

Caregiver/Parent Guide to Self-Advocacy

Caregivers/parents must know how to advocate effectively for themselves if they are going to teach their child/young adult self-advocacy skills.

Here Are Some Tips to Follow When Teaching Your Child to Become a Self-Advocate:

- Research the best ways to teach and transfer these advocacy skills to the child/young adult.
- Discuss/process the importance of advocacy with the child/young adult and have them agree to work on self-advocating.
- Role-play/practice self-advocacy at home in a safe, private setting for common situations or before an event.
- Be consistent.
- Be patient.



When starting out, it can be helpful to model advocating for yourself and afterwards process/explain how you advocated during the interaction/event. Remember, when advocating, it's important to figure out the "who, what, when, where, why, and how." Careful planning with each of those questions while role playing self-advocacy will help when using these skills in public in the future.

- Later, after the child/ young adult feels more comfortable, you can have them practice with you before they try advocating for themselves in the community/in public.
- Start with low pressure situations.
- It can be helpful to be nearby to offer help if needed.
 - Make sure you pay attention so you're available to support as needed.
- With increasing experience and success, you can increase the level of difficulty and at the same time, increase the distance so you're further away.
 - It's still important to pay attention to the interaction but only offer support if it's truly needed.

Having your child/young adult specifically practice these skills on you, the parent or caregiver, provides a great opportunity for them to increase their confidence in their self-advocacy skills. Giving positive and helpful feedback to their self-advocating attempts is both validating and can help improve their self-esteem.

In all cases, process the event/interaction afterwards and ask them how they thought they did. This is a good time to express how you thought they did, reviewing what was done well and what also needs more practice.

Role play, practice, and repeat the self-advocacy skills in a variety of different settings/situations.

