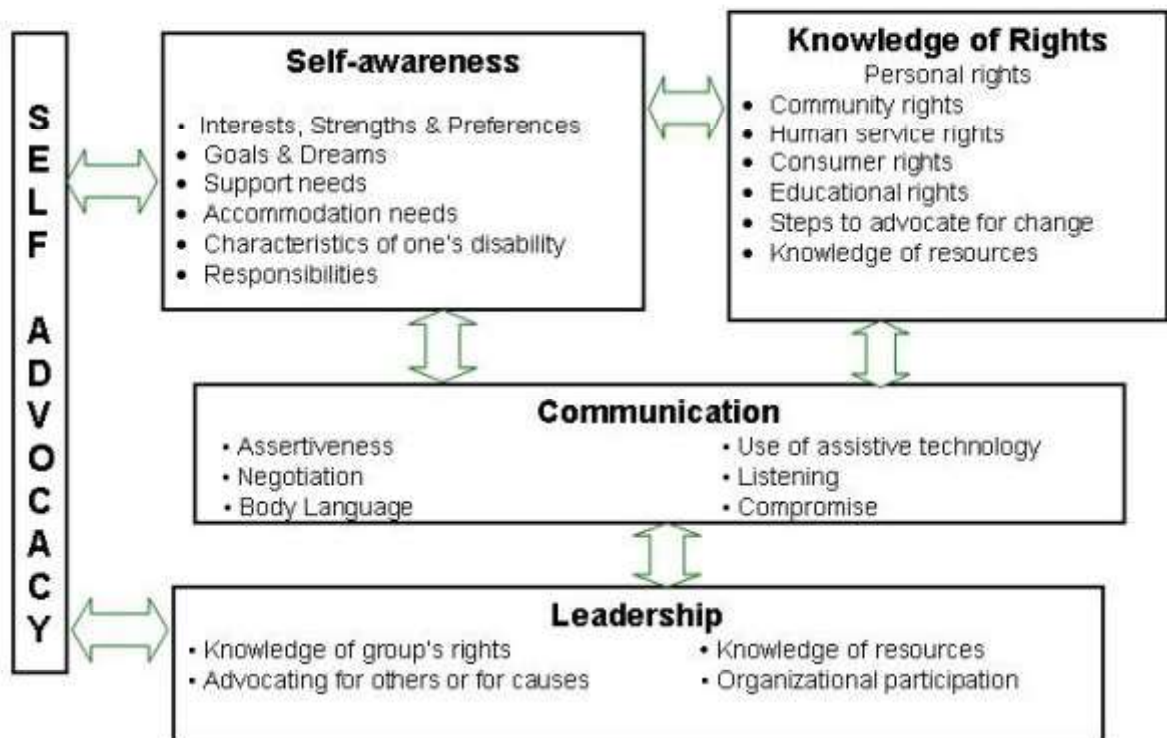


Self Advocacy

Self-advocacy is understanding your strengths and needs, identifying your personal goals, knowing your legal rights and responsibilities, and communicating these to others. A youth must learn how to maneuver through life's challenges and obstacles to make sure his/her needs are met. ~Jodie Dawson, PSY .D.

Developing self advocacy starts with self awareness and self understanding. Self-Understanding will help youth plan goals for themselves. Youth who gain and develop a greater understanding of their own capabilities, rights, and needs gain the confidence to satisfy their wants and accomplish their dreams. This will allow youth to set realistic goals for themselves and will have a better chance of self fulfillment while learning and enjoying the process of journey. It is important for a youth to voice their opinion, address concerns as well as developing learning strategies for setting goals, time management and problem solving. In order to self-advocate, youth need to **RECOGNIZE, ACCEPT and UNDERSTAND**.

Self-Advocacy Characteristics



Characteristics

- Awareness of personal preferences, interests, strengths, and limitations.
- Ability to differentiate between wants and needs.
- Ability to make choices based on preferences, interests, wants, and needs.
- Ability to consider multiple options and to anticipate consequences for decisions.
- Ability to initiate and take action when needed.
- Ability to evaluate decisions based on the outcomes of previous decisions and to revise future decisions accordingly.
- Ability to set and work toward goals.
- Problem-solving skills.
- A striving for independence while recognizing interdependence with others.
- Ability to self-regulate behavior.
- Self-evaluation skills
- Independent performance and adjustment skills.
- Persistence.
- Ability to use communication skills such as negotiation, compromise, and persuasion to reach goals.
- Ability to assume responsibility for actions and decisions.
- Self-confidence.
- Pride.
- Creativity (such as creating other accommodations that help support their needs)

Tips on teaching self-advocacy

Know yourself

- Teach a youth to discover his strengths by pointing out things he does well or finds easy to learn and execute. Help him identify weaknesses and disabilities that you may discover through physical or developmental testing. Encourage him to ask for help if he can't see the chalkboard, for example. Brainstorm ideas he can use to function better in the classroom such as asking to move toward the front of the room, using special tools to see or receiving hard copies of materials he can't see. Remind the youth that others cannot see out of his eyes and won't know that the pupil can't see the material. Suggest scheduling a private conference with the teacher to discuss any problems.

Determine Needs

- Coach the youth to stop and assess her needs before asking for help. Brainstorm possible ways to meet the need with the youth and propose the options she could suggest to the teacher. For example, if the youth is too short to reach necessary supplies, she might ask if she can keep some frequently used supplies at her desk. She could also suggest moving the item where she can reach it, and perhaps the move will assist another student who can't reach it. As a third option, she can ask if she can use a grabber tool, step stool or get assistance from someone to reach the required item.

Clear Communication

Model clear communication and have **your youth** practice it in role-play to make it less threatening. Develop a process of goal attainment. Have them answer the following:

What are my goals?

- What resource do I have?
- What resources do I need?
- What information do I have?
- What information do I need?
- Who has the resource I need?
- Who has the information I need?
- Where do I get the resources I need?
- Where do I get the information I need?
- How do I get the resources I need?
- How do I get the information I need?
- When can I get the resource I need?
- When can I get the information I need?

Your youth is 16 years old and they were kicked out of school for the 12th times this year. It's the middle of March and your counselor and vice principle has told your youth that they're not going to pass the 9th grade. Your youth has been diagnosed with conduct disorder, dyslexia and her father who is her only parent is diabetic and dying of cancer. Your youth is consider the sergeant parent to her sibling, she is afraid to communicate with the school in fear the CPS will come take her and her sibling away. She receives a summons to appear in court for the truancy. The court date is a month from today. Your intervention will be over in two weeks. Using the process of communication for self-advocacy, how would you help her? Answer the above mention question as if you were her.

Understanding Rights

- Educate your youth to know his rights. They should know that they have the right to receive special support if he has a disability or cannot accomplish a task through normal means. Explain that people may not discriminate against them because of a disability, SES, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, environment and/or family history. The law may require they have equal access for all opportunities for success. For example if your youth is has a learning disability, the school has to provide an aid, special classes or other help to achieve educational success. Encourage your youth to push for assistance when it is needed and insist that others respect their rights.

Self advocacy teaches youth how to make decisions and choices that affect their lives so they can be more independent. It also teaches youth about their rights, but along with learning about their rights they learn responsibilities. The way we can teach self advocacy is by modeling self advocacy and instructing them on how to practice self advocacy. libertyonlineuniversity.com