REBUILD NIA

YOUR EXPERIENCE IS THE ASSET.

THE PAPER TRAIL

Self-Advocacy Kit

DOCUMENTATION | COMMUNICATION | FOLLOW-UP

FREE STARTER GUIDE

2026 REVIEW EDITION | EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

SELF-ADVOCACY & SYSTEMS NAVIGATION

THE PAPER TRAIL
Self-Advocacy Kit

A calm, repeatable way to research a process, track communications, and know what to ask next.

FREE STARTER GUIDE | 2026 REVIEW EDITION

WHY THIS MATTERS

When a process is confusing, clear records can help a person communicate accurately. This kit organizes facts, contact history, written questions, published policies, and follow-up dates.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

01 A four-step advocacy and documentation route.

02 A general-purpose communication and evidence worksheet.

03 An example email request and a week of small follow-up tasks.

YOUR FIRST MOVE

Write one sentence stating what you need clarified and which organization controls the process.

THE REBUILD METHOD IN ACTION

The practical starting path

Different agencies have different procedures, deadlines, rights and appeal routes. This kit helps you organize a question; it does not replace qualified advice.

1

Research the correct office and rule

Find the official website, published policy, program handbook, decision notice or agency directory. Record what it actually says, with a URL and date.

TRY IT: Save one official source, not just a social-media explanation.

2

Extract the facts and documents

Create a simple timeline: date, what happened, contact person, case or reference number, and what written record exists. Keep sensitive files secure.

TRY IT: Write a chronological timeline using factual statements.

3

Blueprint a respectful written request

Explain what you are asking, the record or policy involved, and the response you seek. Request written instructions for the official follow-up process.

TRY IT: Use a subject line with a non-sensitive reference description.

4

Follow up through published channels

Track agency replies, stated deadlines and next options. Find official complaint or appeal routes only if relevant; legal or urgent matters may require professional help.

TRY IT: Set one calendar reminder to review a response.

This is a research and organization exercise - not an eligibility or results determination.

WRITE IT DOWN

Your working worksheet

Document facts rather than assumptions. Do not share confidential cases, medical details, or other people's personal information.

01 What is the issue or question in one clear sentence?

02 Which agency, program or organization is responsible?

03 Which official policy, notice or reference explains the process?

04 Who did I contact, when, and what written answer did I receive?

05 What official follow-up route or deadline needs to be verified?

PROTECT PERSONAL RECORDS

Store sensitive evidence securely. This worksheet is not a legal filing, complaint submission, individualized legal advice, or a substitute for emergency assistance.

PUT IT TO WORK

Example + your next move

Use this generic sample to practice communicating without claiming a particular right or outcome.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

Example: asking for a written explanation

“Hello, I am requesting clarification about the next step in the process referenced in your notice dated [date]. Would you please provide the applicable written instructions or direct me to the published policy, including any relevant response deadline? Thank you.” The person records the sending date and the official response.

ONE-WEEK ACTION MAP

DAY 1	State the question in one sentence.
DAY 2	Locate the official office or program website.
DAY 3	Put existing letters and dates into chronological order.
DAY 4	List what is documented and what remains unclear.
DAY 5	Draft a specific question using factual language.
DAY 6	Check official follow-up instructions and stated deadlines.
DAY 7	Update the communication log and set a review reminder.

OFFICIAL STARTING POINTS

USAGov government complaints - https://www.usa.gov/government-agency-complaints

Educational information about recordkeeping and official processes only. Not legal advice, medical advice, representation, or case-management services.