

Reaching Out



It's always okay to reach out for help. But, reaching out can also feel overwhelming. It can be tricky to know who to call, where to go, what to say, and how to follow up.

And... all of these questions can feel especially overwhelming when you're experiencing stress, change, or challenging emotions.

You are not alone. Here are some tips to help you reach out.

BEFORE REACHING OUT



Carve out time

To speak with a person, you'll often need to call during business hours. Try putting it in your calendar. Set a reminder for yourself.



Have a pen and paper handy

in case you need to write down important dates or information.



If possible, have useful information handy

For example, phone numbers, account numbers, insurance ID cards, etc.



Try going to a quiet space and turning off devices you won't need for the call

It can also help to take a few deep breaths before reaching out. This can be a quick way to clear your mind.

WHEN YOU REACH OUT



AT THE START...

Confidentiality

Right at the start, you can ask if a call is confidential. Try, “Hi, before I share information, I want to know, is this call confidential?”

If the call is not confidential you can ask: “How will my information be shared? Who will it be shared with?”

Language Support

If the person answering the call does not speak your language, ask for support. Try, “Is there someone there who speaks [your language]. If not, ask, “Can I get an interpreter?”

Connecting with the right person or place

Start by saying why you are calling or reaching out. Try, “Hi... I’m experiencing [X] or I need [X]. Is this something you can help me with?” If they say no, ask, “Can you guide me to the person or place who can help?”

- If you aren’t sure what to ask for, you can start by saying: “I’m not quite sure what to ask for, but here’s what I’m experiencing.”
- If you don’t know the right contact person, start by saying: “I’m not sure who I should be speaking to. Can I tell you about what I need so that you can tell me who I should speak with?”

DURING...

Ask clarifying questions

If you missed some information, ask, “Can you repeat that?” If you need time to write something down, try: “I just need you to say that one more time so I can write it down.”

It's okay not to know something.

If there's something that is not clear to you, ask about it. If you don't understand a word, concept, or procedure, ask the person who's helping you: “Can you explain that in more detail?”

Mention if information is not right for you

For example, if you are told to go to a location and don't have transportation, say, “I can't get there because I don't have a car/ I live far away from the bus station/ I don't have money to pay for the bus or a taxi.”

Ask about eligibility

For example, you might ask: “If someone does not have proof of income, can they still apply?” or, “Will this be covered by my insurance?”

And know...

You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
You can decide to end the call or say something at any point if you feel you are being treated unfairly.

AT THE END...

Ask about next steps so you know what to expect

You can also find out if there's more you need to do. You might ask: "When can I expect to hear back? How will you contact me? If I don't hear back by that time, what's the best way to follow up?"

Ask how to follow up if you have more questions

Try asking, "Are you the best person to call if I have more questions? Is it okay for me to call you directly? If so, what's your name and number? If not, who is the best person to follow up with?"

Request reminders

If you've set up an appointment you can ask, "Will you be sending me a reminder before my appointment? If you prefer to be reminded via text, ask, "Can you text my reminder?"

Make sure you're reachable

Remember to set up your voicemail. A provider will not be able to leave you a message without voicemail.

AFTER REACHING OUT



Try, try again

It may take several tries to connect with a resource. It's okay to call more than once. Each time you leave a message make sure you mention a way you can be reached.



Write down the date and time you called

When you call again, mention it. You might say, "I reached out on [X] date and have not yet heard back. I'm hoping someone can connect with me today."



If a request is urgent, it's okay to mention it

You might say, "It's urgent that I speak with you. Can you please call me today or leave a message with the best time for me to call you tomorrow?"



If you are experiencing an emergency

Call your emergency services or dial 911. Phones are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.