

What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-advocacy is defined as understanding own strengths and needs, identifying personal goals, knowing legal rights and responsibilities, and communicating these to others". Self-advocacy movement is about people with Intellectual Disabilities speaking up for themselves. It is about having the right to make life decisions without undue influence or control by others.

Self-Advocacy is about advocating for oneself; instead of someone else, like an advocate, speaking for you. It describes the grassroots, civil rights movement of self-advocacy including its associations and groups. Self-Advocacy is about Independent Groups of People with Intellectual Disabilities working together for justice by helping each other take charge of their lives and fight against discrimination. Self-Advocacy teaches them how to make decisions and choices that affect their lives so that they can be more independent. It teaches them about their rights, but along with learning about their rights, they also learn about their responsibilities.

The self-advocacy movement seeks to reduce the isolation of People with Intellectual Disabilities and give them the tools and experience to take greater control over their own lives.

Why is Self-Advocacy important?

People with Intellectual Disabilities are often left out of decisions affecting them. They are not heard or are not taken seriously. They are often told what to do without being asked what they want for themselves. They are often not allowed to decide how they should live their lives. This makes People with Intellectual Disabilities feel dependant and unimportant. But their opinion is important, because no one else knows better what People with Intellectual Disabilities want. This is why professionals, activists, and decision-makers working with People with Intellectual Disabilities should listen to what these people have to say.

What can Self-Advocates achieve?

Self-advocates can achieve Self-determination, can set examples for others and help people without disabilities understand people with disabilities better. They learn how to become leaders and how to change policies, laws, and practices for all People with Intellectual Disabilities. Self-Advocates fight against discrimination and stigma. They can ask that People with Intellectual Disabilities live, learn, and work together with people who do not have disabilities.

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