

FACT SHEET: SELF-ADVOCACY

Q. Why Is Self-Advocacy Important?

A. Decisions are being made that directly affect our lives and we want to tell you what self-advocacy means to all of us. We are registered voters from across the country and we make our own choices and decisions. If you remember back in the 1970's, most of our decisions were made for us. Even doctors told our parents that we would not live a normal life, and we would not be able to read or write and that we should be sent away to institutions.

We, as self-advocates, believe that we should be treated with dignity and respect. It is important for us to have the same opportunities as any other person. We feel that we should be given chances to take risks because we know what is important to us. That is why the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became a law. The ADA helps us by letting people around the country become more aware of supports we might need to live in our communities and to have access to all places in this country.

Q. Who Is A Self-Advocate?

A. It is a person who speaks out for him or herself.

Q. Who is an advocate?

A. An advocate is someone who speaks for others or helps others speak for themselves. Advocates are different than self-advocates because self-advocates speak for themselves.

Q. What Is Self-Advocacy?

A. Advocacy gives a person with a disability a chance speak up for themselves and others. By letting individuals tell others how they feel about issues that affect their lives, they can educate the public about persons with disabilities and how they can be included in all aspects of community life.

Q. How Can We Teach Self-Advocacy?

A.

- By joining a self-advocacy support group, e.g. People First
- Through education by taking courses in school
- By being involved in a training session
- By writing for the different national newsletters
- By using new technology like the Internet

Q. What Are Some Issues That Self-Advocates Feel Are Important To Them?

A.

- **SSI:** With help from SSI we have been able to live our lives with our families, in our communities and become independent. Placing people in institutions costs more money than just helping us through SSI.
- **Families:** Listen to families.
- **Budget:** Be cost effective. Help us to help ourselves. Continue to fund programs that have made us more independent, productive and part of our communities.
- **Education:** Keep inclusive education. We have the right to go to school with everyone else.
- **Health Insurance:** Do not let insurance companies discriminate against us. It is not fair that these companies refuse to allow us to have health insurance.
- **Discrimination:** Do not discriminate against us. We want anti-discrimination laws to work just as well for us as they do for other groups.
- **Labels:** Do not label us. See us for what we can do, not for what we can't do.
- **Legislation:** Learn more about how current legislation has improved our lives.
- **Sensitivity:** Help professionals to be more sensitive to people's needs.
- **Housing:** Housing programs that help us have a home of our own are important. These programs help make it possible for us to live independently.
- **Transitions:** Programs that help us to make the transition from school to work are important. With the guidance of job coaches, we can become employed and stay employed.
- **Choices:** Do not get in our way. Let us do what we can do. We do well on our own, please do not create obstacles for us.
- **Respect:** Listen. We are self-advocates, we deserve the same attention and respect for our views as any other group before Congress... So count us in!

AAMR's Policy

AAMR joins with people with developmental disabilities in supporting the full expression of citizens with disabilities to speak for themselves in making choices about living arrangements, work, personal relationships and the funding of service needs and supports. The Association calls for the international, national, state, and local development of support of groups such as People First and Speaking For Ourselves that provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to advocate for themselves. AAMR supports increased participation of people with disabilities at conferences and on policy making boards at all levels.

What Are Some Helpful Resources?

How To Start A People First Chapter. People First International, Inc., P.O. Box 1642, Salem, Oregon 97309 Ph. 503-362-0336 Fax 503-585-0287

People First Chapter Handbook: A reference guide for self-advocacy chapters. People. First of Illinois, P.O. Box 2153, Loves Park, Illinois 61130

Taking Place: Standing Up and Speaking Out about Living in Our Communities. Self Advocates Becoming Empowered, Tulsa ARC, 1601 South Main Street Suite 300, Tulsa OK 74119 Ph. 918-582-8272 Fax 918-582-6328,

Community Advocacy Press. Newsletter. People with Developmental Disabilities Speaking Out For What They Believe (Quarterly, Free). Capabilities Unlimited Inc., 2495 Erie Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45203 Ph. 1-800-871-2181 Fax 513-871-5893

Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered. National Self Advocacy Organization. Tia Nelis, Chair, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1640 West Roosevelt Road, Chicago, IL 60608-6904 Ph 312-413-1284 Fax 312-996-6942

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