

Arc Guide to Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is using your power to advocate for yourself and to educate others to do the same. Even with an intellectual and developmental disability (IDD), you can make choices about what you need and want. You can help make changes that improve your life and the lives of others.

Self-advocacy means you are able to share your thoughts and feelings with people in your life. You can gain and practice leadership skills. Standing up for yourself and for others is also an important part of self-advocacy.

Advocating for yourself can help you live the life you choose and fulfill your hopes and dreams. You can set and achieve your goals and believe in who you are.

Self-Advocacy History

For many years, people without disabilities have made decisions for people with IDD.

Many people with IDD used to live in large institutions. Institutions were large buildings, like hospitals, where people lived. They did not live at home with their families, go to school with other kids, or work in their communities. They were not able to make choices for themselves.

People with IDD worked with other people to protect and expand their human and civil rights. They worked hard to change laws in their own states and nationwide.

People with disabilities in Minnesota went to the Capitol and advocated for themselves. This led to changes for inclusion in school and more people could get jobs. They could live more independently and create better lives for themselves.

Self-advocacy is not only about speaking up for yourself; it is also about helping others. You can expand your power and help create positive change in the world.

How to Advocate for Myself

People with disabilities can create a good life for themselves! They can do this through advocating for themselves.

Here are some examples of times when you may want to advocate for yourself:

- When you need to make a decision about something important in your life
- When you plan for your future
- When you are in relationships with family members, friends, and romantic partners

- When you are at school or planning your education
- When you look for a job or while you are at work
- When you decide where you want to live
- When you are at the doctor's office or other medical appointments
- When you choose your services and supports
- When you hire or fire your own staff
- When you use transportation

It is important to advocate for yourself. You need to communicate about things you like, things you do not like, and things you want to change! Educating and influencing policy makers and others is also important for self-advocates.

As a self-advocate every day, you help make sure you and others with IDD are respected and treated equally. You can make important decisions. The self-advocacy saying is, "Nothing About Us Without Us"!

How to Get More Involved in Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is a learning process. Some people need to learn how to advocate through trainings, information, and resources. These are often created by experienced self-advocates.

Many self-advocates around Minnesota get together for monthly self-advocacy group meetings. Some groups are part of the Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM) and People First networks. The Self-Advocacy Advisory Council is supported by The Arc Minnesota.

Talk to your friends who are in self-advocacy groups, or use the resources below to find ways to get involved.

Learn More About Self Advocacy

If you can access the internet, here are some good resources to learn more:

[Self Advocate Net](#)

[Self Advocates Becoming Empowered](#)

[The Arc Minnesota Self-Advocacy information](#)

[The Arc Minnesota Self Advocacy Page](#)

For more information or advocacy services, contact The Arc Minnesota at 833.450.1494 or visit www.arcminnesota.org. (Please note: *This document is not legal advice. No information should replace the advice of an attorney.*)

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