outcome you want, offer some ideas and offer to help work out the rest.

The book's list of possible solutions connects neatly to Chapter 4's levers: clearer processes (procedure), more funding (funding), better training (training), consistent services (practice), involving experts and listening to families (policy and process), and realistic timelines (procedure and funding).

Is your solution realistic?

The book's six questions are the right ones. Here is what to add to each.

- **Who would do it?** This is the decision-maker question from Chapter 4. It may be more than one government, or an organization.
- **What would it cost?** Costs include money, staff time, space and attention. You don't need to price it exactly, but showing you've thought about it earns respect. Look for places or organizations that have tried something similar. A **pilot project** lets a new idea be tried on a small scale first, which makes a yes easier.
- **What rules need changing?** Sometimes none do. An existing rule may already allow what you are asking for.
- **Is it practical?** Could it actually be done by the people and organizations involved?
- **Will it make a difference?** For whom, and could it shift a burden onto someone else?
- **What are the next steps?** A good idea with no path attached is easy to set aside.

Facts and values

Governments and organizations have limited resources and many competing priorities. Deciding what to fund or change first is a values question. A realistic ask acknowledges trade-offs rather than pretending they don't exist.

Making a clear ask

The book's three habits (be specific, explain why, include details) are the heart of a good ask. A useful shape is: **"We are asking [who] to [do what] so that [result]."**

Vague	Clear
"Do something about the waitlist."	"We are asking the ministry to publish how long families typically wait, and to explain how it plans to reduce that wait."
"Make the event more inclusive."	"We are asking the organizers to set aside a quiet space, with a volunteer and clear signs, at the next event."
"Fix the rules."	"We are asking the department to review the eligibility guidelines with input from families and report back on what it finds."
"Support families."	"We are asking the board to include a family representative on the committee that reviews this policy."

Not every ask has to be "change the law." Asks can be for information ("please tell us how this decision is made"), for a meeting, for a review, for a specific action or for a commitment. Small asks are fine, and sometimes a request for information is the best first step. The book says a strong ask is time-bound "if possible." Tying your ask to a real decision point, such as before the next budget is set or before a policy review ends, gives the person a reason to respond.

One big ask, three supporting points

A **briefing note** is a short document that summarizes an issue for a busy decision-maker. Public servants and political staff write and read them constantly, and the book's layout is a simple version families can use: one clear ask, supported by a few key points. A tidy single page is easy to pass along, and it helps your issue survive being retold by people who weren't in the room.

Part	What goes in it
The big ask	What you want the decision-maker to do. Clear, specific, realistic.
Who is affected	Who this touches and why it matters.
What we know	The evidence and lived experience that support the ask, with sources.
Why this solution	How it would help and what would change.

Telling the story

The book's reasons are right: stories make an issue real, show its impact, build empathy, complement the facts and inspire action. Numbers tell you how many. Stories tell you why it matters. The book's example pairs an evidence statement with a story to make a stronger message. It uses an invented community and a made-up figure to show the structure. Real advocacy uses verified figures with named sources, and real stories shared with consent.

Whose story is it?

Before a story leaves your kitchen table, think it through. This matters most when the story involves a child.

- **Ask permission** from the person whose story it is. For a child, involve them as much as suits their age and maturity, and respect a no.
- **Think long-term.** Something shared online, in the media or in a public submission can stay findable for a very long time. A story that feels fine now may feel different when your child is older.
- **Share strengths as well as struggles.** People are more than their hardest moments.
- **Protect others.** Leave out names and identifying details of teachers, staff, other children and relatives unless they have agreed.
- **Know where it will go.** Written submissions to legislative committees, for example, generally become part of the public record.
- **Decide your line in advance.** Know what you won't share, so you aren't deciding under pressure.

A story told once is not a pattern. The strongest cases pair a real story with evidence that the problem is bigger than one person. The evidence gives credibility, and the story gives meaning.

Facts and values

Evidence tells us what is. Stories tell us what it is like. Neither tells us what to do. Choosing among solutions involves values such as fairness, cost, freedom and who should carry responsibility. Say so out loud, and invite the other view.

Try saying

"Instead of 'fix it,' what exactly are we asking, of whom, and by when?"

"If they could only remember one thing, what should it be?"

6. Ways to Advocate, and Making the Most of a Meeting

In the colouring book

Different Ways to Advocate lists email, meeting, letter, petition, committee, delegation, media and public education. Getting a Meeting covers who to contact, what to include and how to keep it short. Prepare for the Meeting, At the Table, Ask Questions Too, Write It Down and Follow Up walk through a meeting from start to finish.

The adult version

Eight ways to speak up

Different people and offices respond to different approaches. Most efforts use several.

Way	What it is	Good to know
Email	A quick, written note.	Creates a record. Keep it short, with one clear ask. Staff often read and triage messages, and response times vary.
Meeting	A conversation with an elected official or their staff.	Staff members can be an important point of contact because they receive information, work on files and brief elected members. Ask for the format you need, including accommodations.
Letter	A more formal, detailed explanation.	Good for laying out background. Keep it polite, clear and solution-focused.
Petition	A formal request signed by many people.	Formal legislative petitions follow the rules of the particular legislature, including rules about sponsorship or presentation. Presenting is not endorsing. An official petition is different from one on a private website. Check the rules where you live.
Committee	A group of members that studies an issue or bill.	Federal House of Commons committees accept written briefs from any individual or organization, and other legislatures have their own processes. Briefs are usually public.
Delegation	A short presentation to a council, board or committee.	Common at municipal councils and school boards. Usually requires signing up ahead of time, with a time limit. Practise out loud.
Media	Sharing your story through reporters.	You don't control the final story. See Chapter 8.
Public education	Teaching others through talks, events, resources and conversations.	Builds understanding and allies. It is not the same as asking a decision-maker for something.

