

ADVOCACY

WHAT is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the action of supporting yourself or another's needs or rights.

WHAT does the term "advocacy" mean?

Advocacy must be independent and autonomous.

WHAT is an advocate?

An advocate is someone who advocates an issue for you or on somebody else's behalf.

An advocate helps you to speak for yourself or speaks for others.

WHO is or can be an advocate?

An advocate is any person who represents you, works with a person or group of people who may need support and encouragement to exercise their rights, in order to ensure that their rights are upheld.

WHAT is SELF ADVOCACY?

Self advocacy is your ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert your own interests and desires, needs and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions.

Additional Resources:

Rehabilitation Services Commission's (RSC) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator (800) 207-6047 or www.rsc.ohio.gov

Ohio Legal Rights Services (OLRS) Client Assistance Program (CAP) (800) 282-9181 or TTY 1-800-858-3542.

Ohio Civil Rights Commission's (OCRC) (888) 278-7101.

The Ability Center (419)782-5441(V/TTY) or (877)209-8336.

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) (formerly Self Help for the Hard of Hearing/SHHH) (301) 657-2248 (V/TTY) or www.shhh.org

American Council for the Blind (ACB) (202) 467-5081 or (800) 424-8666 or www.acb.org.

Assistive Technology of Ohio (800) 784-3426

Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) (614) 487-4720.

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) (800) 686-2646 or (419) 212-1997 or (419) 633-7375 or www.namiohio.org

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Self Advocacy:

Why it's
Right for YOU

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Why Advocacy is Important?

Advocacy is important because people are important. There is still a lot of unfairness, exclusion, and general misunderstanding within the community.

Advocacy is a way for you to access what you are entitled to within the community and have your rights as an individual upheld the same as everyone else's.

Advocacy can change community attitudes and misconceptions.

Advocacy can assist people to gain access to resources and finding information.

Advocacy can help make service providers and organizations accountable.

Advocacy can help you maintain control over your situation.

It ensures you have a voice and that it will be heard.

It can also promote positive change to the structure and policy of organizations, which will be of benefit to people with a disability.

10 Steps to Being a Self-Advocate?

1) Believe in yourself. You are worth the effort it takes to protect your interests and your rights.

2) Realize you have rights. You are entitled to equality under the law. Inform yourself by asking questions and using resources, such as those listed in this brochure. Insist that explanations are clear and understandable. Remember that service providers are public servants.

3) Discuss your concerns. Talk directly with your service provider either by phone, in person, or writing a letter. You may bring someone along for support.

4) Get the facts. Problem solve by gathering information. Get the facts in writing. Ask for the policies, rules or regulations being cited to you.

5) Use the chain of command. Use an agency's chain of command to make sure a supervisor or someone else with authority has an opportunity to work with you on the problem and resolution.

6) Know your appeal rights. Request clear written information on your appeal rights either within an agency or outside an agency. Know what the next step will be if you are dissatisfied.

7) Be assertive and persistent. Keep after what you want. Remember that effort moves bureaucracies. Follow up.

8) Use communication skills. Have a plan outlining your concerns. Stay calm and express yourself clearly. Be willing to listen because what you hear may be as important as what you say.

9) Ask for help. Link up with advocacy organizations for more specific information on problems you are having and/or for obtaining services related to a disability. Remember there are also community support groups or organizations.

10) Follow up. Don't give up without using these skills. Agencies are accountable for the decisions they make. You are entitled to know and exercise all your options to obtain the assistance you need. Remember to thank people along the way.

Developing Advocacy Skills

- Define what you need
- Know your rights
- Know your responsibilities
- Know the "system" and the procedures
- Keep records