Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College

Recipe for Success
SUNY Albany
March 15, 2016
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What is Self-Advocacy?

Knowing what you need and being able to ask for it.
Asking for what you need...

- Asking your boss to explain the new task AND show it to you before she walks away

- Asking for someone to reach an item that you are unable to reach

- Asking someone to hold a door open if you are having trouble getting into a building

- Asking for a ride somewhere
What is Self-Advocacy?

A way in which people speak up, voice their opinion, and take responsibility for being equal within society (People First of NH).
“All are Welcome”

- Although this is frequently stated, many times people with disabilities are unable to participate in:
  - Education
  - Social events
  - Employment
  - Health care
  - Transportation
Asking for what you need

- Do you understand how your disability impacts you?

- Can you explain the impact to people you interact with?

- Do you understand what things help you do a good job or participate in activities?

- Can you ask for these things from your boss? Coworker? Someone in the community? A teacher/professor?
Self-Determination

- A concept reflecting the belief that all individuals have the right to direct their own lives

- Attitudes and abilities required to make choices regarding one’s actions free from external influence or interference
Self-determination and Transition go hand in hand...

- Students who scored higher on the self-determination scale were more likely to be employed, earn more per hour, have their own bank account, and live on their own. (Wehmeyer and Schwartz, 1997)
How do youth exercise self-determination?

- Make choices
- Ask for accommodations
- Learn to explain your strengths, interests and support needs
- Set goals
Anyone, regardless of impact of disability, can express opinions, communicate what works and doesn’t work for them, and have some choice and control in their day.
Learn to make choices for yourself
Identify your needs and wants
Share information with someone you trust
Practice what you want to communicate
Speak for yourself; find your voice
Don’t give up if people don’t listen the first time
Celebrate accomplishments
Barriers to Assertiveness/Self-Advocacy

✓ Feeling quiet and too shy to speak
✓ Feeling frustrated and ready to explode
✓ Feeling like I don’t know what to do
✓ Feeling afraid of saying the wrong thing
✓ Not knowing how someone else will react/ Fear of retaliation
Barriers to Assertiveness/Self-Advocacy

- Having too many thoughts and feelings at the same time
- Wanting to be nice to everybody
- Not wanting to cause a problem
- Not wanting to draw attention to myself
- Thinking that no one will understand me
- Not liking the other person enough to try
What stops you from being your own advocate?

Figure out what your barriers are, then come up with a plan to overcome it!
Other Ways to Advocate/Self-Advocate

- Join advocacy/activism groups
- Volunteer
- Write letters
- Serve on committees/task forces/commissions/boards
Other Ways to Advocate/Self-Advocate

- Give testimony
- Run for office
- Talk to legislators and other lawmakers
- Vote!!!
On-the-Ground Advocacy

- Organizing in order to make a change...

- What if a public school doesn’t have an accessible doorway or the football stadium has no accessible seating?

- Attend IEP meetings to support other young people with disabilities
What to do when a problem arises at college?

- Identify what the problem is.
- Come up with a few different solutions.
- Figure out who at the school can help.
  - Office for Students with Disabilities
  - Advisor/ Professor/ Faculty Member
  - Admissions
  - Health Office
  - Friends
  - Counseling Center

Ask for help and address the problem with the proper individuals.
On Campus Resources for Academic Success

- Study Center through the Department
- Writing Center
- Research Center
- Library Workshops
- Center for Disability Services (or whatever it is called at your school)
- First Year Center
- Residential Life
- Counseling Center
Questions???