



An Advocate Is

Self-Advocate: Making sure you are able to get, or access, what you need.

Being a self-advocate is fighting for what you as an individual need to go to school, work, live at home or to have access to healthcare. It means knowing what you need and then asking for that support. This may also mean thinking ahead to guess what problems you may have in the future, so you can act and prepare now.

For example: You want to go to a meeting, but you find out it's held in an upstairs room with no elevator. **NEED:** You need a meeting to be located in a place that is accessible. **ACTION [BEING A SELF-ADVOCATE]:** You call those who are organizing the meeting and make a request [ask them] to have the meeting in an accessible place. You also, in a letter, educate and explain to them about what an accessible space means, [like not having any stairs, wide enough doorways, and access to a restroom that is wheelchair accessible].

Acting as a self-advocate can be done in many ways:

- Figuring out what you need or may need [like an accommodation for a test]
- Ask questions
- Talk to those in charge, let them know your needs
- Write a letter explaining what you need and why they should provide it [give you what you need]
- Keep records – keep notes of when you talk to people [names, dates and notes of what happened]. You can use this to show others you have been advocating for something over a long time.
- Find allies to help you get your point across [people who can give you ideas, who could review a letter or go with you to talk to someone]
- Trust yourself to know what you need, but be open to new ideas and/or ways to meet those needs



Community Advocate: A community advocate is someone who tries to make change for a community. They listen and learn from others in the community about issues and problems that they all share. They then try to create changes in society to help the whole community.

For example: **NEED:** You and others in the disability community want people with disabilities to have jobs with individual supports and to not have the only option be working in a sheltered workshop. **ACTION:** You all decide to talk to local agencies to ask them to find money for and to train job coaches. You also write letters to the newspapers and local law makers about the issue and ask for support. You all make a presentation at the city chamber of commerce [where local business leaders meet] and ask them to write a letter of support about people with disabilities working in regular jobs to the mayor. You all go to a mayor and council meeting and ask them to not fund [give money to] sheltered workshops, to instead fund job coaches and job training for people with disabilities.

Acting as a Community Advocate can be done in many different ways:

- Holding a meeting to talk about community issues people are having
- Deciding as a group action you want to take, or different ways everyone as individuals can work on an issue. Figure out how you'll know if you have gotten what you want.
- Find facts/information to support your cause [this can be things like reports or personal stories people have written about the issue]
- Doing education [events to teach] with the public so they can understand issues
 - Holding a rally
 - Doing public skits or a play on the issue
 - Writing a letter to be printed in the newspaper
- Trying to change laws, or get new ones passed
- Writing a letter to or visiting lawmakers [congress people, city council people]



Accommodation - something to make learning easier

Anticipate - thinking about what might happen

Right - what the law says you should get

Rehearse - doing it over and over

Responsibility - what you are supposed to do

Compromise - "giving in" a little to make a "deal"

Support - someone to help you

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