

GUIDE to the BCCLA Citizenship Handbook

Chapter 6: Dealing with Government Agencies

The first half of Chapter 6 includes information about three agencies that offer citizens very valuable assistance. The related GUIDE activities are intended to show your students or group members how agencies fit into the structure of our government. They also illustrate the variety of work that agencies do.

The handouts for this chapter include a chart or two primarily for informational purposes. They may be useful for helping your students or group members understand government structures and processes.

The second half of the chapter deals with different ways to challenge government agency decisions. We know that agency staff have difficult and important work to do, and

that they are often hampered by stressful working conditions and limited budgets. In general they are well trained, patient, and conscientious.

We would be remiss, however, if we did not let newcomers know that they can challenge agency decisions that they think are wrong. They can also complain if they are treated unfairly. These appeal or complaint procedures are an important part of Canada's traditions of fairness and justice.

PLEASE NOTE: The B. C. government is changing many government agencies after its Core Services Review. Please check the government web page at www.gov.bc.ca, under Ministries & Organizations, or call the government agency itself, if you want updated information about the agencies in this chapter. [June 2002].

Activity 6.0

Materials: Make copies of Handout 6.0 for everyone.

Immigrant Settlement Groups: Translate the Goals handout into your group's home language, make copies, and hand them out.

If you are using a translated version of *The Citizenship Handbook*, follow the directions described in the column to the right (this page).

Otherwise, go over the goals with your group to be sure they understand what they will study and talk about in upcoming meetings.

Goals

Activity Overview and Directions: The Goals handout for each chapter introduces your students or group members to the issues they will focus on and learn about during their work on the chapter. Draw their attention to the appropriate chapter in *The Citizenship Handbook*, and encourage them to browse through it, noting any language or issues that they want explained or find particularly interesting. Ask them to make a note of these things so that they can refer to them when you work on relevant sections of the chapter.

If possible, make photocopies of the Goals handout on heavier than usual paper - perhaps 'card' stock if it is available. As you finish each chapter, attach all related handouts together, with the Goals handout on the front. Staple them or put them in a folder or binder. This gives your students or group members a handy way to save, and to review, the material from each chapter

Activity 6.1

Materials: make copies of Handout 6.1 for everyone

Preparation: Ask your class or group to think about their own experiences with government agencies. Collect and distribute pamphlets and brochures from a few interesting agencies. Let participants look these over, and talk a bit about their own experiences before you start the Activity.

Immigrant Settlement Group: Translate Handout 6.1 into the appropriate home language and proceed as described in the Activity Directions (this page, right column). Try to locate agency information and brochures in the home language of your group.

PLEASE NOTE: CHANGES to B.C. GOV'T.AGENCIES

See www.gov.bc.ca to check for changes that might affect the B. C. government agencies discussed in this activity. Some changes have been made to the Residential Tenancy Office, the Employment Standards Branch, and Victims Services, but these services still do exist in reduced form. [June 2002]

Government Agencies and Us Introductory Activity

Activity Overview: This is another version of the game-like activity that we used in Chapter 1, but the focus here is on government agencies. Participants walk about, asking each other questions to find out who, if anyone, fits the numbered categories listed on Handout 6.1. You then lead a general discussion about how each item relates to an agency or subject in Chapter 6 of *The BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*.

Activity Directions:

- Distribute copies of Handout 6.1 to everyone. Give them time to look over the listed items and to raise questions about the vocabulary.
- Go over the format, making sure that everyone knows how to ask for the information.
- When everyone understands the vocabulary and the process, they should get up and mingle, trying to find someone in the room to fit the listed categories. Be sure to include yourself in this part of the activity.
- When you think enough time has elapsed, call the group back together and go over their lists. Give them a good chance to tell any stories or interesting information they may have discovered during the questioning.
- As you go through the list, mention how each item relates to a government agency. (See 'Suggestions' on next page.)
- If they are using the *BCCLA Citizenship Handbook* (in any version), give them the page number in the *Handbook* where the agency is discussed. If you have time, turn to these pages and point out the relevant material.

On the next page is a list of the 10 categories from Handout 6.1, the relevant page references for the *BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*, and suggestions for linking the categories to government agencies.