The book doesn't list a few other doors worth knowing about.

- **Public consultations and surveys.** Governments and agencies often invite input on proposals, plans and budgets. Watch for them, because they are a formal chance to be heard.
- **School councils, parent groups and advisory committees.** A common place to start for issues

about schools and local services.

- **Candidate forums.** During elections, asking every candidate the same question is a non-partisan way to learn where each stands.
- **Formal complaints and appeals.** A separate track, with its own rules and deadlines, for specific decisions.

A note on lobbying and advocacy rules

Advocacy and lobbying can overlap, but they are not the same thing. Federal, provincial and territorial lobbying laws may require certain paid consultants, organizations or employees to register when their activities meet the rules of that jurisdiction. Requirements and thresholds differ and can change. If you are paid to advocate or are communicating with government on behalf of an organization, check the applicable lobbying registry or commissioner.

Registered charities can take part in public-policy dialogue and advocacy that further their charitable purposes. They cannot directly or indirectly support or oppose a political party or candidate. Other election and lobbying rules may also apply.

Getting a meeting

- **Start with your own representative.** Elected members represent everyone in their area, whichever party you support or don't. The title depends on the order of government and where you live: member of Parliament (MP), member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), member of the Provincial Parliament (MPP), member of the National Assembly (MNA), member of the House of Assembly (MHA), councillor or school trustee.
- **Staff are a real door.** Elected members usually have constituency staff in their home area and policy staff at the legislature. Staff brief the member, so time with them is time well spent.
- **Ministers are reached through their office.** A minister's calendar is limited. Depending on the issue, department officials or ministerial policy staff may also be appropriate contacts. Ask, "Who is responsible for this program?"
- **Opposition critics** follow subjects, raise issues in the legislature and can bring attention to a problem. They do not make government decisions while in opposition. Many advocates speak with members from more than one party.
- **Timing helps.** Legislatures sit in sessions, and budgets, plans and reviews happen on cycles. Ask staff when a decision will be made, and approach before it is made rather than after.

The book's checklist of what to include is a good one. Add two things: attach a short one-page summary so the request can be shared, and say plainly what format and accommodations you need.

A simple structure for a meeting request

Subject line: Request for a meeting about [issue].

Body: Who you are and why you are writing. The issue, in a few sentences. What you are asking for. Who you are with, if anyone. Times that could work, and the format you would prefer. Thanks.

Keep it short. A concise request is more likely to get a yes.

Preparing

The book's five parts are the right ones: your ask, your three main points, your evidence, your questions and your next step. Some extras that help.

- **Practise out loud,** and agree on roles if you are going with others.
- **Bring a one-page leave-behind** that repeats your ask and key points.
- **Expect surprises.** The person may know little about the issue, may have limited time, or may send

a staff member instead of coming themselves. All of that is normal.

- **Plan for accessibility.** Ask for a virtual option, a quiet room, extra time or written materials if they would help.

Should your child come?

Only if they want to, and only if it suits the meeting. Some meetings are adult-level by nature. If they come, tell them beforehand what will happen and what their part is. A short statement, a drawing or a simple question is often better than retelling a hard experience. Plan for a break, never surprise them, and don't put them in the middle of a conflict. Watching, learning and debriefing afterwards is a perfectly good role.

At the table

The book's advice (stay on topic, let others speak, use your notes, stay positive, watch the time, treat everyone with respect, end with a next step) is a solid list. A few adult notes.

- **Listening isn't agreeing.** Someone who listens carefully hasn't necessarily agreed, and someone who can't commit on the spot isn't necessarily brushing you off. Many people can't decide alone.
- **Notice the difference between "I'll look into it" and "I will do this by then."** Both are fine, but they are different, and it helps to know which one you got.
- **It's okay to pause,** to ask for clarification, or to say, "I don't know, and I'll find out and get back to you."
- **Bring the conversation back to your ask** if it drifts, and ask for the next step before you leave.

Ask questions too

The book's three main questions (Who is responsible for this? What happens next? When should we expect a response?) are the essential ones. Add: What information exists on this? Are there plans to address it? What are the challenges? Official answers can sound like non-answers, such as "we are reviewing this." Follow up with specifics: "Who is doing the review? Will it include input from families? When will it be finished?"

Some records and data can be requested through access-to-information or freedom-of-information processes. Rules, fees and wait times vary, so check the process where you live.

Write it down

Notes are your memory, and they show you are serious. Record names and titles, contact details, what was said, commitments made, dates and timelines, next steps and any materials shared. Keep everything in one place, whether that is a notebook, a folder or a digital file. If an issue ever moves to an appeal or complaint, records like these can matter. Keep them safe, since they may hold personal information.

Follow up

Send a short thank-you within a few days. Then check on commitments, share new information and stay polite and persistent. Persistence is steady and respectful, not pushy: ask for a timeline, and if the timeline passes, ask what happened. Advocacy rarely ends after one conversation, and follow-up is where most of the change tends to happen.

Try saying

"Before we go: what happens next, and when should we expect to hear back?"

"That's a good question, and I don't know. Let me find out and follow up."

7. When the Answer Is No, and Staying in the Game

In the colouring book

When They Say No offers steps for staying calm, finding out why and looking for other options. Change the Strategy, Not the Goal shows different routes to the same destination. Disagreement Is Not Failure and Keep the Door Open focus on respect and relationships. Build Allies shows why working with others makes advocacy stronger.

The adult version

A no is information

The book's core idea is that a no can be a setback, not a stop. The first job is to find out what kind of no it is.

