

Advocacy / Self-Advocacy

Defining Advocacy and Self-Advocacy

Advocacy – making it happen for yourself and others

- Trying to make things happen in support of what you want.

Self-Advocacy – speaking up for yourself

- Having a clear understanding of your needs and rights, and knowing how to meet those needs.
- Who here can easily advocate for others? Raise your hand.
- Do you advocate for yourself as much as you do for others? Raise your hand. It's harder to do.
- How do you help others learn to advocate for themselves?

Advocacy Strategies

- Know your needs and be prepared to explain them.
- Know your rights under the law.
- Document your needs, correspondence, and meetings.
- Educate others.
- Get support.
- Contact the people in charge.
- Follow proper procedures.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be tactful.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Understand yourself as a person.

An example situation as a DeafBlind individual: Ordering food in a noisy fast-food place

I would like French fries with ketchup and white vinegar, please. The staff person taking my order may not always face me, so I need to ask them to face me when they are speaking to me, as I have difficulty hearing.

That is self-advocacy.

Knowing your needs and wants and how to ask for them is the first step in self-advocacy.

How do you help your participants to self-advocate?

Utilize a simple situation and use the following steps to build their self-advocacy skills.

- You can help them identify their needs.
- Learn how to appropriately / tactfully ask for the accommodation(s).
- Encourage them to practice asking for their needs and knowing what to do when things go wrong.
- Work with your participants to identify local resources, such as the Disability Rights organizations, the ADA Great Lakes office, and Disability peer groups, etc.

This scenario applies to other situations, ranging from simple interactions to complex ones, such as TSA/travel. I am still developing my self-advocacy skills with each life interaction or situation.

Questions? Feel free to contact us:

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