

Developing Self Advocacy Skills

Note: The information in this article is available in Farsi, French, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese and Spanish and the links can be found at the end of the article.

Quote from a University Student with a disability:

I believe that parents must begin to teach self-advocacy at an early age. I believe parents must allow children to take a lead role in being agents of their own care & advocate for themselves when possible. I feel that if children are taught this skill, while they have parental support, this will very much benefit them in their adult life.

Parents have a key role in helping their child to become independent adults. Children and youth need to develop the skills and knowledge they will need as adults. For children and youth with disabilities, it is very important that they learn how to express their needs and advocate for themselves.

Parent: Build Independence Skills

- Encourage your child to do more for themselves
- Let them take over responsibility for self care and daily activities at home
- Provide opportunities for your child to ask questions and express their needs and opinions to adults
- Let your child take responsibility for making choices
- Encourage your child to advocate for themselves at school or in the community
- Help your child plan who they will need to talk to about the issue and practice what they plan to say

Child or Youth: Learn to Advocate

- Take responsibility for your own care and daily activities at home and in school
- Identify when you need help and what assistance you need
- Learn to express your needs and how to ask for help
- Start small and advocate for one thing you need, for example, an extension for an assignment
- Keep your message simple and clear, and present facts in a logical order
- Practice what you need to say in order to get what you want

Youth or Young Adult: Becoming an Advocate

- Identify an issue that impacts you and other people, for example, the need for a ramp at school or in the community
- Identify other people who can help to advocate and talk with them about what you can do as a group
- Develop a plan by identifying each step and who will be responsible for each action
- Afterwards, review the plan and what worked and what didn't
- If necessary, revise the plan or develop a new strategy
- Each time you have success you will feel more confident and able to tackle another challenge

Translated article:

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