

SELF-ADVOCACY AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS



What is Self-Advocacy?

Knowing what you want, what skills and talents you have, and understanding your rights are important parts of communicating for yourself. It includes understanding your legal rights, knowing your needs, and sharing them with the right person.

Self-advocacy lets people communicate and gives people with disabilities the right to reasonable accommodations or support to be independent or successful in the community.

Understand Your Rights

It's important to know your legal rights as a person with a disability. Learn about the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Understanding the law will give you the ability to communicate for yourself. To receive accommodations as your legal right, you must disclose your disability.

Knowing What You Need

People with disabilities can successfully use community services and be a part of the workplace when they know what supports or reasonable accommodations or modifications they need.

Here are some ideas for better understanding what supports or accommodations you may need:

1. Pay attention to your needs in your community and workplace- Can you get everything you need? Does it support you in getting things done and being independent?
2. How do you communicate? Do you communicate better in writing, by telephone, or in person? Do you need assistive technology like sign language, a communication device or app, or plain language to communicate with others?
3. Research the reasonable accommodations or supports that will work best for you.

Finding the Best Reasonable Accommodations, Modifications, and Supports for You:

You can find information on accommodations is available at disability organizations. The **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)** has qualified people to help you find the best accommodation solutions. Call them at 1- 800-526-7234 and be ready with a clear definition of your problem. Another good resource is the SC Assistive Technology Program. The **South Carolina Assistive Technology Program (SCATP)** uses technology devices and services to help people with disabilities live, work and learn more independently. They are federally funded and part of a national network that provides devices that increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities for people with disabilities. You can also get help understanding your reasonable accommodation and disability needs with **Centers for Independent Living**.

Making a Request for Reasonable Accommodation or Modification

To make a request for reasonable accommodation or modification:

- 1.You will need to disclose your disability.
- 2.It is a good idea for you to come up with ideas and suggestions as you are the expert on your disability.
- 3.Have a clear description of your disability and the accommodation/modification(s) needed in the environment to guarantee that you successfully perform.
- 4.The ADA allows employers and organizations to legally turn down accommodation requests if they can prove "an undue hardship." Sometimes they may offer options that would result in the same product.
- 5.You should suggest the most correct accommodations that will allow you to do well.

Put Your Request in Writing

Put your request for accommodation or modification in writing. Include important information about your disability and the need for accommodation/modification(s). Explain how the accommodation or modification(s) will help you achieve your work and community goals. If the request is denied, the next step is to work with a person with a bigger power level (e.g., the organization director, the DOJ, EEOC officer, etc.) or file a written complaint under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Tips for People with Disabilities to Communicate with Healthcare Providers about Sexual Assault and Abuse

Every day, people with disabilities are sexually abused. It is important that you talk with your medical providers about sexual abuse and prevention.

- Tell your medical provider you may need more time when talking about what happened
- Ask your medical provider to use plain, everyday language.
- Ask your medical provider to explain what will happen during your appointment.
- You can ask your family member or caregiver to leave the examination room if you want to talk to your provider privately.
- Ask questions if you don't understand or need more information.
- Ask your medical provider for information about places that help to people who have experienced sexual abuse.