What you heard	What you can try
"That's not our decision."	Ask who does decide, and take the ask there.
"There isn't money for that right now."	Ask what would need to change. Propose a smaller first step or a pilot. Ask about the budget cycle, and whether existing resources could be used differently.
"We need more evidence."	Ask what evidence would help. Gather it, bring in experts, and pair data with stories.
"It isn't a priority right now."	Build allies to show broader concern, and find how the issue connects to their priorities.
"The rules don't allow it."	Ask which rule. Find out whether exceptions or amendments exist, and whether a different lever would work.
"We disagree."	Understand their reasons, look for common ground, and consider whether your proposal needs adjusting.
"Not yet."	Ask when to check back, and stay in touch.

If the no is about a decision, not a policy

When a no is a formal decision about a specific person or case, there may be a review or appeal process, and those often have time limits. Ask for the decision in writing, with reasons, and find out early what review options exist and how long you have to use them.

Change the route, keep the destination

The book's eight ideas (step back, explore options, ask for input, be flexible, stay focused, track progress, try again, keep the same mission) all say the same thing: the goal stays, and the route can change. In practice that might mean a different lever, a different decision-maker, a different messenger or a different tool. Sometimes it also means reconsidering your idea. A no can show you a weakness in your proposal, and being willing to improve it is a strength. And sometimes it is wise to pause, to save your energy for a better moment.

Disagreement is not failure

Respectful disagreement is a normal, healthy part of a democracy. The book's habits are worth teaching: focus on the issue and not the person, listen first, keep calm, share your reasons, look for common

ground, stay solution-focused, and respect that different people have different roles. The people you are speaking with usually work within budgets, laws and timelines they didn't set, and they are balancing many demands.

Frustration is normal. Harassment isn't.

It is fine to be frustrated, and fine to say so firmly and respectfully. Threats, harassment and personal attacks are not fine, from you or toward you. If you feel unsafe or are being targeted, in person or online, step back, keep records and involve appropriate authorities. Your children learn more from how you disagree than from what you say about it.

Keep the door open

Relationships matter in advocacy. A no today may become a yes when a budget changes, a new person takes over, or the timing improves. Thanking people for their time, even when the answer is no, keeps the path open. Keeping the door open does not mean tolerating mistreatment or staying silent. It means disagreeing well.

Build allies

The book lists who to look for: other parents and families, community members, advocacy groups, professional experts and local organizations. Adults can add a few ideas.

- **Agree on the shared ask** before you join forces. Coalitions often agree on the goal but not always on the method.
- **Share the work and the credit.** Divide tasks, amplify each other's messages and cite one another.
- **Include the people affected**, not just those who speak for them.
- **Check values as well as goals.** Make sure you are comfortable with how a group works and speaks.
- **Look across the spectrum.** Good allies come from many places, and advocacy doesn't have to be partisan.

Taking care of yourselves

Advocacy is a long game, and families in it can get worn down. Share tasks, rest, celebrate small wins and let others step in. Children need to see adults take breaks as well, and to hear that not every problem is theirs alone to fix.

Facts and values

Whether a request is "reasonable" or a "priority" depends on what someone values and what else is competing for attention. Two people can agree on the facts and still reach different decisions. That doesn't make either of them a villain.

Try saying

"A no tells us something. What do we know now that we didn't before?"

"Same goal, different route. What could we try next?"

8. Getting the Word Out, and Getting It Right

In the colouring book

Working With Media, Social Media Is a Tool, Know Your Audience, Be Accurate and Correct Mistakes cover sharing your message clearly, adjusting it for different people, and fixing errors when you find them.

The adult version

Working with the media

Reporters look for clear facts, a short message, real people and a clear ask. The book's tips (know your key message, share real stories, use clear facts, keep it short, be clear about your ask, stay calm during an interview, follow up afterwards) are solid. Some adult additions.

- **Assume everything is on the record** unless you have agreed otherwise beforehand.
- **You don't control the story.** Reporters choose the angle and what to include. Ask about the format and how your words will be used.
- **It is fine to pause**, to say "I don't know," or to offer to follow up.
- **If a fact is wrong**, politely ask for a correction.
- **Be careful with children.** Names, faces and identifying details can be found for a long time. Think about consent, and about the child's future.
- **Local and community outlets** are often a good place to start.

Social media is a tool

The book puts it well: attention isn't the same as policy change. Social media is good for informing, connecting and calling people to action. It also has limits. Posts spread faster than corrections, strong emotion travels furthest, officials may never see them, and what is posted tends to stay. Pair online efforts with formal ones, such as an email, a meeting or a submission.

- **Verify before you share.**
- **Keep it kind and specific.** Talk about decisions and systems rather than personal attacks.
- **Protect privacy**, especially your child's and other people's.
- **Keep your own life in mind.** Comments can turn hostile. Decide in advance how you'll handle that.

Words about named people

Posting claims about a named person or organization can have consequences, including legal ones. Stick to what you can support, focus on decisions and systems, and if in doubt, don't post. If a situation is serious, ask a legal clinic or another qualified professional for advice.

Know your audience

The book's point is that the same message needs different words for different people. Keep the core message the same, and adjust the language, length and level of detail.

Audience	What they need	Watch out for
A minister or elected official	A short, solution-focused message tied to their responsibilities, with evidence.	Long, angry or off-topic messages.
A reporter	Key facts, the human impact and why it matters now.	Jargon and too many messages at once.
A parent or caregiver	Warmth, plain language and practical steps.	Overwhelming people, or assuming they share your background.
A researcher or expert	Detailed evidence and openness to discussion.	Overstating certainty.
The general public	Plain language, real-life examples and easy ways to get involved.	Insider terms.

Be accurate

Credibility takes a long time to build and very little time to lose. Use reliable sources, double-check before you share, say clearly what you know and what you don't, use simple language and give credit to others' work. Phrases such as "as far as I know" and "I'm not sure" are signs of honesty, not weakness.

