Youth Voice & Choice

Why Self-Advocacy Matters

- Helps you take control of decisions about your life
- Builds confidence and independence
- Helps others understand how to support you
- Prepares you for adulthooood...(idk something better)

Our Experiences

"I went to a virtual conference during covid about Supported Decision Making and it taught me that it was important that the youth has their own voice and a say in their lives. So now my parents let me make my own choices with their input, and I get their opinions and those of other people in my life about different areas of my life." - **Abby**

"Use scaffolding! That is: show your kid how you do a task, allow them to do it while you're supervising and supporting, then slowly take away the support until they're doing it on their own. If they struggle without support, go back, give them more time, and help them figure out if this is something they can do alone or something they need another person or people in order to complete. Independence isn't about doing everything alone, it's having control over when and how it's done." - **CJ**

Self-advocacy means understanding your needs and being proactive about the decisions that affect your life. Self-advocacy doesn't just mean speaking up for yourself, it means ensuring that those who support you have the information to be your best advocate as well. It helps you communicate with others, make informed choices, and take an active role in your future. Self-advocacy is an important skill as you transition into adulthood, especially in areas like healthcare, education, and employment.

Self-Advocacy Tips

- **Know Yourself** - Understanding your strengths, challenges, and health needs helps you make better decisions. Learning about your condition, medications, and daily health routines can help you communicate your needs to others.

- **Build Your Support Team** - Self-advocacy doesn't mean doing everything alone. You can include trusted people like family members, caregivers, mentors, or providers in your decision-making process when you want their support.

- **Self-Advocacy In Practice** - Learning to manage appointments, medications, and health information takes time. Start with small steps, like checking in for appointments, or preparing questions for your doctor.

Self-advocacy is a skill that develops over time. Learning to understand your needs, communicate clearly, and take part in decisions can help you build independence and create a future that works for you.

Parent Information Center
YEAH Council
New Hampshire Family Voices®

10 Things You Should Know About Supported Decision-Making

1. You keep the legal right to make your own decisions.
2. You identify the types of decisions you want help with.
3. You choose someone you trust to help you with decisions you want help with. This person is called your Supporter (you can choose more than one Supporter).
4. Your Supporter understands your needs and provides you with information in ways that you understand when you need it.
5. Your Supporter can help you communicate your decisions if you want help.
6. Through a written supportive decision-making agreement, you pick which supporters will help you make which decisions. This agreement legally recognizes your right to make decisions.
7. Your Supporter can help you, but the final decision is yours.
8. Your Supporter must respect your right to make decisions for yourself.
9. You have the right to take risks. You can make a decision that is different than what others want you to make. You can change your mind.
10. You can change or end your supported decision-making agreement at any time.

If you're considering college or employment…think about….

When deciding if a college is right for you, ask yourself:

- What is most important to me in a college experience?
- What kind of learning environment helps me succeed?
- What kind of community do I want to join?
- Am I prepared to manage my responsibilities?

Accessibility Questions to Ask

- What services are available through the Disability Services Office?
- How easy is it to navigate campus (distance between buildings, hills, transportation)?
- Are classrooms, housing, and campus buildings accessible?
- Are there disabled student organizations or peer communities?

Employment Things to Consider

- What kind of work environment works best for me (remote, hybrid, or in-person)?
- What skills and strengths do I want to use in a job?
- What supports or workplace accommodations might help me succeed?
- You can also decide if, when, and how you want to disclose your disability and what supports will help you do your best work.

The goal is to choose environments–in school or work–where you feel supported and able to succeed.