Suggestions re Handout 6.1:

(1) pays rent

A *tenant* pays rent to a *landlord*. If they have a dispute about rent, or any other part of their rental agreement, they can go to the Residential Tenancy Office - a government agency - for assistance. (pp 105, 106)

(2) has worked overtime

Non-union workers who work overtime are paid according to standards set out in provincial laws, not union contracts. In B. C., the Employment Standards Branch assists non-union workers and employers if they have disputes about overtime or other issues or need information. (pp 104, 105)

(3) asked a government agency for information

This is self-explanatory. When discussing this category, make a list on the board or a flip chart of all the government agencies your class or group have contacted. If you haven't already given out the agency brochures you collected, distribute some now. Encourage the participants to share the brochures with their families and friends. (p 103)

(4) talked to ICBC about a car accident

ICBC is a 'quasi-government' agency. Explain that this gives it more independence in setting policies and organizing its procedures than ordinary government agencies. If no one has had any contact with ICBC because of a car accident, ask them about any other type of contact they may have had. (pp 112, 113)

(5) thinks the boss is unfair

You may not find anyone willing to admit they think their boss is unfair. See if someone has a 'friend' or 'relative' with complaints. Remind them that such complaints properly go to union stewards or to the Employment Standards Branch. (pp 104, 105)

(6) was robbed

If no one in your class or group has been robbed, just ask them what government

agency they think is involved. They may name the police, but may not know much about victim services (pp 106,107). *For an update on these services, see Handout 6.2B under the definition for Victim Services, and www.gov.bc.ca, search for Victim Services [June 2002].*

(7) knows the minimum wage

The minimum wage is set by legislation. In a non-union situation, questions about the minimum wage should be directed to the Employment Standards Branch (pp 104, 105). The minimum wage in B.C. is \$8.00 an hour. *There is also a 'first job/entry level' wage rate of \$6.00 an hour that applies for one's first 500 hours of employment [June 2002].*

(8) asking for a police officer's name or badge number

Usually you ask for the name or badge number of a police officer when (1) you want to praise the officer to a superior; (2) you need to get information about a case or an accident; or (3) you want to complain about the officer's behaviour. It is (3) that is most relevant to this chapter. The *Citizenship Handbook* page 112 names the agencies that investigate complaints about the police. (pp 111, 112)

(9) has a complaint about an agency

This is intended to give people a chance to vent some frustration or dissatisfaction they might have about their experiences with government agencies. It might give you some ideas for guest speakers or for places to go to for a field trip. Remind participants that once they have studied this chapter, they will know how to make a formal complaint. (pp 108-115)

(10) knows about the ombudsman

While 'ombudsman' isn't the easiest word to remember, the Ombudsman's Office is an important agency. It can review the actions of any government agency, and other organizations as well. It's motto - *Promoting Fairness for British Columbians* - sums up why Chapter 6 has a section on challenging agency decisions. (p 114)

Activity 6.2, A and B

Materials: Copies of Handout 6.2A and 6.2B for each participant.

Do **not** give out the Vocabulary Resource (6.2B) until after your participants have been given the Vocabulary List (6.2A) and worked together to define the words.

Immigrant Settlement Groups: Translate both handouts and proceed as described in the Activity Directions (this page, right column).

A Reminder To check for possible changes to the government agencies described on Handout 6.2B, see www.gov.bc.ca, under Ministries and Organizations. [June 2002]

CHARTS: Handouts 6.2C & D
These two charts are intended to give your students or group members a visual idea of how government agencies fit into the overall structure and process of the government - whether federal or provincial. They also show in a general way how social programs start as political goals and end up as the work of both government agencies and NGOs. Use the charts to illustrate the vocabulary.

Using Government Agencies

Vocabulary List and Vocabulary Resource

Activity Overview: Chapter 6 has two different vocabulary lists. The first one, Handout 6.2, concentrates on the place agencies occupy in the structure of government, and introduces three agencies or programs that are of practical use to newcomers as well as to established Canadians. It is important for participants to learn this vocabulary and do the activities connected with it before they get involved with the second vocabulary list, which focuses on ways to challenge government agency decisions.

Page numbers on the Vocabulary List and the Vocabulary Resource tell where the words can be found in the *BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*. Encourage your class or group to read the material on these pages.

Activity Directions: For different ways to work with the vocabulary list, see the Introduction, starting on page v.

If you decide to have students teach the vocabulary words to other students (see Introduction page v - Alternative C), divide your class into groups A, B and C. Assign words # 1 - # 4 to group A, words # 5 and #6 to group B, and words #7 - #9 to group C.

