

If your caseworker tells you that you cannot have something in your contract, ask them if there is something you can do so that you could have that thing in your contract.

**Be confident!**

It will not help in your negotiation if you feel that you cannot get what you want. Believe that you will get what you're asking for.

**Do not make it personal!**

Your caseworker is a person with their own views and ideas. Do not forget that you and your caseworker will be working together in the future. So try to keep your cool and be respectful.

**Do not get angry or too emotional!**

If you get angry/emotional while negotiating with your caseworker you will probably not get what you want. So breathe and stay calm.

**Look for common ground!**

Try not to think of this negotiation as "Me against them." Show that you want to work with your caseworker to your contract.

**See what's on the table!**

You can start out the negotiation by seeing what your caseworker is willing to put in your contract. If the caseworker offers you some of what you already want you can accept those things and focus the negotiation on the other things you want.

**Let the Caseworker know what you want!**

If the caseworker does not offer you what you want, let them know what you want to have in your contract. Think of the top three things that you really want and let the caseworker know these things are important to you.

**Do not give in to pressure!**

If your caseworker tells you that you have no right to what you're asking for, do not simply take what they tell you. Calmly ask for a copy of the rule that backs up what they are saying.

**If you need to, take time to think about it!**

You have as much time as you need to think about what you want in your contract before signing it. If you need some time to think about your contract, let your caseworker know you would like some time to think. But remember, you will not start to get your benefits until you sign the contract.

**What if my caseworker and I disagree about the contract?**

If you cannot agree with your caseworker about your contract, you may take the following steps:

- Ask the caseworker to explain *in writing* what they disagree with.
- Then you can ask for a meeting with the supervisor.
- If you disagree with the supervisor, you can ask to have mediation.
- If you still disagree, fill out an appeal form. A hearing before an administrative hearing officer will be set.
- You can get help from Nebraska Appleseed 1-800-845-3746 or Legal Aid of Nebraska 1-877-250-2016.

For more information: [www.neappleseed.org](http://www.neappleseed.org)

For information on education materials see <http://neappleseed.org/docs/chooseeducation.pdf>

- Do not assume your caseworker understands everything about Public Benefits.
- Ask questions.
- Do not sign anything without knowing what you are signing.
- Get and keep copies of what you sign and what you are sent in the mail.

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Understanding  
Your Rights  
in the  
Welfare System

Basic Questions  
& Answers About  
**Negotiating Your  
Employment First  
Contract**

To contact the  
Nebraska Appleseed  
Intake Line, call:  
438-8853 ext. 105  
(in Lincoln)  
or 1-800-845-3746 ext. 105  
(outside Lincoln)

CORE VALUES  
COMMON GROUND  
EQUAL JUSTICE



NEBRASKA  
Appleseed

**Working with your caseworker can sometimes be hard. This brochure can help you find ways to talk to your caseworker about your Employment First self-sufficiency contract so you feel confident about asking for what you want in your contract.**

### **What is Employment First?**

- Employment First is Nebraska's cash assistance program.
- The goal of the Employment First (EF) program is to help you to meet your family's basic needs for a short time and to help you be able to pay for all your needs in the future.

### **How does the EF program work?**

- The Employment First program helps you meet your needs and plan for the future by giving you personal support through a plan designed for you.
- Part of this plan and support requires you to sign an "Employment First self-sufficiency contract."

### **What is an Employment First self-sufficiency contract?**

- It is a "deal" between you and the State that says what you have to do and what your caseworker must do to help you while your family gets cash assistance.
- The goal is for you to do things that will help you to be able to pay for all your needs in the future, while the State gives you all the help you need to do it.

### **How do I get what I want in my contract?**

To get what you want in your contract, you will have to *negotiate* with your caseworker.

### **What is a negotiation?**

A negotiation is a conversation between two or more people who might disagree about some things. The

conversation can allow them to talk about the things they want and try to come to an agreement.

### **How do I negotiate with my caseworker?**

You might feel that you do not have any power to get what you want in your contract. This is not true. You do not have to sign the contract until you agree with the plan and goals in the contract. You can take as long as you need to sign your contract, but you will not start receiving benefits until you sign the contract. So, you should be as ready as you can for your first meeting with your caseworker when you will negotiate your contract.

### **Before your meeting, think about what your goals and needs are!**

Before meeting with your caseworker come up with a list of ideas that would help you to reach your goals. This will help you decide what you want in your contract. To think of ideas of what you want in your contract you can ask yourself these questions:

- What are my goals?
- How can I use the money and support I will get to solve some of the problems that keep me from getting the job that I want?
- What skills do I have that I can use?
- What job training and education do I need before I can get the type of job that I want?
- What training and educational programs are available where I live?
- Do I want to go back to school?
- Do I need childcare?
- Does my family have special medical needs?

- Does someone in my family have drug problems, domestic violence, or mental health problems?
- Do I need help with transportation?

### **Come to your negotiation with a plan!**

If you can, come to your negotiation with a plan in writing showing how you will become self-sufficient. The more information you have showing how your goals will help you in the future the better.

### **For Example:**

A) If you want to go to school you could bring:

- A class schedule;
- Statistics showing that the job you want to do is in demand;
- Information showing the job you could get by going to school will pay more than jobs you can get now; or
- A letter or information from the college showing how many people who graduate from the program find a job\*

B) If you want to do other work activities and you already have a job or volunteer position:

Bring a time sheet of your hours with the name and number of where you work/volunteer and your supervisors name.

### **Know your rights!**

There are many things that you can do under the EF program. At your meeting with your caseworker you should ask a lot of questions. You have a right to know what you can and cannot do. It is a good idea to ask for what you can and cannot do in writing. Some of the rights you have in this situation are:

- The right to work on *your* goals while on the ADC program.
- The right to have your information kept confidential
- The right to be treated fairly and respectfully
- The right to challenge decisions made by HHC that you disagree with.