



**autism
NOW**

The National Autism
Resource & Information Center

A national initiative of The Arc



Self-Advocacy

People who self-advocate take a proactive role in their own life.

Self-advocates believe that:

- **all people have the right to make choices about their lives;**
- **all people should have access to and control of community resources because we all have the same equal civil and human rights;**
- **all people should have an active role in decisions that impact their lives; and**
- **all people should be responsible for the benefits and consequences of the decisions that they make.**

What is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is:

- speaking up for your own interests, desires, needs, rights, strengths and weaknesses;
- knowing yourself, making informed decisions based upon what you think is best, and taking responsibility for those decisions; and
- supporting others so that everyone can express their own opinions about all aspects of life.

Where can you do self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy occurs in all parts of life, including:

- **Home.** Self-advocates develop skills that are needed to live as independently as possible and have control over their daily lives
- **Work.** Self-advocates work with others to voice concerns about their jobs and make working conditions better for all workers
- **The Community.** Self-advocates choose how much they want to participate in the community; they are able to participate and be informed about voting and other political activities
- **Relationships.** Self-advocates develop and deepen relationships with the people in their lives by sharing experiences, concerns, and opinions

Who is involved in self-advocacy?

Many people are involved in self-advocacy. These include:



- **The Self-Advocate.** The biggest contributor to self-advocacy is the self-advocate his- or herself! Only the self-advocate know what the best choice is for his or her life.
- **Like-minded People.** Groups of like-minded self-advocates come together to support each other to express opinions and ensure that everyone can speak their mind; two local and national groups that do this for people with autism and other developmental disabilities are Autistic Self Advocacy Network (www.autisticadvocacy.org) and Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (www.sabeusa.org)
- **Everyone Else.** All people participate in self-advocacy by helping develop the ability of people to determine their own future and by encouraging people to take leadership roles in their own lives

How can I do self-advocacy?

(Contributed by Self Advocates Becoming Empowered)

- Get to know yourself, be proud, and feel strong
- Belong to a local self-advocacy group, get to know the people around you and make friends
- Learn new things, solve problems, make your case, and negotiate for what you want
- Make your own decisions and know your responsibilities
- Think of all other civil rights movements and preserve your rights
- Realize you are not alone; there are other people who are just like you
- Be part of your community
- Listen to people's ideas and respect their opinions
- DO NOT judge people because of the way they look or speak
- Meet politicians and tell them like it is
- Spread the word and get others involved in self-advocacy, especially teens
- Help others become leaders

Resources:

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

www.autisticadvocacy.org

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered

www.sabeusa.org

Advocating Change Together

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

About The National Autism Resource & Information Center

The National Autism Resource and Information Center is a dynamic and interactive central point of quality resources and information for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities, and their families.

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