Correct mistakes

Everyone gets things wrong. The book's model is a good one: "I got that wrong. Here is the correct information." Be honest, share the correct information, thank the person who caught the error, update your materials and keep it simple. When your child sees you do this, they learn that corrections build trust. When someone else is wrong, correct them politely, share a reliable source and avoid shaming. If someone isn't open to it, you don't have to keep engaging.

Facts and values

A correction changes a fact. It doesn't have to change your position. Sometimes a corrected fact strengthens your case, sometimes it weakens it, and sometimes you change your mind. All three are signs of an honest advocate.

Try saying

"I got that wrong. Here's what's correct."

"What is the one sentence we most want people to remember?"

9. How Change Actually Happens

In the colouring book

How Change Actually Happens shows seven steps: problem, research, solution, decision-maker, ask, action and follow-up. Build Your Own Advocacy Plan has six boxes to fill in: my issue, who is affected, evidence, solution, decision-maker and my ask. The final pages return to the idea that big change can start with a simple voice.

The adult version

The honest picture

Change is usually slower, messier and less tidy than seven arrows suggest. Steps loop back. Several efforts run side by side. Results are often partial: a pilot instead of a program, a review instead of a law, a clearer form instead of a new right. Some changes arrive after the people who started them have moved on. None of this is discouraging. It is why the book keeps saying “small steps” and “persistence.”

What a win can look like	Why it counts
Information shared or understood	People now know what is happening and who is responsible.
A meeting, or a commitment to look into it	The issue is on someone's desk.
A form, procedure or explanation is clarified	Daily life gets easier for people using the system.
A pilot project	The idea is being tried, which produces evidence.
A training or practice change	The people doing the work now do it differently.
Funding or a new program	Resources are attached to the change.
A regulation, policy or law changes	The change is built into the rules.

Children should learn to celebrate all of these, not only the last one.

Timing

Ideas land better when they arrive before a decision than after it. Budgets, plans, reviews, consultations and legislative sessions each create windows of opportunity. Ask staff when decisions are made. Election periods bring their own opportunities, such as candidate forums, and their own rules. Any candidate can be asked, and asking all of them the same thing keeps your advocacy non-partisan.

Start small and local

The best first projects for children are close to home: a school, a library, a club, a community centre, a local park. Local decision-makers are easier to reach, results are visible, and the practice carries over. A well-made request to the person who can say yes is a real piece of advocacy at any scale.

A worked example

The book's planning page has six boxes. Here they are filled in using Goose's problem from the activity page: no sensory-friendly space at a community event.

Box	Example
My issue	Community events don't have a quiet, sensory-friendly space, so some children leave early.
Who is affected	Children and adults who find noise, crowds and bright lights overwhelming, including some people with disabilities. Their families. Event volunteers and organizers. The whole community, which loses the chance to have everyone there.
Evidence	What organizers know about the layout and who attends. What families say, with permission. How other events handle it. Guidance from accessibility and disability organizations.
Solution	A designated quiet area with reduced noise and lighting, seating, clear signs and a trained volunteer, added to the event plan.
Decision-maker	The event organizers. If a municipality runs or funds the event, the staff who manage events and, if needed, council.
My ask	"We are asking the organizers to set aside a quiet space at the next event, and we would be glad to help plan it."

From there: send the request, meet if asked, keep notes, say thank you, follow up, and celebrate whatever happens. Then run the six realistic-solution questions from Chapter 5 as a quick reality check. The same six boxes work for a school, a library or a club.

Keeping it sustainable

Children can care about a cause without carrying it. Celebrate participation regardless of the outcome, give permission to pause or hand off, and model rest. Not every problem is one child's, or one family's, to fix.

Other ways to take part

Advocacy is one way to take part in a democracy. Others include voting when eligible (the rules are set by law and could change, so check the official source), following the news, volunteering, joining school or community councils, taking part in consultations, serving on a jury when called and, someday, running for office. Not all of these need to be introduced at once.

Facts and values

How much to change, how fast and at whose expense are questions where reasonable people differ. Advocacy works within that disagreement, not around it.

Try saying

"What is one small step we could take this week?"

"What would count as a win, even a small one?"

Common Questions Children Ask

Each answer has two parts: a **short answer** you can say out loud, and a **going further** answer for when the conversation keeps going. Say as much or as little as fits the moment.

What is advocacy?

Short answer: Advocacy means speaking up to help make something better, using facts and working with other people.

Going further: It can be for yourself, for someone else or for a cause. It can be as small as asking for a change at school and as big as helping shape a national law. What makes it advocacy, and not just talking, is that it connects a problem to a specific change and to the people who can make it.

Isn't advocacy just complaining?

Short answer: No. Complaining says something is wrong. Advocacy also says what is happening, who it affects, what could change and who can help.

Going further: Complaining isn't bad. It is often the first honest signal that something is off, and it's fine to feel frustrated. Advocacy takes the next step and turns the frustration into a clear request.

Can kids really make a difference?

Short answer: Yes, especially close to home, and most of all when they ask good questions and speak up kindly and clearly.

Going further: Children's most effective advocacy is often small and local: a school, a library, a club, a park. Not every effort works, and change takes time, but children can change minds, start conversations and learn skills that last. Adults can help by choosing the right-sized project.

Why can't we just tell the person in charge?

Short answer: Because the person who seems to be in charge isn't always the person who can change that particular thing.

Going further: Authority is spread across many people and bodies. A useful trick is to ask three questions: Who makes the rules? Who pays? Who does the work? The best door is the one that matches your problem. Being heard by the right person is better than being loud to everyone.

What's the difference between a law, a rule and a policy?

Short answer: A law is a rule passed by Parliament, a legislature or a council. A regulation is a detailed rule made under a law. A policy is a guideline for how decisions get made.

