

## **SELF ADVOCATE TRAINING**

Self-advocacy literally means to advocate for yourself. Advocacy means to speak out or argue for a cause. So a self-advocate speaks out for a cause they feel is important. In the lives of people with disabilities and elderly, self-advocacy has come to mean speaking out about the way people with disabilities are treated and the way their lives are affected by systems and services. This movement is becoming stronger and stronger as more people have the courage to speak out, and realize they are not alone. Self-advocates can and do deal with any issue that affects people with disabilities, however, they tend to focus on the main issues of having choice and control in a person's life. Related to this are choices about where to live, where to work, and where to play.

Some self advocates have advocated at Washington DC or in their State government, some within departments that serve people with disabilities, some with agencies that serve people with disabilities, and some with the storekeeper down the block. Wherever they are and whatever the issue, a self advocate's work is important. A unique part of this movement is that not everyone can join in. You can only be a self advocate in the disability movement if you are a person with a disability. Otherwise, you are just an advocate.

One of the biggest parts of advocacy is communication. This means that if we want others to know about our situation we must tell them in a way they can understand. If we want them to change or do something different we must also communicate what we want them to do. This is a new responsibility for some and very familiar for others, either way it can be very satisfying to know that you can speak up and let others know what is important to you.

If you want to become a self-advocate or learn how you can be a better self advocate you are not alone. This growing movement is always seeking new people and there are many organizations you can get involved with. Some are out lobbying for new laws, some are helping people get through systems, and others are teaching people how to be a self advocate. The links below will help you learn more and connect with some National and local organizations.

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities is a governor appointed council that provides support and direction for issues affecting people with developmental disabilities. This includes information on self-advocacy. Find out about their training program from self-advocates and how to get involved. Clicking on the link below will take you there, and clicking on the council meetings button will let you know when their next meeting will be held, and a chance to use your self-advocacy skills.

<http://www.hawaii.edu/ddcouncil/selfadvocacy.htm>

The Arc in Hawaii sponsors self-advocacy clubs where people with mental retardation are supported to become active community members and leaders. Click the link below to learn more about the Arc Hawaii and their self-advocacy clubs.

[http://www.thearcinhawaii.org/advocacy/self\\_advocacy.htm](http://www.thearcinhawaii.org/advocacy/self_advocacy.htm)

The AAMR is a National organization that promotes progressive policies and practices for people with intellectual disabilities. This includes involvement in self-advocacy, and this question and answer page describes self-advocacy and some of the key issues self advocates are working on. Use the link below to learn more.

[http://www.aamr.org/Policies/faq\\_advocacy.shtml](http://www.aamr.org/Policies/faq_advocacy.shtml)

If you are interested in self-advocacy check out this Rhode Island Statewide Self Advocacy page. Find out about self-advocacy, and self advocate networks by clicking on the link below.

<http://www.aina-ri.org/index.html>

The Self Advocate Leadership Network is a network of self advocacy groups and a place to share information. Find out what they have to say about self determination and self advocacy.

<http://www.hsri.org/leaders/background.htm>

The Center on Human Policy posts this article on the self advocacy movement. Find out how this is defined and some resources that will help you learn more by clicking on the link below.

<http://web.syr.edu/~thechp/selfadv.htm>

National Mental Health Consumer's Self Help Clearinghouse has developed the Freedom Self Advocacy Curriculum to help teach people to become self advocates. Find out about their curriculum and upcoming workshops using the link below.

<http://www.mhselfhelp.org/freedom/>

Self Advocate Net is an organization based in Canada focused on giving voice to the concerns of people with intellectual disabilities. Find out what they have done to communicate their stories, and to help people stand up for their rights. Click on the link below to find out about this growing community.

<http://www.selfadvocatenet.com/>

LD Pride teaches people with learning disabilities to be proud of their unique learning styles and to develop coping techniques. This chapter of a larger educational manual teaches people with learning disabilities to become more effective self advocates. Click on the link below to learn more about self advocacy, or click back to the homepage to view the entire manual and much more.

<http://www.ldpride.net/chapter10.htm>

Students with learning disabilities may find it necessary to advocate for themselves during the IEP process and at other points in their education. The hidden nature of their disability may cause others to misinterpret their motivation or support needs. Learning Disabilities Online provides some questions and answers about self advocacy and how to use it to your advantage.

[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/transition/transition\\_self\\_advocacy.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/transition/transition_self_advocacy.html)

People First organizations are springing up all over the world to unite people with disabilities and help them communicate their message to those who need to hear it. They believe people with disabilities are people, not a condition and they have the same rights as everyone else. The link below will take you to a United Kingdom People First organization that has links to other people first sites all over the world.

<http://www.peoplefirst.org.uk/pflinks.html>

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) is a National organization supporting self advocacy and empowerment for people with disabilities. Find out about their goals, their partners and what they are doing in your area. There may be conferences or workshops that will help you with your self advocacy goals. Use the link below to visit their homepage.

<http://www.sabeusa.org/>

ACT or Advocating Change Together can be found at the link below. They provide publications, videos, and other resources to help you become a better self advocate or understand important related issues. Some publications are free and other will require you to purchase them. Check out their links and other projects as well.

<http://www.selfadvocacy.com/>

The Self Advocacy Synthesis Project at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte is working to coordinate all the research and information out their on self advocacy. Find out more about their project using the link below.

[http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp/self\\_advocacy/self\\_advocacy.asp](http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp/self_advocacy/self_advocacy.asp)

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