[Group A has only four words, but they are relatively difficult to explain and to understand, especially since 'non-governmental organization' is not even in *The Citizenship Handbook*. Group B has the most words, but they are all related and are very straightforward. Group C covers two different kinds of agencies, but the definitions should not prove difficult to find or to understand.]

Be sure to check out the charts on Handouts 6.2C and 6.2D to decide whether you want to use them (see shaded comments the left). They will probably be most useful after the group has discussed the vocabulary and been given the Vocabulary Resource. As you go over the chart, they can underline, or write in, the relevant vocabulary words.

Activity 6.2B *Using Government Agencies* Vocabulary Resource

This Vocabulary Resource contains:

- definitions for only the first four terms printed on Handout 6.2B for participants, and
- some additional material (in smaller print) that expands on these terms to show how government agencies fit into the Canadian political framework. We hope this material - and Charts 6.2C and 6.2D - will be helpful for answering questions from participants who find Canada's government bureaucracy a somewhat puzzling and daunting system.

1. social programs (page 104)

government programs for people who need financial, medical or other assistance to help them meet their basic needs or participate fully in Canadian society. *Examples:* the Canada Pension Plan, provincial health insurance, language and settlement programs for immigrants.

These programs are created by laws that reflect the social policies of the government in power, and they change as the government's priorities and concerns change. Most social programs are under the control of a government department or ministry. Along with the social

programs listed above, other examples include provincial social assistance (welfare), federal employment insurance, government loans to student for college and university, and government training and employment programs. See if your participants can name others

2. federal department or provincial ministry (Chapter 3, page 46)

the different parts of the federal or provincial government that are responsible for specific areas such as health, taxation, fisheries, immigration, etc.. Some departments and ministries manage social programs and create agencies to handle the work of these programs.

Government departments and ministries are headed by Cabinet Ministers, the most important and powerful members of the government. They are *elected* MPs like all other members of the government (see page 46), but are chosen by the Prime Minister to be his closest advisors. The next most important official in a department or ministry is the Deputy Minister. This

person is *not elected*, but is *appointed* by the Cabinet. The Deputy Minister is a senior civil servant, and has significantly more power than the other government employees in departments and ministries (known collectively as the 'civil service'). Sometimes a Deputy Minister retains his or her position even if the government changes politically at election time.

Activity 6.2B Vocabulary Resource (continued)

3. government agency (page 103)

an organization set up by a government department or ministry to carry out social programs (or other programs) created by laws and government policies. For examples, see Chapter 6 in *The BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*.

Government agencies are staffed by civil servants, the unelected government employees who do most of the work in departments and ministries. These include the people who deal with the public, and whom we meet and work with in all our contacts with government agencies.

They range from receptionists to social workers, to medical and legal staff, to program and funding managers, to employment counselors and job trainers - all the many kinds of people with the training and skills to do the variety of jobs necessary to carry out an agency's programs and other responsibilities.

4. NGO: non-governmental organization

a private organization set up to develop and present programs and activities approved by its Board of Directors and members. NGOs often get government funding for social programs, but they are not government agencies. Examples: MOSAIC, ISS and SUCCESS (pages 18 and 19).

While this term was not included in *The BCCLA Citizenship Handbook* itself, we thought it should be included in this vocabulary because non-governmental organizations such as MOSAIC and ISS are discussed in Chapter 6.

Sometimes the government does not set up its own agency to handle a program. Rather, it gives money in a grant or a contract to a private outside agency - a non-governmental organization - that already serves the community the government wants to assist. This agency then delivers the program to that community.

It is important for people to realize that these organizations - including the BCCLA as well - are not part of the government. They do not set policy or write the laws or regulations that govern their use of government funds.

The examples of non-governmental agencies given in the *Citizenship Handbook* and listed on Handout 6.2B offer such programs as language classes, interpretation and translation services, settlement programs and citizenship classes - all of which assist newcomers to participate more fully in Canadian society.

The remaining terms on Handout 6.2B are very straightforward and do not require any explanation beyond the definitions on the handout itself. The terms are taken directly from pages 104 through 107 of *The Citizenship Handbook*. See #5 - #9 on Handout 6.2B.

Activity 6.3

Materials: Copies of Handout 6.3 for all participants

Immigrant Settlement Groups: Translate Handout 6.3 and proceed as described in the Activity Directions (this page, right column).

