

PDD Parent Advocacy Guidebook

Escalate Effectively. Organize Collectively.

For families supporting adults in the Persons with Developmental Disabilities program

This guidebook is meant to grow with you through your journey as your family member's advocate. It will help you understand their rights in the PDD program, how to escalate a concern, and organize with other families when issues are systemic.

Individual's Name	
Date of Birth	
PDD File #	
Parent / Guardian Name	
PDD Worker Name	
PDD Worker Phone / Email	
Supervisor Name (if known)	
Date Completed	

How to Use This Guidebook

Read this before you begin

This guidebook is your advocacy toolkit. It is a working document to help you stay organized while dealing with the department.

What You Will Do in This Guidebook

- Section 1 — Understand your rights and PDD's obligations to you
- Section 2 — Learn the escalation ladder: who to contact and when
- Section 3 — Document every communication (your most powerful tool)
- Section 4 — Track decisions and deadlines so nothing slips
- Section 5 — Prepare a formal complaint or appeal
- Section 6 — Connect and organize with other PDD families
- Section 7 — Final advocacy checklist

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Know Your Rights

What PDD is legally obligated to provide — and what you can demand

PDD is governed by the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Services Act and Regulation (PDD Act and Regulation). These are the legal foundation for every eligibility decision, every agreement, and every appeal. When you know the rules, you can hold PDD to them.

Your Rights Under the PDD Act and Regulation

- You have the right to be informed about any decision that affects your family member's services.
- You have the right to receive a written explanation of any decision, including the reasons for it.
- You have the right to request an administrative review, request mediation, or file a formal appeal under the PDD Act.
- You have the right to have services determined through an individualized needs assessment — not a flat rate or generic formula.
- You have the right to participate meaningfully in developing your family member's Individual Support Plan (ISP).
- Your personal information may only be collected for legitimate purposes and must be kept confidential.

PDD's Obligations to You

- **Written decisions:** Any change to an agreement, any reduction in services, or any denial of services must be provided in writing with the reasons.
- **Timely administrative reviews:** If you request an administrative review, it must be completed within 15 working days.
- **Individualized assessment:** Services must be based on an individualized needs assessment — not a generic formula or budget ceiling.
- **Transparent planning:** You have the right to participate meaningfully in developing the ISP.
- **Transition planning:** PDD should work with families to plan for transitions such as changes in living arrangements, employment, or other life changes.

What PDD Cannot Do

- Deny or reduce services without providing a written decision and reasons.
- Make decisions solely based on budget or caseworker caseload.
- Share personal information without consent (except as required by law).
- Retaliate against you for raising a concern or filing an appeal.
- Refuse to provide the name and contact information of a supervisor.
- Rely on an IQ score above 70 as the sole basis for denial without considering adaptive functioning — the Ombudsman found this approach problematic in 2024.

Questions to Ask at Every Meeting

- "Can I have that decision in writing, including the reasons?"
- "What is the timeline for this decision, and what is the process if I disagree?"
- "What is the name of your supervisor, and how do I reach them?"
- "What additional information would change this decision?"
- "Is there anything in policy that prevents approving what we are requesting?"

Resources to Refer to Directly

- Persons with Developmental Disabilities Services Act — open.alberta.ca/publications/p09p5
- PDD Policy Manual — manuals.alberta.ca/pdd-policy-manual/
- Advocate for Persons with Disabilities — alberta.ca/advocate-persons-disabilities
- Alberta Ombudsman — ombudsman.ab.ca

My Rights — Notes

Use this space to note any rights you feel have been denied, or questions you want to raise at your next meeting:

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The Escalation Ladder*Who to contact, when, and what to expect*

If you are advocating about an issue with your family member's contract or access to services, start at Step 1 and climb your concern up in a timely fashion. If you are advocating about a systemic issue, inform the Ministry first, then begin at Step 3. Always inform the Ministry that there is an issue and ask for their support in moving toward a solution.