Going further: Some policies carry legal weight and some don't, depending on how the law is written. Procedures are the steps for doing something. Not every problem needs a new law. Often the fix is a clearer procedure, better training or a change in how things are done.

Why does change take so long?

Short answer: Because many people have to agree, there are rules and budgets to work within, and decisions happen at certain times.

Going further: Governments plan, consult, budget and then carry things out, and each step takes time. That can be frustrating, and it also helps prevent rushed decisions. Some changes are quick, especially changes to procedures and practices made by someone close to the problem. Small wins along the way count.

What if they say no?

Short answer: Find out why. A no can tell you something useful.

Going further: A no might mean "not our decision," "not enough money right now," "we need more

evidence” or “not yet.” Each points to a different next step. Sometimes it means your idea needs improving, and sometimes it means you need a different door. For formal decisions, there may be a review or appeal process, so ask about it early.

What’s the difference between a fact, an opinion and an experience?

Short answer: A fact can be checked. An opinion is what someone thinks. An experience is something someone has lived through.

Going further: Real statements often blend them. Words like “best” and “should” usually signal opinion. Experiences are real and important, and they are personal. A helpful habit is to ask, “How would we check that?”

How do I know if something online is true?

Short answer: Check who wrote it, when it was written and whether other reliable sources say the same.

Going further: Try reading sideways: leave the page and see what others say about its author. Look for the original source. Remember that three sites repeating one message are still one source. If something makes you very angry or very sure very fast, slow down and check twice. “I don’t know yet” is a fine answer.

What if someone disagrees with me?

Short answer: That’s normal. Listen, ask why and share your reasons.

Going further: Disagree with ideas, not people. Look for common ground. The other person may know something you don’t, or may care about something different. You can respectfully agree to disagree. Disagreement isn’t failure. It is part of how communities decide things.

Do politicians actually listen?

Short answer: Many do, especially when the message is clear, specific and comes from people in their community.

Going further: Elected members hear from many people, and their staff read and sort messages. A clear, polite, specific request from a constituent stands out. Listening isn’t always agreeing, and members have to balance many priorities. Remember, too, that elected officials and public servants have different roles.

What is a petition, and does it work?

Short answer: A petition is a formal request signed by many people. It can raise awareness and show concern, but it doesn’t force a decision.

Going further: Official petitions follow rules and follow the rules of the particular legislature, including who may sponsor or present them, and in some places the government must respond in writing. A petition on a private website is not an official petition. Petitions work best alongside other tools, such as meetings and briefs.

What does “lived experience” mean?

Short answer: It’s what you know from having lived through something yourself.

Going further: It’s real knowledge that data can miss, and it helps decision-makers understand what a rule feels like in everyday life. It works best alongside facts. Each person’s experience is different, and stories should only be shared with permission.

What if I’m too shy to speak up?

Short answer: You don’t have to be loud. You can write, draw, research or join others and let someone speak with you.

Going further: Advocacy includes many jobs: doing research, taking notes, making posters, writing a

letter, helping a friend. Confidence grows through small steps. Listening carefully is a real advocacy skill.

Why are there so many different governments?

Short answer: Different governments look after different things, some closer to everyday life and some for the whole country.

Going further: Federal, provincial or territorial and municipal governments each have their own responsibilities, and Indigenous governments may exercise their own governing authorities. Some topics involve more than one. The companions for the federal, provincial and territorial, and municipal books explain each in more detail.

Is it okay to change my mind?

Short answer: Yes. Changing your mind when you learn something new is a strength.

Going further: A good advocate updates when the facts change, corrects mistakes and thanks the person who helped. Changing your mind about a fact doesn't mean you didn't care. It means you are taking the issue seriously.

Things Adults Often Get Wrong

Everyone picks up myths, and advocacy is full of them. Here are some common ones, with what's closer to true.

The myth	What's true
"You need to be an expert to advocate."	Anyone can speak up. Lived experience is real knowledge, and pairing it with checked facts makes it stronger.
"Advocacy is just complaining."	Advocacy connects a problem to a change and to someone who can make it.
"Go straight to the top."	The person at the top may not have authority over your issue and may send you back down. Match the lever and the door.
"My representative can just fix it."	Members are an important door, but one member usually can't change a decision alone. They can raise issues, ask questions, connect you with staff and present petitions.
"Front-line staff are the problem."	They often apply rules made elsewhere. Treat them as allies and ask who decides.
"Public servants are politicians."	They are non-partisan professionals who serve whichever government is in office.
"A petition forces a change."	It can raise awareness and, in some places, requires a response. It doesn't oblige a change. A petition on a private website isn't an official petition.
"A social media post is the same as contacting government."	Posts may never reach the right person. Formal channels create a record and reach the staff who handle issues.
"A no means it's over."	A no is information. It may mean not now, not us or not like that.
"Advocacy means being confrontational."	Most effective advocacy is respectful and collaborative. Disagreement is normal but doesn't have to be hostile.
"Facts are cold and stories are just emotion."	Both matter. Facts show scale, and stories show impact. The best cases use both.
"If it's from an official source, it must be current."	Official sources can be out of date. Check the date.
"Sharing my child's story is the strongest thing I can do."	It can be powerful, and it can also leave a long trail. Think about consent, privacy and your child's future. You can advocate strongly from your own perspective.
"Advocating means picking a political side."	Advocacy can be non-partisan. You can approach members of any party and be respectful to all.
"I need a perfect solution before I speak."	A clear problem, a desired outcome and a willingness to help work out the rest is enough to start.
"Only registered lobbyists can talk to government."	Anyone can contact elected officials and staff. Registration rules apply to certain paid or organizational lobbying and vary by jurisdiction.
"Only national decisions matter."	Local decisions often affect daily life the most, and they are easier to reach.