The correct pairing of numbered sentences with vocabulary words is as follows:

- 1 (K)
- 2 (C)
- 3 (L)
- 4 (J)
- 5 (E)
- 6 (D)
- 7 (F)
- 8 (H)
- 9 (G)
- 10 (I)
- 11 (B)
- 12 (M)
- 13 (A)
- 14 (N)

What Government Agencies Do

Vocabulary Review

Activity Overview: This vocabulary review consists of a set of numbered sentences that are related to the words on the vocabulary list. The object is to replace the [bracketed] question in each sentence with the appropriate vocabulary term from the list at the bottom of the page. After they complete the review activity, they can confirm their answers by using Handout 6.2B.

The numbered sentences may need slight grammatical adjustments so that the vocabulary words fit the sentences correctly. Explain this, and model at least the first sentence as below:

Example: "A tenant can go [where ?] to argue that her landlord raised her rent more than the law allows."

Answer: "A tenant can go [to the Residential Tenancy Office] to argue that her landlord raised her rent more than the law allows. (K)"

Activity Directions: Use one of the following ways to complete the vocabulary review:

- (1) assign it as an individual activity in class or for homework, and follow-up with an informal whole group analysis where each sentence is correctly completed and read aloud by a group member.
- (2) assign it as a paired activity where one person does #1 - #7, and the second does #8 - #14. The pair then help each other with the unfinished portions of their reviews. Follow this with a group review in the form of a contest, or by randomly selecting participants to read out their sentences.
- (3) assign it as a small group activity, where each group does half the sentences, then splits up and forms new groups with people who have answered different questions. When the new groups have completed their reviews, check out the answers during a quick whole group session where you call on different groups for correct answers.

Activity 6.4

Materials: copies of Handout 6.4 'Directions' for each group, and one copy of a story for each role-playing group.

Immigrant Settlement Group:

Translate the stories, but do the role-play Directions orally.

If your group is using a translated version of *The Citizenship Handbook*, do the activity in general as described in the Activity Directions (this page, right column).

If your group does not have *Handbooks*, go over pages 103 through 107 of your own *Handbook* with them, emphasizing the agencies and programs. Give them one of the translated stories. Read it together and discuss how the people in the story might get help from one of the agencies you have mentioned. Then divide the group in two and give each section one of the remaining stories. Ask them to create a role-play about it that includes a solution. Remind them that their translated Vocabulary Resource (Handout 6.2B) might be helpful.

Notice: Changes to services for victims of crimes (pp 106 and 107) are noted on Handout 6.4, Story 3. For a full update, see www.gov.bc.ca and search for Victim Services. June 2002

Using a Government Agency Role-Play and Discussion

Activity Overview: In this activity, participants role-play 'using' the agencies introduced on pages 103 through 107 of *The Citizenship Handbook*. Encourage your students or group members to think creatively about their stories and the actions of the people involved. Remind them that people are not always reasonable and good-natured. These role-plays give participants a chance to show how things might work - or not work - when the agency staff or the citizen is tired, upset, or unreasonable. Point out that a supervisor can be summoned if a staff member is particularly unhelpful or rude. Staff can call 'security' or the police if a client is unruly or threatening. Encourage participants to use their imaginations as well as the facts they have discovered from their reading.

Activity Directions:

- Divide participants into three groups, with 5 or 6 people in a group. If your class or group is too large for just three groups, add more.
- Distribute the role-play Directions (Handout 6.4) to each group. Ask everyone to turn to pages 103 - 107 of *The Citizenship Handbook* (as the handout directs).
- Point out the agencies and services described there. Encourage the groups to use these descriptions, their Vocabulary Resource (Handout 6.2B), any pamphlets you have given them, and their imaginations when they work on their role-plays.
- Make sure they understand the remaining directions, and then give each group one of the stories. While they work on their role-plays, circulate among them, giving assistance as necessary.
- Follow each role-play with a group discussion where you analyze the solutions in the role-plays and clarify the work of each relevant agency.

(If you have more than one group working on the same story, do both role-plays for that story before you discuss the story and its related agency with the whole group.)

Activity 6.5, A and B***Challenging a Government Agency Decision***
6.5A Vocabulary List

Materials: Copies of Handouts 6.5A and 6.5B for each participant

Remember: Do not give out the Vocabulary Resource (6.5B) until after your participants have worked together on the Vocabulary List (6.5A) and come up with definitions of the words.