#	Who you contact	When to use	Expected response
1	Your PDD worker	First contact for any question or concern	Within 2 business days
2	PDD worker's supervisor	No response in 5 business days, or you believe the decision is wrong	Within 5 business days
3	Administrative review (senior PDD staff)	Formal review by a senior worker not involved in the original decision — request within 30 days of the decision	Completed within 15 working days of request
4	Program Manager / Team Lead	Administrative review unsatisfactory, or supervisor has not responded	Within 5–10 business days
5	Mediation	Voluntary — a neutral mediator helps reach agreement. Request within 30 days of decision. If chosen, your 45-day appeal clock is paused.	Varies — arranged by Disability Services
6	Formal Appeal — Citizen's Appeal Panel (CAP)	Disputing a specific written PDD decision — file Notice of Appeal within 45 days of decision (or 30 days after mediation ends)	Hearing scheduled by Appeals Secretariat
7	Alberta Ombudsman / Judicial Review	If the CAP hearing was unfair or its decision did not follow the PDD Act or Regulation	Ombudsman cannot reverse CAP; Judicial Review through Court of King's Bench (within 6 months)

How to Contact Each Level Effectively

- **Always request a written response:** Start with an email, or follow up a phone call with an email confirming what was discussed. Written records are critical.
- **State your concern clearly:** Use this format — "On [date], [what happened]. I believe this is inconsistent with [policy / my family member's assessed need] because [reason]. I am requesting [specific action] by [date]."
- **Bring evidence:** Attach relevant assessments, previous correspondence, and the ISP or agreement to every communication.
- **Be Accurate:** Always refer back to the PDD Act, Regulation, and Policy Manual and how they apply to the service request or systemic correction you are working toward.
- **Set a deadline:** Always specify a reasonable response deadline in your communication (e.g. "I would appreciate a response by [date, 5–10 business days from now]").

Key Contacts

Record contacts for every level of support and escalation — keep this page with you.

Government Offices

Office	Contact Details
PDD Appeals Secretariat	780-427-2709 310-0000 (toll-free) appeals.secretariat@gov.ab.ca
Office of the Public Guardian & Trustee (OPGT)	1-877-427-4525 (toll-free in Alberta) opgt@gov.ab.ca alberta.ca/opgt-supports
Protection for Persons in Care (PPC) (report abuse of adults in care)	1-888-357-9339 (toll-free in Alberta) 780-422-1155 (out of province) ppc@gov.ab.ca Mon–Fri 8:15am–4:30pm
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities	advocate.disability@gov.ab.ca 10055 106 Street NW, Edmonton alberta.ca/advocate-persons-disabilities
Alberta Ombudsman	780-427-2756 (Edmonton) 403-297-6185 (Calgary) 1-888-455-2756 (toll-free) ombudsman.ab.ca
Alberta Supports (abuse/neglect line)	1-855-443-5722

Advocacy Organizations

Organization	Contact Details
Inclusion Alberta (individual & family advocacy)	1-800-252-7556 inclusionalbertaina.org
Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD)	vadsociety.ca
Parent Partnership Project	intake.ppp@gmail.com

My Advocates and Support People

Name / Role	Phone / Email / Notes
Advocate / Support Person 1	
Advocate / Support Person 2	
Advocate / Support Person 3	
Advocate / Support Person 4	

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Communication Log

Document every contact — your records are your most powerful advocacy tool

Why documentation matters: If you ever need to escalate a concern or file an appeal, a clear record of every contact — dates, names, what was said, and what was promised — is essential. Written records do not disappear.

Best Practices for Documentation

- After every phone call, send a brief follow-up email: "Hi [name], just confirming our call today — you said [X], and the next step is [Y] by [date]."
- Keep copies of all emails, letters, decisions, and ISP documents in a dedicated folder — physical and/or digital.
- Date every note you make. Include the full name and role of anyone you spoke with.
- If you receive a verbal decision (e.g. "We can't fund that"), always request it in writing.
- Note exact quotes where possible — especially if something concerning is said.

Additional notes on communications:

Use this log to record every significant communication. Photocopy additional pages as needed.

[illegible]

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Tracking Decisions and Deadlines*Never miss a timeline — written decisions start your appeal clock*

Important: Under the PDD Act, you must file a Notice of Appeal within 45 days of being told about a decision. If you request an administrative review, the appeal clock is NOT paused — track both timelines simultaneously. If you choose mediation, you must request it within 30 days of the decision; after mediation ends you have 30 days to appeal. Missing the appeal deadline can mean losing your right to appeal. Track every decision carefully.

Decision Tracker

Record every PDD decision that affects your family member's services. Note whether you agree and what action you took or plan to take.

