

Advocacy

ILC provides advocacy training for individuals with disabilities to assist them in developing the skills needed to advocate on their own behalf to obtain necessary support services, learn leadership skills, and become more productive and involved in community wide services.

What is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is:

- Taking responsibility for your own life
- Knowing your responsibilities
- Making choices
- Asking for help when you want or need it

With self-advocacy skills, individuals with disabilities can make choices and decisions about their lives:

- At home
- In the classroom
- On the job
- Receiving medical attention
- Using transportation and other public services
- Having fun

Can individuals with disabilities be self-advocates?

Absolutely! All individuals can be self-advocates. All people can make known their hopes and dreams and the kinds of support they need from friends, family, and people who provide services.

Individuals with disabilities can express their choices using verbal and nonverbal communication. Some may express themselves using sign language or communication devices. Others may need additional support through advocates, circles of support, or person centered planning activities.

What are examples of self-advocacy?

An individual with a disability can:

- Explain their disability to someone
- Be active in the IEP meeting
- Ask for more time on a test
- Communicate strengths and needs to an employer
- Make appointments
- Meet with a doctor alone
- Find volunteer opportunities
- Make plans with friends
- Choose a restaurant, meal, or movie

- Learn about issues and vote

What are ways to support self-advocates?

Caring family, friends, and professionals are an important part of people's hopes for today, tomorrow and the future. Self-advocacy doesn't mean living without support and guidance. Everyone depends on their family, friends and community.

Supporters can:

- Listen
- Respect differing opinions
- Encourage personal choices
- Teach good manners and social skills
- Provide information that helps in making a decision
- Teach money management
- Support decisions to try something new

What are some steps an individual with a disability can take?

- Become aware of your strengths and weaknesses
- Understand what helps you learn or perform better
- Be an active member of your education planning team
- Look people in the eye
- Make decisions and be responsible
- Learn how to ask for help when it is needed
- Face challenges as opportunities
- Help others
- Learn about available resources
- Understand it's okay to make mistakes and learn from them
- Learn to solve problems without hurting others
- Finish your education
- Learn strategies to manage the challenges of your disability
- Find technology options to manage the challenges of your disability
- Understand the pros and cons of different choices
- Continue to dream
- Develop a positive attitude, flexibility, and a sense of humor

Other Links:

Us Department of Justice: www.usdoj.gov/disabilities.htm

Register to vote in South Dakota: www.sdsos.gov/vote