Immigrant Settlement Groups
Translate both handouts and proceed as described in the **Activity Directions** (this page, right column).

Activity Overview: Handout 6.5A lists the second set of vocabulary words for Chapter 6. Each word is related in some way to challenging a government agency decision. Most of the words are uncomplicated and do not require additional explanations for ESL teachers and settlement counselors beyond the definitions given in the Vocabulary Resource 6.5B (see next page).

This vocabulary and the activities following it could be used as an entirely separate unit for a class or group that already has good practical knowledge about government agencies, but does not know much about challenging their decisions.

Page numbers on the Vocabulary List and Vocabulary Resource tell where the words can be found in the *BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*. Encourage your class or group to read the material on these pages,

Activity Directions: In the Introduction to this *GUIDE*, we have suggested several ways to introduce vocabulary words and to encourage participants to find and learn their meanings. We leave you to choose how you want to do this with your own students or group members (see *GUIDE* Introduction, starting on page v).

Activity 6.5B

Challenging a Government Agency Decision
6.5B Vocabulary Resource

This Vocabulary Resource contains:

- definitions as printed on Handout 6.5B for participants, and
- some additional material (in smaller print) that may be helpful to teachers and settlement counselors.

1. to challenge (108)

to question or express doubt about an action, decision or opinion because you think it is untrue, not based on fact, or otherwise wrong

2. to appeal (108)

to make a formal request to an agency, asking it to reconsider and change a decision you think is wrong

Usually an appeal is directed to someone who has more authority in the agency than the person who made the original decision. Some agencies have very detailed appeal procedures, while others are much more

informal. You rarely need a lawyer's help in the early stages of an appeal. When the process becomes more formal, however, with procedures similar to those in a courtroom, a lawyer's assistance is usually necessary.

3. dispute (104, 105)

a disagreement or difference of opinion between two or more people or groups. These people or groups are called 'the parties to the dispute'.

Examples of the kinds of disputes that concern us in this chapter are: disagreements between a person who wants a government service and the agency that won't provide it; problems between a landlord and a tenant

about rental payments, damage deposits, or repairs and maintenance; and the differences in opinion between a police officer and a group of demonstrators about the legal limits of the demonstration.

4. internal complaint procedure (103)

the process you can use, or the steps you can take, within a government agency when you want to complain that the agency treated you unfairly

An appeal or a complaint: what's the difference?

*In general, an **appeal** relates to a decision about you that arises from the rules and regulations governing agency programs and procedures. For example, a staff person decides that you cannot take a program because you do not have all the qualifications listed for program participants. But you think you do have the qualifications. You then appeal to someone in the agency who has more authority than the person who made the original decision. Or you appeal to an agency committee that has been set up to consider such appeals. In appealing, you are asking the agency to reconsider the decision and to change it - in your favour.*

Activity 6.5B

Vocabulary Resource

(continued)

*A **complaint**, on the other hand, usually relates to a decision or to behaviour that you think is unfair or discriminatory. Perhaps you think you are being discriminated against because of your ethnic background, your religion or your sex. You may think a staff person has been unnecessarily rude to you, or very uncooperative. In these circumstances, you make a complaint (usually in writing) to someone in the agency assigned to receive such complaints, and that person investigates the complaint and decides what to do about it. These procedures vary widely from agency to agency.*

5. arbitration (106)

formal meetings in which the two parties to a dispute explain their opinions to a third party, the 'arbitrator', who then decides how to end the dispute.

6. Ombudsman (114)

a special office set up by the B. C. government to look into complaints from citizens who think a provincial government agency has treated them unfairly. [In B.C., the Ombudsman's office also considers complaints about universities, local government agencies, and professional groups.]

7. time limit (109)

how much time you have to make a complaint about unfair treatment or to appeal an agency decision. [If you do not act within the time limit, you sometimes lose your right to complain or to appeal at all.]

8. interview (111)

a formal meeting in which one person is asked a series of questions so that the other person(s) can gather information. [For example: an agency staff member interviews a client; an employer interviews a job applicant; and the police interview a suspect.]

9. to investigate (112)

to examine a situation thoroughly in order to find out the truth about what happened or to resolve a dispute about it.

Here are some examples of what you do in an investigation: interview the people involved; examine written records and relevant files;

find experts and others who can shed light on what happened; and follow up reasonable suggestions and clues.