Talk About It Together

Conversation habits

- **Start with curiosity.** “What do you think?” before “Here’s how it works.”
- **Say which is which.** “That’s how it works” for a fact, and “that’s what I think” for an opinion.
- **Let your child lead.** Follow the page they like, not the order of the chapters.
- **Say “I don’t know. Let’s find out.”** It models exactly what the book teaches.
- **Keep it short and light.** Five minutes is plenty. This isn’t homework.
- **Use everyday moments:** a rule at school, a sign at the park, a story on the news.
- **Hear more than one view.** “What might someone who disagrees say?”
- **Stay non-partisan.** Explain how things work and where the real debates are, and let your child form their own views.
- **Notice effort, not just outcomes.** Speaking up carefully is worth celebrating whatever happens.
- **Turn feelings into next steps.** If your child is upset by something unfair, name the feeling first, then ask, “What could we do about it?”

A rough guide by stage

Every child is different. Use these as rough guides, not milestones.

Stage	What advocacy can look like	How you can help
Younger children	Asking for what they need, noticing what is fair, saying “I have an idea,” and colouring and talking about the book.	Model asking politely. Name what you are doing when you speak up. Keep it playful, and celebrate questions.
Middle years	Small requests at school or in a club, sorting fact from opinion, writing or drawing a short note to someone who can help.	Help them find the right person. Practise a clear ask together. Let them try, even if the answer is no.
Tweens	Researching a topic, group projects, school councils, understanding levers and orders of government, checking online claims.	Explore sources together. Talk about who decides and why. Discuss privacy and kindness online.
Teens	More independent efforts: writing to representatives, attending public meetings, volunteering with organizations, building media literacy. Voting when eligible (set by law and could change; check the official source).	Step back and be a sounding board. Talk about how to handle disagreement and hostility. Support their choices, including a decision to pause.

Activity ideas

- **Fact, opinion or experience at dinner.** Take turns saying a statement, and let everyone sort it. Try one about your day.
- **Trace a rule.** Pick a rule your child notices at school, a library or a park. Find out who made it and who could change it.
- **Who decides?** Take a walk and guess which order of government looks after what you see. Look it up together afterwards.
- **Find your representatives.** Look up who represents you at each order of government, and what

each role does.

- **Watch a meeting.** Many councils, boards and legislatures share recordings or broadcasts. Watch a short section together and notice how it works.
- **Write a clear ask together.** Choose a small, real thing (a request to a library, a coach or a school) and use the sentence shape from Chapter 5. Send it if your child wants to.
- **Check a claim.** Take a claim from the news or a post and run the four-question routine from Chapter 3.
- **Interview someone.** Talk with a neighbour, relative or community member who changed something and ask how they did it.
- **Start a family advocacy folder.** For a real effort, keep track of who, what, when and the next step.
- **Practise the pause.** Role-play a short meeting, including saying “I don’t know, and I’ll find out.”

Answer keys for the activity pages

How to use these keys

The colouring book has no answer key, so these are reasoned keys. Where an item doesn’t fit neatly, a note explains the overlap. The reasoning matters more than the box, and a child who gives a thoughtful reason for a defensible answer has understood the point. Statements that mention a specific time or temperature are described here without repeating the figure.

Fact, Opinion, or Experience? (the cut-and-sort page)

Statement	Box	Why
A statement that a named city gets cold in the winter	Fact	Weather records can confirm it. “Cold” is relative, and arguing over what counts is a good way to see how facts get more precise.
The earth revolves around the sun	Fact	Established by evidence.
A statement of when a meeting started	Fact	Checkable against an agenda, minutes or a record.
A statement of the temperature at which water boils at sea level	Fact	Measurable and repeatable.
Chocolate ice cream is the tastiest flavour	Opinion	Taste is personal, and people differ.
Everyone should exercise daily	Opinion	Overlap: there is evidence about the benefits of being active, which is fact, but “everyone should... daily” is a recommendation, and what suits each person differs.
I think more parks should be built	Opinion	A belief about what should happen. “I think” and “should” are clues.
This is the best solution	Opinion	A judgment. It can be supported with evidence, but “best” depends on what you value, such as cost, speed or fairness.
I have used this service and it was helpful	Experience	Real and personal. It doesn’t prove the service works for everyone.

Statement	Box	Why
I have a sibling with autism	Experience	Something the speaker lives with and knows first-hand. It is also a fact about their life, but only they can confirm it, so it fits Experience best.
I felt worried during the school meeting	Experience	A feeling. It is true for the person, and no one else can prove it wrong.
In my experience, early support makes a big difference	Experience	Overlap: it starts as personal experience but makes a general claim. Research can test the claim, so it is a good example of a statement to pair with evidence.

The result is four statements in each box. If your child's sort differs, ask "what would we do to check it?" Statements that mix categories are the best conversations.

Federal, Provincial, or Municipal? (the matching page)

The book asks children to write the box number (federal, provincial or territorial, or municipal) beside each picture. Some items involve more than one order of government. The key gives the closest fit for the book's three boxes and explains overlaps.

Item	Best fit	Note
Airports	Federal	The federal government is responsible for air travel and airport policy. Many airports are run day to day by independent authorities or other bodies.
Hospitals	Provincial or territorial	Health-care delivery and administration. Hospitals are usually run by health authorities or boards under provincial or territorial oversight.
Parks and playgrounds	Municipal	Local parks and playgrounds. Provincial, territorial and national parks exist too, but the playground picture points to local.
Income tax	Federal	Overlap: provincial and territorial governments also collect income tax. The book's box is federal. The tax companion explains more.
Policing	Provincial or territorial	Provinces and territories are responsible for policing, delivered by municipal police services, provincial police or the RCMP under contract. Criminal law itself is federal.
Education (kindergarten to high school)	Provincial or territorial	Provinces and territories set the framework, and school boards or authorities often run schools locally. Education for First Nations children involves different arrangements.
Highways	Provincial or territorial	Overlap: main highways are generally provincial or territorial, while local streets are municipal. The book's "Who Can Change It?" page lists roads under municipal, so both answers make sense with a reason.
Garbage and recycling	Municipal	Local collection and programs. Provinces and territories often set rules that shape recycling.
National defence	Federal	The clearest federal item.

