

4 STEPS TO STRONGER SELF-ADVOCACY

A self-advocate is someone who speaks up for themselves. The following steps will help you become a stronger self-advocate.

Step 1: Get to know yourself. It helps to start by figuring out:

- The self-advocacy skills you have, and the ones you need to work on (such as communication, assertiveness, listening, negotiating)
- The areas of your life in which you are a strong self-advocate (such as school, friendships, etc.)
- The areas in which you want to speak up more and play a bigger role in decision-making

This resource can help you do a self-assessment in the areas of learning, connecting, thriving, working and leading <http://www.ncldyouth.info/Downloads/Am I Learning to Lead Self Assmt Youth.pdf>

Step 2: Learn your rights and responsibilities

- If you have a disability, you have the right to reasonable accommodations at school and work .
- It is your responsibility to know what a reasonable accommodation is, and how to ask for one.
- If you have a disability, visit this site to learn more about your rights <http://www.ndrn.org/index.php>.

Step 3: Speak Up! You can start doing this:

- Sharing your thoughts and opinions in class, at the dinner table, at your place of worship, etc.
- Asking questions if you don't understand something your teacher, advisor or your doctor says.
- Standing up for your rights if you think they're being violated.
- When appropriate, asking for accommodations at school or work.

Step 4: Team Up! Think about building a team of people you trust to help you become a stronger self-advocate. Some of these people could be:

- Friends and older students you admire
- Teachers, coaches, principals, and academic advisors or counselors
- Family members who want you to be as independent as possible

Source: Adapted from Youth in Action! Becoming a Stronger Self-Advocate, National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability

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