10. to retaliate (111)

to harm or punish someone who has harmed you or done something you dislike or are angry about.

Sometimes agency clients worry about appealing a decision or making a complaint because they are afraid that staff at the agency might retaliate by denying them benefits or refusing to let them into a

desired program. This should never happen, and is a very rare occurrence. When it does happen, the client should report the incident immediately - and perhaps bring along a sympathetic staff member or a friend for support.

Activity 6.6

Making and Challenging Agency Decisions Vocabulary Review

Materials: Copies of Handout 6.6 for all participants.

The Vocabulary Resource, Handout 6.5B, which has been distributed already, may be useful for this activity.

Immigrant Settlement Group: Translate Handout 6.6 into the home language of the group. We suggest you follow the Activity Directions set out in the shaded square for lower level ESL classes (this page, column right).

The correct answers for the matching exercise are as follows:

1. H
2. C
3. I
4. B
5. F
6. A
7. E
8. G
9. J
10. D

Activity Overview: This activity is a straightforward matching exercise. It give examples of conduct that is related to agency decision-making and to challenging agency decisions. Participants match the conduct with the appropriate vocabulary terms.

The object of the exercise is to find out if participants understand the practical meanings of the vocabulary terms they have been discussing.

Activity Directions: This activity can be an individual homework or in-class assignment, or it can be done as an in-class paired or small-group exercise. Distribute Handout 6.6 to everyone, and tell the class how they will do the work. If they are going to work together in pairs or small groups, divide the class as necessary. Explain the matching process, and put them to work.

For a lower level ESL class, we suggest you divide your group into pairs. Ask one half of the pairs to do #1 - #5, and the other half to do #6 - #10. When these pairs have completed their work, regroup them to create new pairs in which each person has done a different half of the exercise. The new pairs can then complete their exercises together, teaching each other about the half they have already done.

When you follow-up with the whole group to confirm the correct answers (see column to the left), let different participants read each 'story' aloud as practice. Enliven the whole group session by asking participants for examples from their own experience to complement the examples given in the exercise.

Activity 6.7

Materials: Copies of Handout 6.7 for all participants

Immigrant Settlement Group:
Translate Handout 6.7.

If your group is using a translated version of *The Citizenship Handbook*, proceed with the activity as described in the Activity Directions (this page, column right).

Otherwise, divide the group into two or more smaller sections. Ask each group to work together to choose answers for #1 - #6, or #7 - #12, based on what you have already discussed in class. When you go over the answers in a whole-group discussion, refer to your own *Citizenship Handbook* to verify or explain the correct answers to the group. The relevant page numbers are noted on the Handout.

The True/False answers are:

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. T
6. F
7. T
8. F
9. T
10. F
11. T
12. F

Challenging an Agency's Decision

Reading for Details

Activity Overview: This straightforward activity asks participants to say whether certain statements about government agencies are True or False. All the statements have something to do with challenges to government agency decisions as discussed in *The Citizenship Handbook*. The relevant *Handbook* page number is noted after each statement.

Activity Directions:

- This activity can be used as an individual open book, homework or in-class assignment. It can also be done in pairs or small groups during class time. Or, see below:
- If you have enough time, divide your class into groups A, B, C, and D. Assign the first three T/F statements to group A, the next three T/F statements to group B, and so on.
- When all the groups have found their three answers, form new groups. Each new group should include at least one member from each of the A, B, C, and D groups.
- The new groups can then complete the whole T/F exercise, with the 'experts' from A, B, C, and D explaining their answers to the other students so that everyone has all 12 answers.

Before you begin this activity, check pages 108 - 113 of *The Citizenship Handbook* to make sure that the language level is appropriate for your class or group. You may want to have a whole-group discussion to highlight some of the areas that you think might present problems. Or you may have the time and interest to assign the material over a longer period in the way described for Activity 4.5 on page 61

Activity 6.8A

Materials: Either copies of Handout 6.8A for all participants, or a set of strips from Handout 6.8B for each small group.

Immigrant Settlement Group: We suggest you use Handout 6.8B - translated into the appropriate language - for this activity. The content of 6.8A and 6.8B is the same, but Activity 6.8B is more interactive, and perhaps more fun, for an informal group.

The directions for Activity 6.8B are the same as for 6.8A. See the [Activity Directions](#) on this page, right column.

