

ADVOCACY

ABOUT ADVOCACY

What is advocacy?

In general, advocacy refers to the process of trying to persuade others to support your position or point of view.

Why is advocacy important?

Being an advocate for yourself or someone else is critical to ensuring your wants, needs and concerns are known by the right people. Examples of advocacy are letting your employer know you need a reasonable accommodation in the workplace or letting your child's school know that they are not receiving the speech therapy that is listed on their IEP.

Advocating means...

- Asking clarifying questions
- Being assertive (not passive or aggressive)
- Giving eye contact
- Being clear with what you want
- Being consistent with your message
- Having a plan
- Being respectful



HELPFUL HINTS: HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE/SELF ADVOCATE

HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

Identify the goal of your advocacy.

What are you hoping to accomplish?
What are some acceptable outcomes?

Develop a plan to get there.

What facts support your position? What rights do you have, are there laws that apply? What resources exist? What benefits or services are you entitled to?

Consider how the other person might feel.

This shouldn't change your goal but it may change your strategy. Who are you trying to convince? What might their argument be against your position or against the goal you are advocating for? How might you counter their argument?

Be aware of your emotions and also the emotions of the other person.

Try your best to not be emotional while presenting your case. Stick to the facts and try not to make it personal. This will help the other party to not be emotional or take something personal.

Make sure you are speaking to the right people.

Is the person that you are bringing your concerns to empowered to grant your request? If not, no matter how hard you try, you will not be successful. Make sure you are talking with the right people, the people who have the authority to address your concern.



Build on common ground.

Identify any area where there already is agreement, even if it is small, because it can sometimes reduce the level of conflict.

Present your case.

Make your concerns known along with your point of view. Always put everything in writing if possible so you have a paper trail.

Consider possible resolutions.

There may be only one possible resolution to your request. Examples would be you are asking for a job coach for yourself to enable you to be trained for your employment or you are asking for your child to receive the speech therapy that they need to benefit from their education and which is listed on their IEP. In these cases the only solution is to provide a job coach to enable you to learn your job responsibilities or to provide the speech therapy that your child needs to benefit from their education. However, before you present your case, consider whether or not there is more than one resolution to your concern or need.

If you don't speak up for yourself or your child, it is likely no one else will. You cannot afford to be passive. You must be assertive in getting answers to your questions, seeing that your needs or your child's needs are met and gaining the best possible outcome.