Date	Decision made	Who made it	Do I agree?	Action taken / planned

Upcoming Deadlines

List all upcoming deadlines — appeal windows, renewal dates, administrative review requests, and meeting dates.

Deadline 1 — Date	
Deadline 1 — What is due	

Deadline 2 — Date	
Deadline 2 — What is due	

Deadline 3 — Date	
Deadline 3 — What is due	

Deadline 4 — Date	
Deadline 4 — What is due	

Deadline 5 — Date	
Deadline 5 — What is due	

Deadline 6 — Date	
Deadline 6 — What is due	

Understanding Your Agreement

- Your signed PDD agreement is a legal document. Read it carefully each time it is renewed.
- Any service not listed in the signed agreement cannot be delivered — make sure everything discussed is written into the agreement.
- If your agreement is reduced at renewal, you have the right to a written explanation and the right to appeal.
- Services through Family Managed Services (FMS) are also governed by a signed agreement — the same rights apply.

5**Preparing a Formal Complaint or Appeal***When internal escalation is not enough*

There are three formal options beyond internal escalation: (1) an administrative review by senior PDD staff, (2) mediation, and (3) a formal Appeal to the Citizen's Appeal Panel (CAP). These are not mutually exclusive.

Option 1 — Administrative Review

- Use this when you disagree with a PDD decision and want it reviewed by a senior worker who was not involved in making it.
- Deadline: Request within 30 days of the decision. Note: requesting this does not pause the 45-day appeal clock.
- How: Ask your PDD worker to submit a request for an administrative review.
- What to expect: Completed within 15 working days. You will receive the outcome in writing.

Option 2 — Mediation

- Use this when you want a neutral third party to help you and PDD reach a resolution.
- Deadline: Request within 30 days of the decision. Your 45-day appeal clock pauses while mediation is underway.
- How: Ask your PDD worker to arrange mediation — it is set up through Disability Services using a neutral mediator from Dispute Resolution Services.
- What to expect: Voluntary and confidential. The mediator makes suggestions but cannot force an outcome. If unresolved, you may still appeal within 30 days of mediation ending.

Option 3 — Formal Appeal (Citizen's Appeal Panel)

- Use this when you have received a written PDD decision that you disagree with (e.g. denial of eligibility, reduction of funded services, rejection of a service type).
- Deadline: File within 45 days of the decision (or 30 days after mediation ends if you tried mediation first).
- How: Complete PDD Notice of Appeal form (PDD0021). Submit to the Appeals Secretariat by email, mail, or fax.
- Appeals Secretariat: appeals.secretariat@gov.ab.ca | 780-427-2709 | 310-0000 (toll-free in Alberta)
- What to expect: The Secretariat reviews acceptance. If accepted and you have not tried dispute resolution, you will have 30 days to attempt resolution before the hearing proceeds. The Citizen's Appeal Panel can agree with, reverse, or change the PDD decision.

Tips for a strong appeal:

- Attach all relevant professional assessments and reports.
- Reference specific sections of the PDD Act, Regulation, or Policy Manual where possible.
- Bring your Communication Log to demonstrate your escalation history.
- Ask a parent advocate or the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities to help you prepare.
- Focus on your family member's individual needs — save conduct concerns for a separate complaint.
- If you believe the CAP hearing was unfair, contact the Alberta Ombudsman or apply for Judicial Review (Court of King's Bench, within 6 months).

Summary of my concern:

What I am requesting as a resolution:

Appeal Preparation Checklist

✓	Task / Document	Status
☐	Written decision letter (the one I am appealing) — in hand	<i>Have it / Need it</i>
☐	Notice of Appeal form (PDD0021) — completed and signed	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	Confirmed: I am within the 45-day appeal deadline	<i>Confirmed / Check date</i>
☐	My family member's current PDD agreement and ISP	<i>Have it</i>
☐	All professional assessments referenced in my appeal	<i>Have it / Need it</i>
☐	My Communication Log (Section 3 of this guidebook)	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	My Decision Tracker (Section 4 of this guidebook)	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	Written summary of my appeal argument	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	Name and contact of my support person or advocate	<i>Confirmed / Not yet</i>
☐	Authorization form (if someone will act on my behalf)	<i>Done / N/A</i>
☐	Submitted to Appeals Secretariat	<i>Done / Pending</i>

My appeal argument — draft your main points here:

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Connecting and Organizing with Other Families

Collective voice creates systemic change

Individual advocacy protects your family member. Collective advocacy improves the system for every adult with a developmental disability. When families organize together, share information, and speak with a unified voice, PDD is far more likely to respond with transparency and accountability.