Variation 6.8B: *Sentence Strips.*

In this variation, you must cut the 6.8B handout into separate strips. Each strip of paper has one of the statements about Slava's complaint. To complete the story, the students or groups members must physically put the strips into their proper order.

This is a more interactive, and probably somewhat easier way to do the activity. Here participants can follow Slava's progress visually as they arrange the statements in order.

Navigating an Internal Complaint Process

Activity Overview: In this activity, participants read part of a story, then complete the story in small groups by putting a set of 15 statements into the correct order. *This requires a fairly high ESL level and a great deal of group cooperation.* The whole story describes an incident at a government agency where 'Slava' encounters a very rude staff member who gives him incorrect information. He decides to complain about this treatment, and does so in ways that in general parallel the discussion in pages 109 through 111 of *The Citizenship Handbook*.

(The 15 statements that need to be arranged and numbered give clues to their correct order by describing the different steps Slava takes in making his complaint. All 15 statements should be read - and understood - before participants begin to put them in order.)

Activity Directions:

- Divide participants into small groups of four or five people.
- Give them all copies of Handout 6.8A, *or* put a stack of sentence strips from Handout 6.8B, and the 6.8B introduction, on their table.
- Ask them not to read ahead, but to stay together with you as you proceed through the directions.
- Ask different participants to read aloud the story at the top of the Handouts A or B.
- Explain the directions for putting the statements in order. When you think everyone understands what they are to do, ask someone to read the statement already marked as (1).
- Ask them all to look for the statement that should come next. The clues about the next step are the words: "The staff person who answered the phone ...". Those words follow logically after Slava's call to the agency. Tell participants to mark that statement (2) and to work in their groups to decide the order of the rest of the sentences.
- When everyone is finished, review the exercise, asking different groups to contribute their choices as you proceed to put the statements in order.

Activity 6.8A Internal Complaint Process (continued)

The logical order for the statements is as follows (with explanations):

- Statement (2) ends with Slava asking the agency to mail him information about the complaint process. You will find two statements about this information. One says that Slava can "start the complaint process by himself without a lawyer's help". The other says that Slava can start the complaint process by writing "a letter to the agency with the details of his complaint". These, then, become statements (3) and (4), and it doesn't really matter which is which.
- Slava told a friend about his plan to write a letter and she asked about the time limit. That becomes statement (5). Slava checks the agency information again, and finds out about the time limit - statement (6).
- Now Slava must write the letter. Statement (7) says Slava wrote the letter and tells what he said first. His letter has two more parts. The sentence beginning "Then he asked the agency to review . . ." becomes statement (8). "And last, he asked for an apology . . ." is statement (9).
- Now we look for a response to Slava's letter. Statement (10) begins "After a few weeks . . ." and says that the agency wants him to come in for an interview.
- The next three statements are about the interview. In statement (11) Slava worried about the interview and asked someone to go with him. Statement (12) tells what happened "[a]t the interview . . .". Statement (13) starts "When the interview was over . . ." and says Slava can expect a letter.
- The remaining statements talk about Slava's letters from the agency "after the interview . . .". Statement (14) describes the first letter. Statement (15) describes the second letter, and is the end of the story.

Activity 6.9

Writing a Letter of Complaint

Materials: Copies of Handout 6.9 for each person or group

Immigrant Settlement Group: Translate the story into the home language of the group.

If you are using a translated version of *The Citizenship Handbook*, you can do the activity as described in the **Activity Directions** (this page, right column), modifying them to fit your group. If you have a small group, you might prefer to work on the letter as a group project.

If you are not using a translated *Handbook*, verbally review the information on pages 111 and 112 of the *Handbook* with your group in their home language. Repeat relevant sections of the *Handbook* as you guide the group through the letter-writing process.

Before your class or group does this exercise, they should read aloud - or you should read to them - the four short paragraphs that introduce the topic "Complaints Against the Police" on page 111 of *The Citizenship Handbook*. These paragraphs discuss the complaint system in the context of police accountability to the public for their actions.

Newcomers to Canada can usually count on our municipal police and RCMP officers to be helpful, courteous, and fair minded. It is very important that new Canadians learn to respect and trust the police as an independent agency, set up to protect the public and to enforce the laws of Canada. It is rare for police in this country to be corrupt. Nor are they political tools of the government. All members of the public should feel safe in approaching the police for help. Most police officers want only to do their jobs well - and that includes dealing with all members of the public in a fair and courteous manner. (See next page for comments about newcomers and the police.)

