

Why advocate...

What does it mean to advocate for yourself or your community? Being an advocate means that you ask for what you need while respecting the needs of others. For example, if you are at a store and find barriers to accessing goods and services, you are able to ask in a polite way to be served.

Self-advocacy is asking for what you need in a direct, respectful manner. Why is this skill important?

Self-advocacy helps you:

- ~Obtain what you need
- ~Live independently and make your own choices
- ~Learn to say no without feeling guilty
- ~Express disagreement respectfully

“Be patient, knowing that change might take some time.”



About us

Utilizing our collective power, DAC provides information and referral services while fostering attitudes, policies, and environments of equality and freedom. Our board strives to create a compassionate and accessible place for people with disabilities. We encourage people with disabilities to take control of their lives and to live life to the fullest.

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How to advocate





1. Think about what you want to be different. Before you talk to the other person, make sure you know what you want to happen. Do you want to be treated differently? Do you want that person to stop doing something? Do you want a barrier removed?

2. Take a deep breath and speak clearly and slowly. Deep breathing gives your body lots of oxygen, and oxygen helps you feel calmer and think more clearly. Start by saying something like, "I would like to talk with you about..." and then calmly describe how you see the situation.

3. Do your research. Take the time to gather background information. Who is affected? How does this issue divide segments of the community? Find specific solutions to offer, as it shows you took the time to consider all sides of the issue.

4. Let the other person speak.

Being a self-advocate doesn't mean that only you talk. The other person needs a chance to respond to what you are saying. If that person becomes impatient, try to stay calm and take a deep breath.

5. Don't expect immediate results.

Change is not always instant or lasting. Sometimes it takes many conversations before anything changes. You may even have to remind the person more than once.

6. Ask for help. One of the best parts of being your own advocate is that you don't have to solve all the problems on your own. You can and should ask for help. Asking for help is also advocating for yourself. Find a like minded group of people. By organizing and working together it's easier to make change.



Where to go to make change:

Contact your representatives. Determine if the problem is local, or at the state or national level.

- Local city
- State Legislature
- U.S. Representatives
- U.S. Senators

Write a letter to the editor:

This is a great way to engage with a topic you're passionate about and to influence public opinion. Your letter to the editor can be a response to an event or issue in your community.

Most papers will have guidelines for the types of letters they will publish and rules regarding the letter's length. And how often individuals can submit. They also typically ask that you include your name and contact information for verification. Make sure to read these guidelines before you send off your work.

Give your letter more force by focusing on one issue and providing evidence for that issue. Be brief and state your position up front. If your letter is edited, it will likely be cut from the bottom up. Use a personal example. It will have more impact on the readers.