Why Organizing Matters

- Families often experience the same problems — long waitlists, unexplained service reductions, eligibility denials, lack of communication — without realizing they are not alone.
- Documenting patterns across families provides evidence that a problem is systemic, not individual.
- Groups of families can request meetings with Regional Directors and senior management in ways individual families cannot.
- Organized family groups have influenced PDD policy, funding levels, and eligibility criteria in Alberta.

How to Connect with Other PDD Families

- **Parent Partnership Project:** The organization that produced this guidebook. Connect with other families navigating PDD, share resources, and participate in collective advocacy.
- **Inclusion Alberta:** A family-based federation that advocates for adults with developmental disabilities. They have significant PDD experience and run a Family Managed Supports Resource Centre — inclusionalberta.org.
- **Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD):** A cross-disability organization providing a voice for Albertans with disabilities — vadsociety.ca.
- **Advocate for Persons with Disabilities:** A provincial office that represents the rights, interests, and viewpoints of persons with disabilities. They provide navigation support — alberta.ca/advocate-persons-disabilities.
- **Disability-specific groups:** Organizations focused on your family member's specific diagnosis often have PDD experience and parent networks.

Requesting Transparency from PDD

- Submit a Freedom of Information (FOIP) request to Alberta Assisted Living and Social Services to obtain data on PDD waitlists, funding levels, denial rates, and staffing.
- Attend public consultations: Assisted Living and Social Services periodically holds consultations on disability policy. Organized groups can register to present.
- Meet with your MLA: A group of families requesting a meeting to discuss PDD concerns is a legitimate and often effective strategy.
- Write collectively: A letter to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services signed by many families carries far more weight than individual letters.

Starting a Local Family Advocacy Group

A family advocacy group does not need to be formal or registered to be effective. Even 4–5 families who agree to share information, document experiences, and communicate collectively can have significant impact.

- Agree on a shared goal: What specific change do you want to see?
- Document individually, share collectively: Each family keeps their own records and aggregates patterns to identify systemic issues.
- Designate a spokesperson to represent the group in meetings with management or elected officials.
- Communicate in writing: Group letters and emails create a record. Always follow up verbal meetings in writing.
- Stay issue-focused: Effective advocacy focuses on systemic problems and policy solutions, not on individual caseworkers.

Families I Am Connected With

Record other families or advocates you are connecting with. Keep this information confidential.

Family / Contact Name	How to reach them	Shared issues / notes

Our Collective Goals

What systemic changes is your group working toward? Be specific.

Our Action Plan

List the concrete steps your group will take, who is responsible, and by when.

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Final Checklist*Confirm you are ready to advocate effectively*

Use this checklist to confirm you have worked through every section and have everything in order before your next meeting or escalation.

✓	Task / Document	Status
☐	Section 1 — I have reviewed my rights and PDD's obligations	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	Section 2 — I have recorded contacts for each escalation level	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	Section 3 — I have started my Communication Log	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	Section 4 — I have recorded all decisions and upcoming deadlines	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	Section 5 — If applicable: I have drafted my complaint or appeal	<i>Done / N/A</i>
☐	Section 6 — I have identified other families or advocates to connect with	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	I have a dedicated folder (physical or digital) for all PDD correspondence	<i>Done / In progress</i>
☐	I know the name and number of my PDD worker's supervisor	<i>Confirmed / Need it</i>
☐	I know how to reach the Appeals Secretariat (780-427-2709)	<i>Confirmed</i>
☐	I know how to contact the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities	<i>Confirmed / Need it</i>
☐	I have shared this guidebook with anyone else advocating alongside me	<i>Done / N/A</i>

You Are Ready When:

- ☐ Every section of this guidebook is as complete as possible
- ☐ You have a communication log and are documenting every contact
- ☐ You know the escalation ladder and who to contact at each level
- ☐ All deadlines are recorded and being tracked
- ☐ You are connected with at least one other family or advocate