Remind participants, however, that in Canada, both the government and the police themselves recognize the public's need for a way to complain about wrongful police conduct. The complaint process now in place is described on pages 111 and 112 of *The Citizenship Handbook*. For those distressing cases where police conduct deserves criticism and discipline, the public complaint process is a necessary corrective.

Activity Overview: Participants write a letter of complaint to the police based on the story of a young man who has a struggle with three male attackers, followed by a run-in with the police. Racial stereotyping prevents the police from soliciting useful information at the scene, and the real wrong-doers get away. The purpose of the exercise is to give participants some practice in writing a factual, clear and concise letter of complaint.

Activity Directions:

- Ask everyone to read the story on Handout 6.9. (Different individuals can read portions aloud, or everyone can read silently.) Tell them to raise questions about vocabulary, if necessary.
- Once everyone understands the story, review the material on pages 111 and 112 of *The Citizenship Handbook*.
- Divide participants into pairs or small groups, and direct them to write a letter of complaint from Ravi to the appropriate police authority.
- Tell the groups to use the information about writing a letter of complaint (pp 111 and 112) as a guide for their letter. (directions continued on next page)

Activity 6.9

Writing a Letter of Complaint

(continued)

Brochures and Information:

The Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (B.C.), the RCMP Public Complaints Commission, the Legal Services Society, and the BC Civil Liberties Association all have information pamphlets about the police complaint procedure. Some of these are available in languages other than English. See Resources section of this GUIDE for contact numbers.

The BCCLA pamphlet, "Making a Complaint against the Police", clearly describes what happens at each step of the complaint process. It would be an excellent resource for this subject and activity.

- Remind your class or group that the incident occurred in Vancouver, which has its own municipal police force. (With that information, they can check the paragraph on page 111 of *The Citizenship Handbook* headed 'Complaining about police conduct' to discover where such a letter would go in real life.)
- After reviewing the various letters written by your students or group members, follow through with an appropriate activity.

In an ESL class, for example, you might want to 'correct' all the letters, suggest grammatical and word-choice improvements, and return the letters to the writers. Or you could choose one of the letters, distribute copies, and use it as a class exercise in grammar and vocabulary. At the same time, the class can discuss how well they think the letter sets out the complaint.

Some newcomers face significant barriers re the complaint process:

- The police in their home country may have been corrupt, cruel, politically motivated or totally inefficient. Complaints would not have been useful and might well have been dangerous.
- Some may worry that a complaint about police behaviour will affect their immigration status in a negative way.
- Others may be afraid that their English is not good enough to bring a complaint or to understand the complaint process.

If you know of anyone with these problems, you can help that person by taking him or her to an immigrant services agency and by getting in touch with the B C Civil Liberties Association. These organizations can give reassurance about the process itself and about its irrelevance to immigration status. They can also help individuals locate assistance for translation and interpretation.

Activity 6.10

Materials: Make copies of Handout 6.10 for everyone

Immigrant Settlement Group:

Translate Handout 6.10. If you are using a translated version of *The BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*, follow the directions as described in the [Activity Directions](#), this page, right column.

If you are not using a *Handbook*, do the activity orally with your whole group. Fill in the answers group members come up with from their previous work in this chapter or their own experience. Then explain the remaining agencies briefly, one at a time. Give group members a chance to figure out which remaining complaints might go to the agency you have just described.

Answers to Matching Exercise

1. (C)
2. (G)
3. (I)
4. (B)
5. (J)
6. (D)
7. (A)
8. (E)
9. (F)
10. (H)

Matching Agencies and Complaints

Review Exercise

Activity Overview: This is a straightforward matching exercise. On the left side of the handout is a numbered list of complaints, simply described. On the right side is a list of agencies. Participants decide which agency is most appropriate for handling each complaint. This activity covers some agencies that participants may be encountering for the first time in this chapter. Page numbers after each agency show where the agency name appears in *The Citizenship Handbook*.

Activity Directions:

- Divide your class or group into pairs or smaller groups.
- Distribute copies of Handout 6.10 to everyone, and explain the matching process. Use the first complaint, with its answer, as a model.
- Point out that participants can look up the agencies or services on the pages of *The Citizenship Handbook* noted after each agency.

You can also use this activity as an individual open book homework or classroom assignment.

This activity lends itself to being a game or a contest. All you need to do is offer a small prize for the first group or individual to hand in an exercise completed correctly.