

Tips for Getting Durable Medical Equipment: From One Self-Advocate to Another

The following tips are from a 2022 SARTAC Fellowship project. I was getting my own power wheelchair and having a hard time. I wanted to find out what other people were experiencing and try to find a way to make it easier for people to get durable medical equipment. The process is long and some people get stuck at home waiting for a new wheelchair or a repair. Other people can't work or end up with bed sores. Here are some tips I learned along the way.

1. **Be persistent.** Follow up regularly to keep the process moving.
2. **Write a letter.** A letter to the insurance company or to the head of the agency explaining your situation can help.
3. **Make it personal.** Include a picture with your letter and explain how hard it is waiting for this equipment. Anything to remind them that you're not just a case number, you're a person.
4. **Talk to your legislator.** Legislators can get things moving and may make some of their own phone calls on your behalf. In the long run, they can look at ways to improve the process.
5. **Appeal.** Always use this option. You may have to do it several times. It's worth the time it takes.
6. **Grow your network.** Get as many people as possible to support you like your social worker, doctor, physical therapist, seating specialist, etc.
7. **Learn from others.** Talk to people who have gone through this and ask them what worked for them.
8. **Do your research.** Know what type of equipment you need so you can be a better advocate.

