



Supporting Self-Advocacy for
Teens and Young Adults with
Disabilities



- This presentation is sponsored by Minnesota Disability Support Alternatives.
- MNDSA offers a variety of services, including support planning and self-advocacy training and support.
- www.mndsa.org

ACCESS NOTES

- Automatic closed captions are available
- You can find the link to access the slides in the event description
- A recording of the webinar will be available on the event page after the livestream
- Someone will be monitoring the chat in case issues come up
- It takes me a moment to type out a response, so please be patient

- Nonspeaking autistic person who uses a communication device
- Degree in Special Education from the University of Minnesota
- Worked as a disability consultant, a public speaker, a direct support professional, and a teaching assistant
- I get support services to help me live independently



Cole's
Introduction

WHO'S IN THE AUDIENCE?

Share a brief sentence or two in the chat about who you are and what brings you to this webinar.

TOPICS

Self-Advocacy

Importance of Self-Advocacy

Self-Determination and Dignity of Risk

Learned Helplessness

Supporting Self-Advocacy

WHAT IS SELF-ADVOCACY?

- Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself and what's important to you.
- Self-advocacy means knowing your rights and standing up for them.
- Self-advocacy means making choices about things in your life.

WHAT DOES SELF-ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

- Making choices about where you live, work, or go to school
- Deciding what services you want and how you want those services to look
- Asking for accommodations and what you need to be successful
- Telling someone “no” to something you don’t want to do
- Letting someone know they hurt you
- Asking for space and setting boundaries

SELF-ADVOCACY AND DISABILITY

- Society was not designed with people with disabilities in mind
- Access barriers create the need for self-advocacy
- People with disabilities are often given fewer opportunities to practice self-advocacy as they grow up

**EVERYONE SELF-
ADVOCATES!**

Self-advocacy is not just for people with disabilities, everyone needs to self-advocate

Share a time that you successfully self-advocated. What was the effect?

WHY IS SELF-ADVOCACY IMPORTANT?

Independence and interdependence

Choice and control

Safety and boundaries

SELF-ADVOCACY AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

- People need self-advocacy skills throughout their life
- As people transition to adulthood, self-advocacy becomes even more important than it already was



Self Determination: Making your own decisions about your life, your goals, and how to reach your goals



Dignity of risk: Being allowed to take reasonable risks, even if they might end badly, and learn from your mistakes

SELF-
DETERMINATION +
DIGNITY OF RISK



HOW SELF- ADVOCACY DEVELOPS

- Earliest self-advocacy is often refusal
- Confidence with self-advocacy builds as the young person sees their communication affects the world around them
- Others encourage the development of self-advocacy by responding to the person's requests, either through:
 - Agreeing
 - Coming to a compromise
 - Suggesting other solutions
 - Explaining the reasons it can't happen

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

- Learned helplessness is a response to not being given control over your life and the things that affect you
- When someone finds that nothing they do can change a situation, the brain disengages and stops trying to find solutions
- Not a person's fault or intentional behavior

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT SELF-ADVOCACY?

- Give opportunities to share opinions and preferences on things that matter. Listen to and respect these preferences
- Pause before jumping in with solutions to someone's problem. Find out how they would like the problem solved and work with them to make a plan
- Recognize the ways that people are already expressing self-advocacy and help them build on that



SELF-ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

Upstream Arts: Self-Advocacy Classes

<https://www.upstreamarts.org/take-a-class/>

Contact: julie@upstreamarts.org, 612-331-4584

Advocating Change Together: Self-Advocacy Academy

<https://www.selfadvocacy.org/self-advocacy-academy/>

Contact: Adam Ruff, ruff@selfadvocacy.org

MN Autistic Alliance: Cultivate (Self-Advocacy Support)
and Lattice (Individualized Support)

www.mnautisticalliance.org (Coming April 2022)

Contact: admin@mnautisticalliance.org

Minnesota Disability Support Alternatives: Self-Advocacy
Training and Support

www.mndsa.org/self-advocacy

Contact: Stacy Vigiletti, stacy@mndsa.org



QUESTIONS?

- Feel free to ask questions in the chat
- Please be patient while I type my response
- For questions about the MNDSA Self-Advocacy Program, you can ask in the chat or contact Stacy Vigiletti at stacy@mndsa.org