

Policy Brief

Self Advocacy

TERMS & TIPS



As a trainee at the University of South Florida (USF), the decisions you make influence and are influenced by individuals with disabilities. This brief's goals are the following: To provide a set of strategies that ensure young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) receive consistent and unrestricted access to a fully integrated university experience.

Furthermore, providing instruction on the strategies mentioned above can ensure that students with IDD achieve a state of self-determination as they begin to transition into their post-university life. Ultimately, overcoming obstacles during the transition phase can lead to the possibility of achieving a fulfilling and meaningful sense of purpose and self-worth in many areas of adult life, ranging from employment to community living.

Defining Key Terms

Self-Advocacy: "Self-advocacy focuses on the ability to stand up for oneself and to help people with disabilities stand up for themselves by speaking up, speaking out, and speaking aloud. It means having the opportunity to know your rights and responsibilities, to stand up for them, and to make choices about your own life (Pennell, R. L. (2001). Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy: Shifting the Power. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 11(4), 223-227.)."

Self-Determination: "Self-Determination focuses on reforming systems to provide better opportunities for choice and self-direction and providing people with disabilities with skills and information so they can express self-determination in

their own lives (Pennell, R. L. (2001). Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy: Shifting the Power. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 11(4), 223-227.)."

Practice Makes Perfect

Know how to be assertive and persistent: One of the most critical self-advocacy skills students with disabilities need. Suppose a student feels they're unable to take a passive and not aggressive approach in making requests for reasonable accommodations through disability services; this could harm their chances of receiving the right type of support.

Know your strengths and weaknesses: A student's effectiveness at being a strong self-advocate can be determined by their knowledge of their disability. A student having intimate knowledge of their disability can help them with how they tackle the obstacles that may present themselves in the classroom.

Requesting assistance when needed speaks volumes to a student's ability to self-advocate. For a student, being knowledgeable about their disability can also determine how they approach their participation in clubs and in meetings, job interviews, locating various resources and services.

Know Your Rights: It is vital for a student to be aware of their rights and entitlements. Students with disabilities should take the initiative and seek access to reasonable accommodations that are supposed to be guaranteed under federal law; such privileges however are not always guaranteed at the university level. The most well-known piece of federal legislation is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If denied

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a certain accommodation, a strong self-advocate would challenge this decision by citing to an administrator the more essential facts and entitlements presented in the ADA and how they're in violation of federal law.

How Can Self-Advocacy Help You?

- It can help with building confidence.
- It can improve a student's assignment and test grades.
- It can reduce a student's level of stress and anxiety.
- It can enhance a student's communication skills.
- Allows a student to develop more of an outgoing personality.

Examples of Accommodations

- Assistive technology for notetaking.
- Providing a student with extra-time during an exam.
- Allowing students to take an exam in a more private setting.
- Allowing students to record a professor's lectures, etc.

Transitioning out of High School: A Six Point Plan

Research Employment Agencies

Research the various state and federally funded employment agencies in your respective city (i.e., vocational rehabilitation).

Invest in Tech

Having the correct type of technological equipment is essential

for you to feel confident while performing crucial tasks on the job with computers, tablets, and other smart devices.

Making a Decision on Your Chosen Field

Individuals with disabilities should be mindful of selecting a field that is both of interest and matches their ability. Ultimately, certain careers are more complementary to specific types of disability.

Building Your Resume & Cover Letter

There are employment centers on college campuses around the country that most likely have a specialist who can help you construct a resume that can set you apart from the rest of the applicants who are vying for the same position as you.

Applying for Jobs/Attending Job Fairs

Most employers post job listings online. Use online resources such as LinkedIn, Indeed, and many others to search for job listings and applications. Searching for job fairs in your respective city will produce results for all the upcoming job fairs in your area.

Prepare for the Interview

If it's NOT brought up during the application process, it is vital that before the interview you address the accommodations you require to the interviewer so that he or she can ensure that you feel comfortable throughout the interview process. Conducting mock interviews with a friend or family member is an excellent way to anticipate how you will perform during the interview.

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