Item	Best fit	Note
Housing (shared)	Shared	Involves all three: federal funding programs, provincial and territorial programs and housing law, and municipal permits and planning. Indigenous governments also have roles. Any box can be defended, which is the point of “shared.”
Water and wastewater	Municipal	Usually delivered by municipalities. Provinces and territories set standards and oversee. On some lands, the federal government and First Nations have different arrangements.
Environmental protection (shared)	Shared	Involves all three: federal standards and assessments, provincial and territorial regulation of natural resources, and municipal land use, waste and water.
Public transit	Municipal	Usually run by municipalities or regional bodies, often with provincial, territorial and federal funding.
Criminal law	Federal	Parliament makes criminal law. Provinces and territories are involved in administering justice, and arrangements vary.
Fire services	Municipal	Local departments, often with provincial or territorial fire codes. Some areas rely on regional or volunteer services.
Health care	Provincial or territorial	Delivered and managed by provinces and territories. The federal government provides funding and sets some national conditions.
Zoning and land use	Municipal	Set by municipalities under provincial or territorial planning law.
Immigration and citizenship	Federal	Citizenship is federal. Immigration overlaps: the federal government runs the overall system, and provinces and territories have roles in selecting some newcomers.

Limits of the three boxes

For First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, several of these items (education, water, policing and housing among them) involve different arrangements. The three-box match is a starting point, not the whole picture.

Goose Has a Problem! (colour the best first step)

Best first step: Learn more. It comes first because knowing what is happening and who is responsible makes every later step stronger.

Choice	Verdict	Why
Learn more	Best first step	Find out the facts and ask questions. This is the “research” step of the plan.
Contact the right people	Good next step	Overlap: “Learn more” also involves talking to the organizers, so a child who chooses this one has grasped that asking comes before demanding.
Get others involved	Good next step	Other families and groups add ideas and strength, and are best approached once you know the facts.
Post on social media	Not a first step	Attention isn’t the same as change, and a post shared before you know the facts can spread mistakes. Later, a careful post may help.
Ignore it	No	Nothing changes, and the children who left early are still left out.
Write a mean comment	No	Blaming people damages relationships and credibility, and makes it harder to work with the organizers.

Moose Has a Plan! (put the steps in order)

Position	Step	Why it goes here
First	Problem	You have to know what you’re working on.
Second	Research	Gather facts, evidence and real-life stories.
Third	Solution	Develop realistic, practical options.
Fourth	Decision-maker	Find the right people at the right level.
Fifth	Ask	State clearly what you are asking for.
Sixth	During the interview	The conversation where the ask is made. Stay calm, be yourself and keep to your key points.
Seventh	Follow-up	Stay engaged, ask for updates and keep going.

A note on this page: the book’s process page (How Change Actually Happens) uses “Action” as the step after the ask, while this activity uses “During the interview.” Both sit between the ask and the follow-up. A child who places them there has the right idea. Real advocacy loops back, and the order here is the neat version.

Advocacy Myth or Fact

Statement	Answer	Why
Advocacy only works if you are an expert.	Myth	Lived experience counts, and anyone can learn.
It’s better to stay quiet than to make a mistake.	Myth	Mistakes can be corrected, and staying quiet means nothing changes.
Advocacy is only complaining.	Myth	It connects a problem to a change.
One person can make a difference.	Fact	One person can start a conversation or bring forward an idea. Broader change often involves other people, decision-makers and time.

Statement	Answer	Why
You have to be confrontational to create change.	Myth	Respectful, clear advocacy is usually more effective.
Facts, research and real stories make your advocacy stronger.	Fact	Evidence gives credibility, and stories give meaning.
If you disagree with a decision, you are being negative.	Myth	Respectful disagreement is a normal part of democracy.
Change happens quickly.	Myth	It usually takes patience and persistence.
Working together with others makes advocacy more effective.	Fact	Allies bring skills, ideas and strength.

What Would You Do?

Scenario	Best choice	Notes
A social media post about your issue has incorrect information.	Comment with the correct information and a reliable source.	Do it kindly and once. Don't argue in a thread. Sharing the post, even to correct it, spreads it further, and getting angry rarely helps. If it's harmful, consider reporting it.
You asked for a meeting and they say no right now.	Send a polite follow-up and ask when you can try again. Find another way to share your ideas in the meantime.	Overlap: both choices are constructive, and they work together. Giving up and posting a negative comment don't help.
A friend says, "Advocacy doesn't work."	Share a real-life example of change that happened.	It also helps to be honest: advocacy can be slow and doesn't always work. Admitting that makes your example more believable.
A local event isn't accessible for people with disabilities.	Politely contact the organizers to share concerns and suggest solutions.	Organizers often welcome early feedback. Accessibility is also covered by laws and standards in many places. If there's no response, others can help, such as the municipality, disability organizations or human rights bodies.
You made a mistake in a presentation.	Correct it and share the right information.	Correcting builds trust. Pretending, blaming or going quiet does the opposite.
You have a great idea, but it's a big change and might take a long time.	Break it into smaller steps and make a plan. Start by learning more and finding supporters.	Overlap: both are good, and they work together. Learning and finding supporters is often the first small step.

The open-ended pages

Four pages have no right answers: **Is Your Solution Realistic?**, **Make a Clear Ask**, **One Big Ask**, **Three Supporting Points** and **Build Your Own Advocacy Plan**. Use them as conversation starters.

- **Is Your Solution Realistic?** Use the six boxes to talk through an idea: who would do it, what it would cost, what rules might need changing, whether it is practical, whether it would make a difference and what the next steps are. "Not sure yet" is an honest and useful answer.
- **Make a Clear Ask.** The book's space begins "We are asking the government to..." Children may aim their asks at a school, club, library or municipality instead, and that is often better. Some sample endings are below.

- **One Big Ask, Three Supporting Points.** Fill in the ask first, then who is affected, what evidence supports it and how the solution would help. Chapter 5 has the layout.
- **Build Your Own Advocacy Plan.** Chapter 9 has a worked example using Goose's problem.

Sample ask beginnings	Sample endings
"We are asking the government to..."	"...review the guidelines with input from families and share what it finds."
"We are asking the school board to..."	"...include a family representative on the committee that reviews this policy."
"We are asking the organizers to..."	"...set aside a quiet space at the next event, and we would be glad to help plan it."

Glossary

Term	Plain-language meaning
Accessibility	Making places, services and information usable by people with different abilities.
Accommodation	A change that removes a barrier so a person can take part.
Accountability	Being answerable for decisions and actions.
Advocacy	Using your voice, facts and relationships to help create change.
Advocate	Someone who does this, for themselves, for someone else or for a cause.
Agency	A government body created for a particular purpose, often with some independence.
Ally	Someone who works alongside you toward a shared goal.
Brief	A written submission to a committee or public body.
Briefing note	A short document that summarizes an issue for a decision-maker.
Bylaw	A local law made by a municipal council.
Cabinet	The ministers who lead departments and make major policy decisions together.
Committee	A small group that studies issues or bills, hears from the public and reports.
Consent	A person's freely given, informed agreement, which matters when sharing their story.
Constituent	A person who lives in an elected member's area and is represented by them.
Consultation	A process in which a government or agency invites public input on a proposal or plan.
Decision-maker	The person or group with the authority to make a particular change.
Delegation	A short presentation to a council, board or committee.
Evidence	Facts, research or records that support a claim.
Fact	Something that can be checked against evidence.
Funding	The money and resources available to make something happen.
Jurisdiction	The area or subject a government or body has legal authority over.
Law (statute)	A rule passed by Parliament, a legislature or, for bylaws, a council.
Legislature	An elected body that makes laws for a province or territory.
Lived experience	What a person knows from living through something.
Lobbying	Communicating with public office holders to influence decisions, often for pay or for an organization. Regulated in many places.
Minister	An elected member who leads a government department.
Misinformation	Wrong information that gets passed along.
Non-partisan	Not aligned with a political party.
Ombudsperson	An independent officer who looks into complaints about how public bodies have treated people.
Opinion	What someone thinks or believes.

Term	Plain-language meaning
Order of government	Federal, provincial or territorial, or municipal. Indigenous governments may also exercise their own governing authorities.
Petition	A formal request signed by many people, submitted under the rules of a legislature.
Pilot project	A small-scale trial of a new idea.
Policy	The broad rules and guidelines that shape what a government or organization does.
Practice	What actually happens day to day.
Procedure	The steps for how something is done.
Public servant	A non-partisan professional who gives advice and delivers government programs and services.
Regulation	Legally binding details made under the authority of a law.
Self-advocacy	Speaking up for your own needs and choices.
Source	Where a piece of information comes from.
Stakeholder	A person or group affected by an issue or involved in it.
Training	What the people doing the work learn about how to do it well.
Transparency	Openness about how decisions are made.
Tribunal	A body that decides certain disputes or applications, less formal than a court.

Reliable Sources and Further Reading

Sources are listed by name so you can search for the current version. Websites and programs change, so check that what you find is up to date.

How government works

- Government of Canada, “How government works” pages
- Parliament of Canada, learning pages for the House of Commons and the Senate
- Library of Parliament, research publications
- Elections Canada, civic education resources
- Your province’s or territory’s legislative assembly and elections office
- Your municipality’s website and clerk’s office

Taking part

- House of Commons, participation pages on petitions and committees
- Provincial and territorial legislative assemblies, petition and committee pages
- Your municipal clerk, for delegations and council meeting rules
- Government of Canada consultation listings (Consulting with Canadians)
- Provincial and territorial consultation pages

Lobbying and public policy dialogue

- Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada
- Provincial and territorial lobbyist registries
- Canada Revenue Agency guidance on public policy dialogue and development activities (PPDDA)

Rights and inclusion

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Canadian Human Rights Commission
- Provincial and territorial human rights commissions and tribunals
- Federal, provincial and territorial accessibility legislation, and Accessibility Standards Canada

Independent oversight

- Provincial and territorial ombudsperson offices
- Child and youth advocate or representative offices
- Office of the Auditor General of Canada, and provincial and territorial auditors general
- Federal, provincial and territorial information and privacy commissioners

Facts, data and media literacy

- Statistics Canada, and provincial and territorial statistics offices
- Canadian Institute for Health Information
- Official government reports and public accounts
- MediaSmarts (digital and media literacy)
- Peer-reviewed research journals

Civic learning for young people

- CIVIX (Student Vote)
- Samara Centre for Democracy
- Apathy is Boring

Indigenous governments and communities

- The governments and organizations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities themselves, for how their own governance works
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and Indigenous Services Canada, for federal information
- Department of Justice Canada, principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples (optional federal background)

About numbers

This handbook contains no figures because figures change. When you need one, such as a deadline, an eligibility rule, a fee or the number of signatures a petition needs, get it from the official source and check the date.